The Untimely-Image
On Contours of the New in Political Film-Thinking

Jakob Nilsson
Contents

Acknowledgements ............................................................................................................. 9
Preface ................................................................................................................................. 11

Part I. Thinking Contours of the New ............................................................................... 21

Chapter 1. What is “New”? ......................................................................................... 23

1.1. The New as Rare: From Badiou to Deleuze ......................................................... 24
1.2. Further Remarks on the New .................................................................................. 54

Chapter 2. The Untimely-Image: Basic Components and Characteristics .................. 68

2.1. Thought & Politics in the Realm of Moving Images ................................................. 68
2.2. Image – Representation – Thought-Image ................................................................. 72
2.3. Thought & Belief in Two Different Regimes of Images ......................................... 86
2.4. The Crystal: Cinema 2’s Introduction of the New as Struggle .............................. 101
2.5. The Untimely-Image ............................................................................................... 108
2.6 The Wire & the Untimely-Site .................................................................................... 116
2.7. On Truth Taking on a “New Sense” & the Limitations of this New Sense for Political Art ........................................................................................................................................ 119

Chapter 3. Further Complications of the Untimely-Image: The Wire ............................. 131

3.2. “Method”: On the Relation between Social Science, Art and Philosophy in Dealing with The Wire .................................................................................................................................................... 147
Part II. Two Political Problems: Blackness and Mapping

Advanced Capitalism

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter 4. The Wire’s Noological and Aesthetic Organization</th>
<th>159</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4.1. The Wire’s Political and Argumentative Structure</td>
<td>160</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2. The Wire’s Audiovisual Configuration: An Aesthetic of the Large Organic Picture</td>
<td>166</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter 5: Blackness</th>
<th>185</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5.1. The Blackness Patterns</td>
<td>185</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2. Blackness &amp; The Wire</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.3. Valérie: An Untimely-Image</td>
<td>204</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter 6. Capitalism &amp; the Problem of Cartography</th>
<th>215</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6.2. Cognitive Mappings</td>
<td>218</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.3. Conclusions for Chapters 5 and 6 – Two Problems, Two Diverging Evaluations</td>
<td>244</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Summary and Conclusions                                   | 246 |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviations</th>
<th>250</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bibliography</th>
<th>251</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Filmography</th>
<th>261</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

| Index of Persons                                          | 262 |
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Preface

This study creates and develops a concept called the untimely-image. Its purpose is to be a critical framework for evaluating and conceiving of political moving-image art as creative of what I call contours of the new. The larger problem and question addressed is the following: how to envision political moving images today as directly expressive, not of the new itself but of potentials for the new. This study investigates the many implications of this problem, and sets out to formulate a positive answer to the question of how political moving-image art could and should be conceived from this perspective.

The untimely-image crystallizes a set of criteria for thinking the problem of potentials for the new in political moving-image art. The articulation of this concept goes through the treatment of a range of thinkers – e.g. Badiou, Jameson, Rancière, and most significantly and extensively Deleuze – that have all written directly on, or that are indirectly relevant for thinking the philosophical, aesthetic and political intricacies of this problem within the contemporary world. Through an extensive discussion of The Wire further complications in articulating the untimely-image will be worked out. The Wire does not serve as an empirical example of an untimely-image – in the final instance it is rather shown to be unable to fully express any clear untimely-images. The main aim of the treatment of The Wire is to deepen the understanding of the wider aesthetic-political problems discussed, and to broaden, nuance and make more concrete the development of the untimely-image. The Wire and the untimely-image will relate in a process of juxtaposition – they will continuously meet up, cross over, separate, and reproblematize each other – which keeps deferring a final evaluation until the end for the sake of further revealing nuances of both The Wire and the untimely-image. As a rejuvenated form of political art, The Wire provides a rich aesthetic-political geography for thinking through the complexities of the untimely-image.

One basic premise in this study is to conceive of moving images with sound as thought of various kinds. To conceive of film itself as thinking can mean many different things, and in some ways such conceptions are as old

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1 This is a preface to a theoretical study. It is not an introduction in the sense of the part that, together with a “theory chapter”, defines the theoretical parameters that are then applied to empirical material in the rest of the study (which is often the case within art, film and media studies). Instead, the theoretical parameters are gradually developed across the whole of the study – which also means that none of the chapters are the “theory chapter”. The preface is called a preface instead of an introduction to emphasize this point.
as the first instances of film theory. This study bases its understanding of film as thinking mainly on a reading of Deleuze’s cinema books. There are connections here with a view of film-thinking as proposed by Daniel Frampton in a book-length study called *Filmosophy*.² What is shared is the importance given to Deleuzian insights on film and thought, and a view of film-thinking as concerning the full range of the specific audiovisual parameters of moving images with sound. Lacking in these texts, as well as most texts aligned with this view of film within the larger contemporary field of film-philosophy, are critical accounts of the political aspects of film regarded as thought.³ And certainly, there has not been any systematic investigation of film-thinking as the political expression of generative potential – or as I, with many specificities added, call *contours of the new*.⁴ This is not only because of a lack of concerns with political issues. It is on a more strictly philosophical level also because of a lack of critical analysis and even recognition of the many different and even conflicting ways that films thinks. This study is not concerned with film-thinking in the sense of an ontology of how films think in general. Rather, this study takes it as an axiom that films themselves think in ways unique for the moving image with sound. But they do so in an open variety of ways, and it is here that the present study’s interest in film as thought lies. We will deal with how to conceive of the differences between how different works of moving-images think, and with the importance of these differences when it comes to how to conceive of the vocation of political art as the expression of contours of the new. The concern, then, lies with the aesthetic-political implications of these differences. The untimely-image serves, in this sense, as a critical theory of film-thinking.

While the point is another than arguing for some specific way that films in general think, we will still theoretically go through important basic parameters of in what senses films think (first parts of Chapter 2). That film thinks, in one way or another, is an idea no newer than film theory itself. Deleuze’s cinema books are one long run-through of conditions for and the practice of cinema as thinking with moving images and sound. But what they do is to subject film-thought to “noological” analysis, which makes minute differentiations between film-thinking in the history of cinema. This stretches from the most habitual thought to the most advanced. It can be pointed out

³ Two academic journals that cover this larger field, which includes vastly different kinds of theories, are *Film-Philosophy Journal* and the newer *Cinema: Journal of Philosophy and the Moving Image*.
⁴ Daniel Frampton’s main – but hardly original – claim that cinema is less a successful or unsuccessful copy of reality than a “new reality, a new world”, is a very different kind of claim. It deals with a conception of the ontology of films in general. The word “new” here merely helps to point out that film is not reducible to how it relates to a preexisting reality and that it rather “presents a unique world”, 2006: 3, 5. Of course, one could add, this is also the case with the most clichéd or reactionary films.
that cinema as advanced thought is not to say that cinema is philosophy, which is an idea that circulates within contemporary discussions within the wider field of film-philosophy. Even in its most advanced form the moving image with sound has its specific conditions for thinking, which in certain regards is unavoidable different from philosophy’s concern with creating philosophical concepts. At the same time, there are no clear borders. The cinema books end with an uncertainty as to what extent cinema has the ability to create a kind of philosophical concepts, which leads to the final question being that of the nature of philosophy. But however it is conceived, film undoubtedly thinks. The untimely-image deals with film-thinking to the extent that it may be expressive of “contours of the new”. Along these lines, Chapter 2 will to a large extent be concerned with a new reading of Deleuze’s cinema books as about the creation of the new as something rare and as the object and outcome of struggle in art and thought. But before this can be done, the concept “contours of the new” must be thoroughly specified. This is the objective of Chapter 1.

As part of contours of the new, the word “contour” has a slightly counter-intuitive meaning that will be explicated in detail. But Chapter 1 primarily investigates the many philosophical implications of the term “new”, aimed to gradually define how this term will operate in this study. Chapter 1 is relatively extensive on this account. It aims to be as clear and precise as possible also for those not directly familiar with the philosophies discussed, but its first subchapter must at times also be relatively abstract. The extensiveness and the relative abstraction are necessary for two intertwined reasons: 1. The term “new” can mean just about anything if not philosophically defined and properly situated in relation to other definitions and functions, and 2. The new is the central concern of the untimely-image – the term “new” therefore needs to be carefully delineated in the beginning of the study in order to make full sense in the rest of the study. One thing that should be mentioned already is that the concept of contours of the new does not regard the actual new. It is only about contours of potential for the new. Important to announce in advance is also that it is not about the “majestically new” or large-scale political visions, but about the subtle and micro-political. Yet another thing to mention, which is also a problem that will be continuously discussed throughout the study, is how to conceive of a concern with the new in political art today when the new as aesthetic production has been subsumed to such a large extent by commodity culture.

An aligned problem that runs like a red thread throughout the whole study is the lost, but renewable, relevance of previous strategies of political art, in view of a transformation in logic of capitalist power. The latter has become

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5 The uncertainty entails Deleuze finding in certain films “figures of thought” which can form intricate relationships with language that borders on concepts.
increasingly “rhizomatic” and non-localizable while working with parameters such as affect and hybridity and happy to include and commodify ever new “marginal” so-called “differences”. Rosi Braidotti, referencing Lyotard, points out how “queering identities is a dominant ideology under advanced capitalism”.6 The various counter-cinemas of the 60s and 70s, with their emphasis on deconstructing or countering “dominant” “representations” from the margins seem to have lost some of their political relevance. In counter-cinema, third cinema, postcolonial cinemas, feminist cinemas, etc. there has been an across the board centering on bringing out that which is rendered invisible by dominant narratives, that is, to be in a position of countering hegemonic narratives by bringing out all that it covers over: fluid heterogeneous hybrid identities, the fractured and discontinuous, the elusive (which is conceived of as the avoiding of a referent for an epistemic violence), the upgrading of that which is downgraded, the making visible of what is in the margins, etc. This is not to say that these theories and practices of political art are not often aware of their implications in larger systems of power and that these kinds of expressions can be co-opted. But it is to say that the parameters of political art can and need to be re-thought.

Challenging fixed identity and essentialism have for a long time been staple ideals of political art. But these kinds of challenges are increasingly irrelevant in advanced capitalist society. In a world in which power increasingly works on the level of affects, and in which “unfixed identity” is arguably hegemonic, what is needed is not more political art, or theories of political art, concerned with affects of unfixed identity. What is needed in political art, I argue, is more thought and the experimental creation of new thought. The crux of the problem for moving-image political art in the contemporary world, consequently, lies in the implications of film-thinking and the expression of contours of the new. This is the concern of the untimely-image.

The untimely-image is a specific idea of political thought in the form of moving images. It is conceived to contribute to the thinking of political moving-image art in three ways, corresponding with how it largely functions on three interrelated levels:

1. A tool for critical orientation, that is, a device that helps to critically map various ways that moving-image art can be political. This is done mainly by,

   A) distinguishing the untimely-image from neighboring forms of political art, and

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B) showing how the untimely-image must itself be mobile and therefore come to concern, at least potentially, aspects of several kinds of political moving-image art.

2. A speculative idea. The untimely-image is not a specific actual content and is always given its full determination in relation to a specific problem and a specific situation. In this way each untimely-image will be distinct, and the concept is therefore both strict and open-ended. On the most general and open level, the concept functions as a kind of summoning, a mobile quasi-ideal of what political art should do that stretches in a defined way into the not yet fully conceivable.

3. A tool for critical evaluation. The untimely-image as a set of non-static but defined parameters that can serve as criteria for critical evaluation – including the evaluation of works that fail to explicitly express untimely-images, and works that have not yet been created.

The untimely-image is not “untimely” in the sense of an actual occurrence coming too soon (e.g. someone dying too young, and therefore dying an “untimely death”), and certainly not in the sense of being old-fashioned, or antiquated. It is not a linear or in that sense historical concept. It concerns the clearing for and the expression of potentials for the new. As described in 2.5 below, the untimely-image counter-actualizes and extracts from givens generative forces that inheres within them as tendencies, and then co-creates with these tendencies and shapes them into moving-image contours. It is the clearing for and the expression of figures of potential in thought in the form of moving-images – figures of potential that I will define as contours of the new. As will be specified in Chapter 1, what is here called contours are not to be understood as figurative outlines or blueprints. Contours have instead a “sub-representational” logic (the logic of the sub-representational is discussed most explicitly in 2.9).

The untimely-image is an original concept developed in this study. But it is composed in close dialogue with several other thinkers. The two key dialogue partners are Deleuze and in a more indirect way the system of thought that is The Wire. The untimely is a concept in Deleuze (with origins in Nietzsche). But the aspects of the untimely-image that are of a Deleuzian inspiration do not merely concern his notion of the untimely. The Deleuzian aspects of the untimely-image are rather drawn from various properties of Deleuze’s thought as a whole. The untimely-image is in this sense a crystalized composition of parts that stem from a selective treatment of Deleuze – given also that his thought was changing and constantly altered in relation to different problems and hence quite multifarious. This also includes certain

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7 The French term used by Deleuze is intempestif and the German term in Nietzsche is Unzeitgemässe.
problematizations and stretchings of his thought. While this treatment of Deleuze is a central aspect of the untimely-image, it is one aspect. As stated, the concept is also developed in dialogue with other thinkers including Alain Badiou, Jacques Rancière, and Fredric Jameson. While the development of the concept of the untimely-image will go through many theorists and pass several stages, there are two basic “terrains” that the development of the concept will cross:

1. Deleuze, primarily for his rich and diverse conceptualizations of thought, thought as cinema, and most centrally, the logic of potentials for the new.
2. The Wire as an intricate work of political moving-image art that is also relatively well distributed.

On the one hand, the untimely-image is extensively defined throughout the study. But on the other hand, this is a concept whose very idea includes that it can only be defined up to a point. This is because, as stated, each specific untimely-image gets its full definition in relation to a specific problem. As the problem that the untimely-image counter-actualizes shifts, aspects of its definition may have to be modified. The concept will therefore be defined in two different ways:

1. The untimely-image as a general concept: the articulation of those aspects that remains as its characteristics independently of the problem at hand.

The first level defines what must be part of all untimely-images. The second level helps to further those definitions, but it also puts the concept to work regarding two problems that add specifications. The second level of definition is therefore open, and must be open to modifications that finally extend beyond this study.

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The Wire, which consists of a five-season whole, first met an audience as broadcasted on HBO (2002-2008). But it has its steadily expanding audience primarily through what quickly became its main life on DVD and various file-sharing formats. The Wire is one of the most discussed and seen pieces of political moving-image art in the recent years since it is not merely an

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8 Medium-wise, I regard The Wire to be nothing narrower than a specific configuration of moving images with sound that constitute a diverse process on a mainly digital media landscape. Based on this premise, The Wire is in this study investigated as moving images with sound. In a different text I critique the otherwise common labeling of The Wire as “television” and discuss various ways that it is rather a media-terminological problem, Jakob Nilsson, “A Media-Terminological Problem Called The Wire”, Journal of Aesthetics & Culture (forthcoming).
“alternative media practice” or something screened in galleries, but rather a well-distributed part of popular culture. *The Wire*, as political art and as – although not overly popular – popular culture, also happens to have a largely black cast. How can we understand the expression of blackness in this well-known and well-spread political critique? *The Wire* does not have an intention to do anything political with the topic of blackness per se. It is focused rather on class and the effects and functions of neoliberal capitalist structures and policies. This study, however, does not reduce itself to merely track the creators’ intentions. One of the concerns of Chapter 5 is to investigate *The Wire*’s expression of blackness through the general framework of the untimely-image. The other large political problem of *The Wire* is its mapping of neoliberal capitalist structures and policies. It is a sociological investigation that also approaches what Fredric Jameson conceptualized as “cognitive mapping”. I will come to understand the sociology as well as the cognitive mapping as part of *The Wire* as a system of thought in the form of moving images. This kind of thought will then be juxtaposed – compared, contrasted, and in parts equated – with the untimely-image. How to understand *The Wire* as a mapping of contemporary capitalism, and what it means to do so from the perspective of the untimely-image, is investigated in Chapter 6.

*The Wire* is clearly political art in the sense that it brims with an implicit aim of altering the state of affairs depicted. But it does so in very specific ways. Its critique is primarily guided by the ideal of illumination, and it is clearly distinguishable from political art that merely critically parodies or catalogues a state of affairs. *The Wire* rejuvenates or even reinvents a certain tradition of political art while simultaneously bordering on the mainstream, not least in its distribution. One of the most general points of interest in *The Wire* as political art lies in it being an intriguing combination of the ambitiously and uncompromisingly political and being a relatively widespread part of popular culture. Such a mix sets the stage for the unexpected to gain real force. I discuss such a combination in terms of an untimely-site (2.6 below).

*The Wire* is not merely ripe for an advanced political analysis, it is *itself* an advanced political analysis in the form of moving-images with sound. It is the dramatized presentation of a sociological analysis while being also a unified political argument and vision – with a not-so contemporary aesthetics subordinated to those purposes. As such *The Wire* will primarily be treated in this study as a *theoretical material in itself*, instead of merely as “empirical” material to which theory is applied. This does not mean that it will not also be subjected to close aesthetical analysis on many levels. Chapter 3 will investigate its “literary” structures, and also lay out a methodological remark on how *The Wire* is to be approached. Chapter 4 analyses the structuring of its political arguments, as well as the audiovisual configurations of its aesthetic.
As already implied, I argue that the most explicit political content of *The Wire* splits up into two (interrelated) problems: the expression of blackness and the mapping of facets of contemporarily neoliberal capitalism. The two problems are investigated in Chapters 5 and 6 respectively. This will allow us to put the untimely-image to work in relation to concrete political problems, which will exemplify how its parameters are concretized in relation to specific problems. And reversely, these two problems will split the untimely-image into two different evaluations. *The Wire* will be seen to be more or less devoid of traces of any untimely-images of blackness, while it is more in play when it comes to the mapping of capitalism. If it fails in regards to blackness, then why discuss it? The main reasons are that the very ways that it fails are interesting and revealing, and because it will allow us to make other kinds of points: to investigate a contrasting case of a specific untimely-image of blackness (from Jean-Pierre Melville’s *Le Samouraï*, 1967), as well as to analyze the difficulties provided by the intensive commodification of difference in advanced capitalism. But another reason is because *The Wire* is generally regarded (to a large extent rightly so) to critically illuminate the truth of the states of affairs depicted. Since this critique also happens to have a largely black cast, it also risks inadvertently reproducing certain cliché ideas of blackness. The certain clichés in mind are what I will conceptualize as contemporary “blackness patterns”. These patterns do not concern stereotypes, but a logic that in intricate ways equates blackness with the sociological. If this is investigated in Chapter 5, Chapter 6 is ultimately something like a juxtaposition of both conflicting and overlapping notions of means to make a map of advanced capitalist structures in political art, and what such mappings means in relation to the problem of expressing contours of the new. The two basic parameters in this juxtaposition are those forms of mapping aligned more with the untimely-image and those forms of mappings more aligned with a Marxist tradition of illumination. In practice this is mostly played out as a discussion of how to assess and relate the respective ideas of political mapping in Deleuze and in Fredric Jameson.

There are contemporary thinkers of the political, and of political art, that in different ways wants to rejuvenate or reinvent a future-oriented notion of political art that I will refer to in this study as the “majestically new”. Alain Badiou, who is mainly discussed in chapter 1, is one example, and Fredric Jameson, discussed in Chapter 6, is another. A main concern for Jameson is to investigate how postmodernity hinders what he wants to restore: utopian desire and utopian imagination. Despite their differences, this point about “desire” and “imagination” is comparable to Deleuze’s notion of restoring “belief” in the world as still capable of creating new forms of life when such a belief has waned – in art with the running into a wall of modernist utopian thinking. But for Deleuze this regards the struggle to find completely new kinds of paths for thinking in political art (this is treated in depth in chapter 2). For Jameson, while postmodernity (“late” capitalism) requires new ideas
of how to be political, the concern is, in the end, the imagining of ways to adjust classical notions of political art as Marxist illumination to an increasingly complex contemporary world.

The main aim of this study is to develop the untimely-image and thereby contribute to contemporary theory of political art. But two minor aims accompany this main aim. The two most central paths in the development of the untimely-image are, as stated, a treatment of Deleuze and The Wire, respectively. It is within these paths that the two minor aims will simultaneously be worked out. The primary of the two minor aims is to contribute to current discussions of Deleuze’s thought; the secondary of the two minor aims it to contribute to current discussions of The Wire. In Chapters 3-6 The Wire and the untimely-image relate in a process of reciprocal analytic development: the examination of The Wire serves to sharpen and advance further complexities of the untimely-image; and the untimely-image will gradually provide a set of new theoretical perspectives on The Wire. In this sense, the discussion of The Wire also serves as an example for other studies that want to put the concept of the untimely-image to use as a critical framework.

This study has on center stage parameters that must be understood as aesthetic. This does not mean that I will provide or reference a definition of how the term should be understood in general. On the most basic level I utilize the term “aesthetics” to refer to audiovisual configurations within art, or artistic or artistic-like expressions within a social and material world. In Chapter 4 it also serves to reference a principle or a set of principles for organizing artistic elements (The Wire as abiding by what I call “an aesthetic of the large organic picture”). The term aesthetics also implies a sensitivity to differences in conditions of what can and cannot be done between generally different material bases – e.g. what the moving image with sound can do that a painting cannot and vice versa – without therefore supposing some static homogenous self-identity of each art/medium, delineated within some grand aesthetic system. But most importantly, what I mean by “art” and more inadvertently “aesthetics” is mostly bound up with my reading of Deleuze and with the problem of thought. There is an aesthetic to thought and the activity of thinking, but there are also specific kinds of thinking in

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9 For most readers the following is superfluous information, but due to how this term is still understood in some disciplines there are reasons to point out that in this study, the term aesthetics does not regard value judgments, “pleasure”, “beauty”, or any static “systems of the arts”. This study is also unconcerned with general categorizations between what art is and what it is not.
art. This is most significantly examined in Deleuze’s cinema books, where cinema’s moving images get intricately connected to the art – indeed the aesthetics – of thinking. Aesthetics is in this study not only connected to thought, but as I will show also to what it means to spawn and find ways for new thought. The untimely-image concerns art, aesthetics, images, and thinking as all bound up with the aesthetic-political problem of creating contours of the new. The many definitions given to the untimely-image also mean that the term “political” – which just like the term “aesthetics” will receive no general, one-size-fits-all meaning – is given a particular function, and more so with the further specifications that come with the untimely-image problem at hand in each case.

While concerned with aesthetics in this way, this study focuses on images themselves and not on spectators, audiences or reception practices (the implications of this somewhat controversial delimitation is discussed in 1.2.1). The untimely-image is not a sociological concept – it is not about the matter-of-fact level of actual effects or social change. It does not concern the expression of the new itself, but contours of potentials for the new in the form of moving images with sound.

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The text will at times be punctuated with what I call “elaborations”. The elaborations are specific unfoldings/expansions within the main thread of the discussion. This does not mean that they are parenthetical or less essential. They are a structuring devise signaling for the reader that a section will branch somewhat. In most cases they branch in the sense of a special emphasis of something theoretically important.
Part I.
Thinking Contours of the New
Contrary to Deleuze, therefore,
I think […] events are rare …
– Alain Badiou

[S]o great is the capacity […] for exhausted life
to get control of the New from its birth […]
The power of the false is delicate,
allowing itself to be recaptured
by frogs and scorpions.
– Gilles Deleuze

Chapter 1. What is “New”? 

A central aspect of the untimely-image is to express contours of the new. What this entails is explicated gradually throughout this study. This first chapter defines the terms contour and new with main focus on the latter. If not properly defined, new can mean just about anything. It may refer to Grand Events, fluctuations within consumer culture, the constant becoming of everything everywhere, or an already given phenomenon that appears for the first time for an individual subject. None of those conceptions point to what we have in mind with contours of the new, but we will have to grapple with all these conceptions in order to get at it. First of all, we are searching for a concept of the new that goes beyond mainstream philosophical conceptions, in which the new is assumed to be relative, for instance, to a subjective perspective – the new for someone, and not the new as such. This leads us to philosophers Badiou and Deleuze, who formulate notions of real, and not merely subjective, novelty. A distinct reading of the differences between these two philosopher’s takes on the new will be conducted, and this reading will serve as raw material for the extraction of and articulation of the concept.

of contours of the new. A key point of specialization is that we are searching for a conception not directly concerned with the actual new itself so much as what can be described as subtle generative processes of the new. The second subchapter deals in its first section with the reasons for why the concepts developed regard only the works of moving images themselves, and not how they are received by spectators and in its second section with a first articulation of a running theme across this study: how to think the new from within advanced capitalism and consumer culture. This chapter, then, discusses a series of questions and problems regarding the new in order to come out with a quite specific definition of the term that is to be operative in this study.

1.1. The New as Rare: From Badiou to Deleuze

In a recent book on Badiou, Sam Gillespie writes: “If Deleuze is the great contemporary thinker of both novelty and multiplicity, he almost certainly finds his worthy rival in the figure of Alain Badiou.” The significance of this “rivalry” is reflected in many ongoing debates and studies not only on how to conceive the relation between Badiou’s and Deleuze’s respective philosophies of the new, but also how to conceive and evaluate the two philosophers conceptions and evaluations of each other. Deleuze wrote only a passage on Badiou but Badiou wrote several texts including a book-length study on Deleuze. But their respective philosophies and how they conceive of the other are two different questions. We can find valuable aspects in Badiou’s thought in spite of the fact that, as many have shown, Badiou’s texts on Deleuze actually say little about Deleuze. And we can also relate and compare their respective philosophies in ways that exceed their own ideas of this relation. The present section, however, does not study this relation for its own sake. The aim is only to gradually draw out certain implications about the new that are significant for how to conceive of the basics of the untimely-image and the contours of the new.

Although their conceptions of the event are very different, for both Badiou and Deleuze it concerns generating processes of the new as such – i.e. the new as irreducible to language, social construction, appearance or subjective experience. Both also regard the essential aspects of the event to exceed given spatial and temporal coordinates. An event is not reducible to a causal chain and is only secondarily a “phenomenon”. Its essential aspects exceed a particular position in time and space. But the event is at least graspable by the signs it emits, which can have significant consequences on

thought. But these similarities hide significant differences. Let us begin with Badiou’s theory of the event. The aim is to progressively clarify aspects important for our concerns, and we will finally actually only retain a few points from Badiou. But we still need to look at Badiou’s system as a whole – at least as it appears in his magnum opus Being and Event – for the parts to make sense. A relatively close assessment of the system of one of the two “great contemporary thinkers of […] novelty” will also serve, not least, as a contrasting lead up to the specificities of the other thinker, Deleuze. So while the following account will be long in relation to how little of Badiou’s system that will reappear in the rest of the study, it is motivated by his status as a contemporary thinker on novelty, the fact that the parts of his system only make full sense as a whole, and that the points that I will retain from the discussion will create an illuminating contrast to and a way to enter into the complexities of Deleuze’s thinking of the new. We will in this sense go relatively far into Badiou only to work our way out of Badiou. But on the other hand, Badiou’s system is in the following given a fairly short treatment, given its complexity – the account below will not be able to do full justice to all the intricacies of his system.

Let us begin with the event. The event in Badiou is the rare eruption of an unknown within being. It emanates from a “void” that is radically “outside” of being. But it is “outside” only in the sense that “being” is defined as structured thinkable presentation – it is “inside” being in the wider sense of “being” as exceeding the thinkable, which is what Badiou describes as pure multiplicity (more on this latter point below). The event erupts as the unthinkable within what is thinkable. The event itself cannot be thought or even detected even in our most advanced means of thinking being – which is to say, ontology (and Badiou famously equates the forefront of ontology with axiomatic set theory). In the sense that ontology cannot think the event, the event is external to being.13 Events are what “interrupts” being as “supplement” to it in the form of an unknown.14 This unknown cannot be recog-

13 Alain Badiou, Being and Event, trans. Oliver Feltham (London/New York: Continuum, 2007), pp. 184, 190, hereafter referred to as BE.
14 On the one hand, as Daniel Smith notes, “this is exactly how Deleuze [in What is Philosophy?] defines the ‘modern’ way of saving transcendence: ‘it is now from within immanence that a breach is expected … something transcendent is reestablished on the horizon, in the regions of non-belonging’ […] Though Badiou is determined to expel God and the One from his philosophy, he winds up reassigning to the event, as if through the back door, many of the transcendent characteristics formerly assigned to the divine”. “Mathematics and the Theory of Multiplicities: Badiou and Deleuze Revisited”, The Southern Journal of Philosophy (41: 3, 2003), p. 438. On the other hand, Badiou became quite aware of how is idea of the event appears from a Deleuzian perspective and coyly defended himself by conceding that “if the only way to think a political revolution, an amorous encounter, an invention of the sciences, or a creation of art as distinct infinities – having as their condition incommensurable separative events – is by sacrificing immanence […] and the univocity of Being, then I would sacrifice them”. From the perspective of his own philosophy, however, Badiou “do not actually believe” that a sacrifice of immanence “is the case”. 2000: 90f.
nized within a “situation”, which is to say from within “being” (as a given thinkable presentation). If it cannot be recognized, then how can it be detected at all that an event has occurred? The event is “foreclosed from knowledge” but without therefore being necessarily unnoticeable (BE, 329). The event leaves traces within the situation, which means that it can be retroactively inferred that an event has taken place. Past events, furthermore, function as condition of possibility for the detection and the naming of a new event (we will come back to this point below). But most central here is those that perform the detecting and the naming – those individuals or collectives that Badiou calls “subjects”. The event engenders the subjectivization of individuals or parties that are drawn to think the implications of the event. They “name” or “nominate” the event as event. But they also extract from the event a new “axiom” or “Truth”. Remaining “faithful”, the subjects labor with the “truth procedure” of coming to terms with and then gradually trying to implement the new truth in a situation (for example the event of the French Revolution and the axiom/truth “all men are equal”). The event performs a subjectivization, and the subjects it thereby founds retroactively “name” the event as event (without this particular form of recognition the event may go unnoticed and have no real consequences). Since the event is unknowable from within being, the subjects in this way may be said to “mediate” between the event and being. Let us look a bit closer at the relation between the event and being and how the subject may be said to mediate between them.

The event for Badiou is radically other than being. It is radically other not in the sense that it comes from another world, but in the sense that it is beyond being as a thinkable situation. The being-situation lingers on in its ordinary becoming without any extraordinary change. For Badiou a situation, while constantly changing in insignificant ways, is fairly static. It is interrupted only by events, which introduce the possibility of a wholly new situation. The event erupts as an “exception to [ordinary] becoming” and inserts an “intervallic void between two times”. This gives birth, first of all, to the possibility of an inclusion of a new “Truth” in a situation. The event “opens up a space of consequences in which the body of a truth is composed” (2009: 386). Although the question of novelty and of the event for Badiou concerns a radical rupture within a given situation, what actually happens is more nuanced and subtle. An event introduces newness in a situation. But that an event occurs does not mean that everything in the situation suddenly chang-

15 The “faithfulness” that guides this work, of course, comes with a number of difficulties. It gives rise to “splits and heresies” and to “suspicion[s] that the operator of faithful connection is itself unfaithful to the event out of which it has made so much”, BE, 392. Along these lines, Badiou distinguishes between kinds of fidelities – in Being and Event he separates “real” or “generic” from more dogmatic and sterile types of fidelities, 236-238, 261.
es. Not everything, obviously, becomes new just because an event has occurred. Badiou: “There is some newness in the situation […] But this newness does not prevent [the situation-including-the-newness] from sharing a number of characteristics with the fundamental situation” (BE, 384, also 407f). The event may be a radical rupture, then, without being radically transformative in practice. But how then is the novelty included in the situation? The inclusion of the new in the situation – the “truth procedure” – is gradual. This does not mean adding recognizable information. It means forcing into the situation the consequences of what from within the situation must appear as an “indiscernible”. And as such it only “modifies [the situation] ‘slightly’” (BE, 386). So Badiou’s event, while radically rupturing, is not tabula rasa in practice – primarily because it can only seep into the situation in a finite and gradual way.

It is in this seeping into the situation in a finite and gradual way that we find the subtleties and nuances of Badiou’s philosophy of the event. But it is also here that the creative work of the subjects comes in. The event and its truth brings with it the new only in the sense of the coming into being of an “infinite” possibility (i.e. “all men are equal”). But it is the subjects’ activities that see that this possibility is formulated from out of the event and that it has consequences. The first order of business for the subjects, after naming the event as event – which is to determine it as an “indiscernible” and an “undecidable” from within the perspective of the situation – is to extract from it a new possibility in the form of a truth or axiom. But it is only after the naming and the extraction of a truth that the real work begins. There are more aspects than one to the subsequent work, but the main thing is the struggle to make the event and the truth it entails result in the gradual rearrangement of the situation. The truth – and we can keep to the example of radical equality as extracted from the event of the French Revolution – is something like the creation from the event of an “infinite” regulatory ideal. While on the ideal level grandiose it is subtler in practice: the faithful subjects work towards implementing this ideal locally and finitely within the specific conditions of a given situation. A truth is therefore both infinite and local. Badiou: “Ontologically, every truth is an infinite”, that is, an Idea in a Platonic sense, but as it is implicated in a given situation it is a “generic fragment” (2009: 32). It is in this way that the subjects can be said to function as mediators between the event/its truth and the situation.17

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17 On the one hand, the subjects mediate from within the situation – subjectivization is “the emergence of an operator” that serves as an “interventional nomination from the standpoint of the situation” (BE, 393). But on the other hand, the work that the subjects perform does not concern what exists as part of the situation, but “whatever is faithfully connected to the name of the event” (393). In this sense the subjects are both part of the situation and existing between the situation and the eventual truth that it names. That is, the subjects are “at the intersection, via its language, of knowledge and truth” (406), which is to say that it is the link between being and event (429). Since the event erupts from a void and is therefore without
The event emanates from a “void”. It is, as Badiou writes, “the arrival in being of non-being, the arrival amidst the visible of the invisible” (BE, 181). But from the perspective of the situation – which is a structured presentation of being (including ontology itself) – the event itself is still “foreclosed”. It only leaves traces in the form of an “indiscernible” in a situation. The event is interpreted on the basis of such traces (193). Badiou: “The indiscernible is specifically the ontological schema of an artificial operator. And the artifice is here the intra-ontological trace of the foreclosed event” (384). As the event breaches into a situation, it creates a “hole” in knowledge. It is indiscernible and unclassifiable for existing knowledge (338), and “knowledge” is here defined as “the articulation of the language of the situation over multiple-being” (513).

But there is also a sense to which being exceeds ontology – and this is where the void comes in. Outside ontological articulation reality splinters off into “pure multiplicity” – which for Badiou means formal, empty and non-denumerable quantity – that exceeds being as thinkable unified object to the extent that it can only be thought of as void. Any determined situation is a presentation – a “count-as-one” – of what cannot be presented. What cannot be presented is being as pure, non-denumerable multiplicity. Any determined being or any presentation (including ontology itself) turns pure multiplicity into a multiplicity. But pure multiplicity is a “not-one”, which means that it “is not” – it lacks thinkable and presentational being and is therefore “void”. This also means that it is “in-numerable”, and that it lacks differences, elements, and structure (it is “a-structured”), as well as substance (it is “pre-substantial”).

Being-as-pure-multiplicity is an inconsistency: it exceeds any consistency of (ontological) presentation, intuition or thought – any “count-as-one”. It is purely on the basis of a “decision” that Badiou axiomatically refers to this unthinkable as “void” (the name of no-thing). However, it is precisely from this un-presentable and unthinkable void that any ontological presentation is “weaved”. Any situation, which is to say any presentation, presupposes that which cannot be presented – all situations are creations from “nothing” in this particular sense. The relation between the void and a situation is thereby not a simple dualism: the situation contains its outside as an unthinkable and unrecognizable inside from which it is created. The void itself remains as an unconscious immanent to every situation – unconscious to the point of being unthinkable. This means for Badiou that in any “normal regime of structured situations” there is “no conceivable encounter with the void” (BE, 56).

The event, however, gives the void a certain localization and thinkability – but events are rare and are far from noticeable for everyone, at least in the spatiotemporal coordinates, the subject mediates in the form of a “local configuration of a generic procedure from which a truth is supported” (391). The subject carries out faithful operations by which “the event comes into being” (409).
It erupts as excess from within an “evental site” in a situation, creating a “dysfunction” within it that launches a slow process of coming to terms with what has erupted. What erupts with the event is a new possibility whose truth can be gradually implemented into the situation with the means of a certain subject position (178). Although the truth itself is an “infinite” axiom, its local implementation within the situation guarantees that it remains processual and specific. A “truth”, furthermore, is precisely something new – it does not fully correspond with any existing standard of measure (truth is in this sense distinguished from judgment and knowledge: ordinary truth-statements of knowledge concern what Badiou calls the “veridical” and not what he calls truth, *BE*, 332). The event engenders truth and subject simultaneously, which is the start of a truth procedure within the situation as something new that comes into being and continues to become.

The “hole” in knowledge created by the event and its truth is a generic hole (*BE*, 432). The truth is indiscernible since it is not recognizable by already existing knowledge. But as a hole or “subtraction” from knowledge the indiscernible is the “truth” of a situation in a future anterior sense: it is “the foundation of all knowledge to come” (*BE*, 327). All engendering comes from what the event brings forth. “Nothing”, which is to say nothing

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18 “Rare” [*rare, rareté des événements*] means here first of all, more obviously, that the event is exceptional in relation to the situation. But it clearly also means rare in the sense that events are separate and infrequent: events are, as Badiou writes, “all absolutely distinct – not formally [...] the form of all events is the same) but ontologically. [Events do] not compose any series, [they are] sporadic (events are rare) [...]”; and their truths are “rare fragments” that “traverse here and there our bleak world”, 2000: 74-75, 91. So events are rare and correspondingly also the truths extracted from them. Badiou speaks about the importance of “[i]dentifying those rare sequences through which a political truth is constructed” as “a sustained exercise of thought”, *Infinite Thought: Truth and the Return to Philosophy*, trans. Oliver Feltham and Justin Clemens (London/New York, Continuum, 2004), p. 74. The type of thought to identify these rare events and truth formulations is the thought of philosophy. This is because ontology itself within Badiou’s system precisely cannot think the event. It is also not said form the perspective of the practical realms themselves – politics, science, art, and love – in which events occur. This is because these practices are far from only concerned with “those rare sequences” in which a new truth is constructed from a rare event. First of all, there is the “truth procedures” that deals with its aftermath – the struggle to gradually implement the new truth in the situation – which are infinitely ongoing. Second of all, any practice is grappling simultaneously with an open number of truths that have already been formulated in the past. The claim that events and new truths are rare is therefore made from the perspective of philosophy, in the sense that philosophy thinks the event within these more practical realms. But since events themselves lack spatio-temporal coordinates, how can they be regarded to be rare, sporadic, or infrequent? Is this not to quantify events and therefore to force upon them spatiotemporal coordinates? The event is an event only as erupting within a situation and the situation has spatio-temporal coordinates – this explains why Badiou says that events are “ontologically” distinct while saying so not from the perspective of ontology but from the perspective of philosophy. The event is a breech in ontology, the “the arrival in being of non-being”, which gives the event, this “non-being”, a certain spatiotemporal localization. The eruption as occurring in being/the situation provides the parameters for saying that events do so rarely, sporadically, and infrequently, without thereby claiming that events themselves have given spatiotemporal coordinates.
thinkable, generates the event itself. What generatively precedes the event therefore cannot be thought within Badiou’s system. Badiou’s thinking of the event is in this way reduced to a concern with what happens after the event – the event itself is simply “drawn from the void” (BE, 329). In his system everything having to do with “conditions” and “prerequisites” is reduced to mean what is “calculable” in advance. As reduced to the calculable and causal, “conditions” and “prerequisites” exist only on the side of the situation and already existing knowledge. The event is precisely “that which is purely hazardous, and which cannot be inferred from the situation” (BE, 193). This quite simply means that there is no thinkable genealogy of the event in Badiou. The generative is all about what follows from the event.

It seems to me that this reduction of thinkable “conditions” and “prerequisites” to the “calculable” is to throw out the baby (any kind of generative structure conditioning the event) with the bathwater (the calculable and causal). It is perhaps here that Badiou is most problematic: he implicitly postulates an either/or between the event being calculable/foreseeable or erupting from a void and therefore lacking any (thinkable) genealogy. Badiou’s interest in the event lies almost solely (we will return with the exception below) with the processes of “intervention” that follow (which “names” the event and gradually puts the novelty it entails into circulation within the preexisting situation). My conception of “contours of the new”, inversely, concerns the generative forces before any kind of actual New. And as generative figures, “contours of the new” precisely do not have calculable and foreseeable outcomes.

In Badiou, what is important about a rupturing event, then, is its aftermath. Let us repeat and expand a bit on this aftermath. There is first the subjectivization of those that retroactively name or “nominate” the event and its truth. This is an “interpretative intervention” that concerns “unfolding the consequences of this nomination in the space of the situation to which the site belongs” (BE, 203), that is, “the incorporation of the evental into the situation in the mode of a generic procedure” (BE, 393). The event is therefore “only recognized in the situation by its consequences”, and it will “always remain doubtful whether there has been an event or not, except to those who intervene, who decide its belonging to the situation” (BE, 207). If there is no intervention that “puts it into circulation within the situation […] the

19 Badiou: “[I] cannot [in contrast to Deleuze] bring myself to think that the new is a fold of the past […] This is why I conceptualize absolute beginnings (which requires a theory of the void) […]” The Clamor of Being, p. 90.

20 This is clear in the mediation on Leibnitz in Being and Event. It is headed by the following Leibnitz quote, “Every event has prior to it, its conditions, prerequisites, suitable dispositions, whose experience makes up its sufficient reason”. In Badiou’s treatment of this issue the mediation, all that in this sense comes “prior to” the event, its generative conditions and prerequisites, are through is reading of Leibnitz reduced to the calculable and foreseeable, BE, 315.
event does not exist” (*BE*, 209). But the naming of the event performed by the subjects must be separated from the means for measure of the situation that the event has erupted within: the naming is a creative indexing and not a re-presentation (the re-presentation of the void/event Badiou goes so far as to equate with “evil”). That is, the naming of the event must be separated from forces that would appropriate the event as new fuel for the same within the pre-existing situation (*BE*, 201ff). The “event is only possible if special procedures conserve the evental nature of its consequences” (211), the evental nature of the event must be kept intact – it must remain both “named” (as unnamable) within the situation and “sutured to the unpresentable” (*BE*, 206). This means furthermore that the “naming” or the “nomination” of the event has nothing to do with nominalism. While the subjects will have to be quite creative with coming up with ways for implementing the truth within the new situation, the new *as such* is irreducible to language, social construction, or, for that matter, subjective experience. Badiou is especially critical of language-centered theories, most explicitly various forms of constructivism and nominalism – from Foucault to analytic positivism – since he regards such theories to be unable to recognize that which is in excess of the situation (*BE*, 288ff). The nomination of the event, Badiou writes, “absolutely breaks with the constructivist rules of language” (*BE*, 290). The notion of the event and the new as irreducible to not only language but to subjective experience is an important point that we will return to from a primarily more Deleuzian perspective in 1.2.1 below.

But again, if the event cannot be recognized from within the situation, how can it be recognized *as an event* by anyone? There is no genealogy for the event itself, but there is a kind of condition of possibility for the intervention and the naming of the event: prior events. In order for the intervention to be able to grasp the event *as* event and not merely reterritorialize it into the preexisting situation it must be founded on something other than the situation and the available notions of meaning within it:21 the interpreting intervention performed by the subjects are founded instead on previous events – while ontologically distinct, all events have the same “form” (*The Clamor of Being*, 74-75). In this way, interventions have a temporal aspect: they serve as connectors of already circulating events across time. *Interventions* are thereby always founded on already decided events. In this sense events can never really function as radical beginnings (*BE*, 210). In spite of some of his own statements to the contrary, there is therefore a sense to which Badiou’s events cannot be – or rather cannot have the form of – absolute, unconditioned novelty. All events have the same form. But it is within the procedures of the event’s aftermath that we find the real subtleties and complexi-

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21 This is based on a distinction between truth and meaning. Badiou: “A generic procedure effectuates the post-evental truth of a situation, but the indiscernible multiple that is a truth does not deliver any meaning” (*BE*, 391-392).
ties. And it is precisely in this aftermath that the event will be played out, to the extent that it only really “exists” (i.e. has being) in its consequences. The importance of the event lies in following its “consequences, not in glorifying its occurrence” (BE, 211).

Let us finally look at the formal nature of the new truth itself as well as the aftermath of its implementation in a situation. The new truth itself is grandiose. The truth is “infinite” (e.g. all men are equal). As mentioned, truth in Badiou’s system is the concrete truth of a situation in a future anterior sense. That is, it refers to a future situation in which a truth is absolutely implemented (BE, 400). The language used by the subjects therefore “hypothetically” signifies a truth to come. In a given situation, these truths, Badiou writes, “displace established significations and leave the referent void”. But “this void will have been filled if truth comes to pass as a new situation (the kingdom of God, an emancipated society, absolute mathematics, a new order of music comparable to the tonal order, an entirely amorous life, etc.)” (BE, 399).

What is revealed in the parenthesis is important. These are no minor or subtle changes. Truth, despite its “indiscernible” status in the situation it erupts in and its existence only as a kind of quasi-name, is nothing other than an “ideality to come” (BE, 433). In the sense of hypothetical signification, referencing a future state, the subject “knows” the “ideality-to-come” as if it was knowledge. There is, in this sense, a kind of hypothetical harmony of truth and knowledge-to-come: a statement of truth first belongs only to the event and not knowledge. But “then, in the situation to-come in which this truth exists, the statement will have been veridical” (BE, 403). The “situation to-come” is “a universe in which the new [i.e., “truth” X] […] is actually presented and no longer merely announced” (BE, 404-405). Of course, what gradually seeps into a situation of this “infinite” ideality is only local and finite – in practice the situation will only include “some newness”. But the new/truth itself clearly has an absolute formal structure. Both in its finite/local versions (the “some newness”) and in its ideal form the truths are Majestic – the kingdom of God, an emancipated society, absolute mathematics, an entirely amorous life, etc. It seems that the singular and the subtle of the new, which is indeed there in Badiou’s conception of post-evental processes, is always relative to an “infinitive” absoluteness of a “universe to-come” (BE, 399).

Furthermore, if we look at the actual empirical events discussed in Badiou’s Being and Event they can be labeled Grand Events. They can also

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22 This does not mean that it is pre-existing – truth in Badiou is “post-evental” (355).
23 Badiou: “With the recourses of the situation, with its multiples, its language, the subject generates names whose referent is in the anterior: this is what supports belief. Such names ‘will have been’ assigned a referent, or a signification, when the situation will have appeared in which the indiscernible – which is only represented (or included) – is finally presented as the truth of the first situation” (BE, 398).

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be argued to be limited to the historical and the anthropocentric – they happen only within politics, science, art, and love (the task of philosophy is to think the event within these realms). A major theme that runs through the whole of *Being and Event* is the event of Cantor’s invention of set theory in mathematics. Badiou also discusses or references the following empirical examples throughout this book: the “emergence of philosophy in Greece” (125, 257), the French Revolution (180, 203), the October Revolution (393), the “Schoenberg-event” as “the destruction of the tonal system” (393, 394, 400), the “Galileo event” as the birth of modern science (143, 401), the “Cézanne-event” as a revolution in painting (329), and the “Christ-event” – the “event” of Christ dying on the cross (212, 392). Examples of less empirically specific events include occurrences within art and science that constitute “the great aesthetic and conceptual transformations” (340) and the “social contract” as “the foundational event of politics” (345-350). Badiou’s conception of the event – as “historical caesura” (340) – provides us with a first example of what I will continue to refer to in this study as the majestically new.24

A more subtle conception of the new, and also structurally more suitable for our concerns, is found in Deleuze. “If Deleuze is the great contemporary thinker of both novelty and multiplicity”, to once again quote Sam Gillespie, it is not surprising that Badiou to a large extent develops his own philosophy of the event through a polemical interpretation of Deleuze. Badiou conceives of the event in Deleuze as the constant becoming of everything to which he contrasts his own notion of the event as rare (exceptional, sporadic).

Badiou’s accounts of the similarities and differences between him and Deleuze, however, are not a good resource for understanding Deleuze. Since Deleuze’s philosophy is a strong solution to problems Badiou also became concerned with, Badiou needs to establish as much distance as possible in order to find room for his own ideas, which is completely legitimate. But this is a non-encounter in many respects – for instance, it is primarily as a thinker of multiplicity that Badiou sees Deleuze as a rival, but he does not engage at all with Deleuze’s complex concept of multiplicity. The name Deleuze functions much like a semi-straw-man against which Badiou defines himself. He does not – as Deleuze did with other thinkers in his monographs – creatively open up and drag along Deleuze’s thought and the un-thought therein in a synthesis with his own thought. Rather, he starts out with a “decision” to follow an “axiom”: Deleuze is the philosopher of the One and Badiou himself is not. He then grinds select parts of Deleuze’s writings through this axiom until it comes out as a vitalism primarily concerned with “the fate of the One”, “the One-result of all becoming”, and therefore the “Eternal Re-

24 The subtler image of the event found in Badiou’s discussion of Mallarmé, is about the “symbol of the event” or “making an event out of the thought of the event”, *BE*, 193. Emphasis mine.
turn of the identical, the undifferentiated power of the Same”.

But if imaginative, Badiou’s take on Deleuze is not without merits. At its best, it forces a more rigorous thinking through of what Deleuze’s philosophy actually consists, and perhaps even some reexaminations. In our case there is especially a point about frequency to “subtract” from Badiou’s critique that will be important as an entry into the subsequent discussion: in what sense is the event of the new rare and in what sense is it an ongoing continuity? Badiou is quite right in stating that for Deleuze the “event is not the chance-laden [hasardeux] passage from one state of affairs to another” (Badiou, 2006: 384). This is true. But the reason is not, as Badiou argues, that Deleuze had a preference for some “One” of “undifferentiated” continuous becoming. What Deleuze is concerned with regarding the event, following Nietzsche, is instead to develop a sense and logic of the event more subtle and more implicated in the world than the Grand Event coming from “nowhere”. It is a serious mistake to assume that this new sense and logic is about continuous becoming without differences. With this other sense and logic, which we will come to examine from many perspectives below, Deleuze offers a great resource for developing a conception of the new that is structurally subtle, and micro-political instead of macro-political, while completely concerned with difference — and, I will add, with the rare. This combination of factors seems to me to be vital for the articulation of contours of the new in political art.

Deleuze’s complex and multifarious concept of the event to a large extent conceptualizes imperceptible generative processes (micro-events). Such processes may only later culminate in distinguishable happenings that are more traditionally called events. The concept of the untimely-image that is to be developed across this study is concerned with precisely tendencies, “contours” and generative processes, instead of actual events and their aftermaths. As developed below, we will be concerned with the new only in the sense of “the contour, the configuration, the constellation of an event to come” and not, as in Badiou, the subsequent processes of implementing the consequences of a Grand Event in a state of affairs. The event in Deleuze is not on one side of a semi-binary, in need of faithful subjects that “force” the “truth” of the event into a situation that cannot recognize it.


“great contemporary thinker[s] of both novelty and multiplicity”, then, Deleuze appears as the most relevant resource for what is to make up the concept of the untimely-image.\(^{27}\) But what is the event of the new in Deleuze? If it is not about the “Grand Events” does this mean that there is nothing that separates the new from everything else that happens? I argue that Deleuze’s concepts of the event and of the new are not only complex but also more than just one thing and differently emphasized through his philosophy depending on the problem at hand. But let us now shift to put more emphasis on the new. The event can be seen as a way of conceiving of the processes of the new, or, one of their aspects or implications. A main point of shifting focus from event to the new is also to avoid reducing the problem of the new in Deleuze’s thought to his discussion of the event in *The Logic of Sense*.\(^ {28}\)

I will argue that Deleuze’s thought is premised on a certain (although not rigid or binary) differentiation between the banally changing and the new/the extraordinary/the singular, but with a notion of the new nevertheless irreducible to Grand Events, passages between states of affairs, or, for that matter, something “messianic”. In showing how this is the case, we can push to the side Badiou’s eccentric interpretations of Deleuze’s philosophy as about an “indivisible continuity of Virtuality” that “does not accept any figure of separation” (2009: 382). But on a more serious level, I will have to confront readings within advanced Deleuze scholarship that his philosophy adds up to a conception of the new as in some sense ongoing everywhere. I will problematize such conclusions and show that in Deleuze, the new is multifarious and in many respects a rarity. The explication of the senses in which the new is rare in Deleuze is what we will now embark on.

**The Conditions of the New as Real**

Although Deleuze never really put the term “new” on center stage – preferring his concept of difference – the conditions for and the implications of the creation of the new are at the heart of his thought. Deleuze described the aim of his own Bergson and Whitehead-inspired project as the investigation of

\(^{27}\) Badiou will continue to be referenced on occasions, and parts of his system will be instrumental in developing what I call the untimely-site in 2.6 below.

\(^{28}\) Badiou, for one, primarily focuses on *The Logic of Sense* in his polemics against what he perceives to be the event in Deleuze. Deleuze later deemed this work “too structuralist”. Its Lacan and Klein-inspired notions of the genesis of language and sense is something Deleuze does not return to. Jean-Jacques Lecercle argues that Deleuze’s “early philosophy of language is […] on certain points, incompatible with the later one” Jean-Jacques Lecercle, *Deleuze and Language* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002), p. 100. Language, furthermore – although this is not to say that *The Logic of Sense* is reducible to a concern with language – is not a direct concern of the untimely-image.
“the conditions under which something new is produced”.

In an influential article, Daniel W. Smith describes Deleuze’s project precisely as an investigation of the “the conditions of the new”. The question of the new is complex, he writes, and “easily confused with a host of related but nonetheless distinguishable problems, including questions of transformation and change, causality and determinism, and the possibility of emergence (emergent qualities)” (2007: 1). The term “conditions” is according to Smith key in understanding what is distinctive about the problem of the new. Traditionally, he shows, the term “conditions” serves to demarcate either what is logically possible, or what is within the scope of “possible experience” (Kant). Deleuze introduces a third sense of the term: the conditions for real experience, that is, the conditions for the new as the real itself (Smith, 2007: 2-3).

In Kant, famously, no “things-in-themselves” (noumena) can be experienced or known. Things-in-themselves are outside the realm of knowledge in the strongest possible sense: if there were a God’s view of things-in-themselves this would not be knowledge. Kant’s “Copernican revolution” in philosophy entailed a new systematized conception of how all forms of experience and reasoning is necessarily received and structured in set ways. Human consciousness constructs reality and knowledge through specific, given frameworks. We cannot know or experience things in themselves, since we know and experience things as they appear to us within such a fixed framework. Phenomenal experience is restricted by given “conditions of possible experience”. Thought is restricted by transcendental conditions, in the form of given categories and logical principles in the thinking subject – which is to say that for Kant there are a priori facts of reason.

Deleuze, following the post-Kantian Salomon Maimon’s suggestions, cannot assume that there are faculties in thought that are given in this sense and not themselves the results of processes of engendering (not to be confused with mere social constructivism). For Deleuze, thinking, while certainly restricted and most often habitual and small-minded, is not based on pre-given universal coordinates, but on coordinates that are themselves temporal and in real movement. The transcendental conditions of thought are them-


31 As this entails postulating time as the most fundamental aspect of the thinking subject, we should add here that Deleuze nonetheless credits other aspects of Kant’s philosophy for introducing elements of this insight, *Difference and Repetition* [1968], trans. Paul Patton (London/New York: Continuum, 2004), p. 108f, hereafter referenced as DR. Deleuze otherwise
selves in the making – although more or less dynamically so. For Deleuze, *difference* is the genetic condition of *real* (and not merely “possible”) thought. This “principle of difference” provides a notion of thought as determined by structures of habits (social and biological) while fundamentally *open*, not merely open to consume more knowledge, but open in the sense of the basic structure of human thought itself, which is not given a priori. Thought is certainly restricted, not to mention our phenomenal apparatus. But inherent within thought, on the most fundamental level, is *generative difference* – a potential for new thought, unknown *kinds of thought*. And if thought, behind habitual everyday thought, fundamentally open up towards a groundless ground of generative force, is there not also a possibility to think this force for the new within thought? That is, to think the “unthought within thought”? In Deleuze the unthought or even the unthinkable does not imply a timeless limit between what we can think and what we cannot think. The unthought is rather a sub-representational realm of potential for the new within thought. This is not the realm of representation within thought, but the realm of the *problematic*.32

If this realm concerns potential for new thought, what does “potential” mean? Potential for the new must first of all be distinguished from the *possible*. A possibility is an already formed identity that *preexists* the real. It preexists as an identity that awaits realization. If the possibility is realized, reality is *added* to it. Furthermore, the possibility and its realization *resemble* each other. The “ground” (the possibility) is made in the image of what it grounds (its actualization). A realization of a possibility does not involve creative *differentiation*. The possible/real relation is therefore unable to account for the new. This is behind Deleuze’s famous Bergson-inspired substitution of the virtual/actual for the possible/real. How do a virtual potential and its actualization differ from a possibility and its realization? A virtual potential is first of all already *real*. But it is not real in the sense of an already given identity. It is a “problematic” potential made up of mobile “differential relations” (these kinds of structures will be described in detail in subchapter 2.9 below). If and when such a problematic potential is *actualized*, the outcome will not merely be the realization of an already given. The actualization itself is the production of a *new difference*. The outcome does

holds Plato and his theory of reminiscence to have begun to introduce time and difference “into thought” as its fundamental condition (“not in the form of a mythical past or former present, but in the pure form of an empty time in general”). But this was done “only in order to subject them again to the mythical form of resemblance and identity”. While this aspect of Plato’s thought, then, is “crushed by the emerging dogmatic image”, it brought “forth a groundlessness that it remains incapable of exploring”, ibid., 206, 207.

32 Deleuze: “[P]roblematic Ideas are precisely the ultimate elements of nature and the subliminal objects of little perceptions. As a result, ‘learning’ always takes place in and through the unconscious, thereby establishing the bond of a profound complicity between nature and mind”, *DR*, 205.

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not resemble the potential. For Deleuze and Bergson, this is a fundamental condition for real novelty.

In Deleuze, however, the virtual/actual relation does not imply that the virtual one-sidedly “gives” as it withdraws, as one may simplify Heidegger’s notion of the ontological difference between Being/beings. The relation between virtual/actual is in Deleuze anything but one-directional. The actualization not only produces a new actual difference, it also re-determines the potential, which subsists on its own plane while implicated in the actual. The virtual conditions are re-determined along with what they condition. The virtual and the actual are reciprocally determined. They are so in a complex manner. But the main point is that the actual is not only generated by virtual potential, the virtual potential is changed by what happens in the actual (and in The Logic of Sense the virtual is even discussed as an effect of the actual).

When it comes to events this reciprocity means, as James Williams writes, “a process where virtual ideas are determined by an actual change” (2009: 106). James Williams even describe reciprocal determination between the virtual and the actual as “perhaps Deleuze’s greatest metaphysical innovation and the key to understanding the power of his philosophy”. But how are the virtual conditions thinkable? As Smith writes: “[I]t is one thing to lay out a project like this; it is another thing to find a ‘method’, so to speak, capable of providing a way of thinking these conditions of the real”.

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33 Miguel de Beistegui argues, incorrectly, that in Deleuze reality only moves “downstreams” – from the virtual to the actual. He bases this on Deleuze and Guattari’s famous idea in What is Philosophy?, that philosophy goes back up the path (towards the virtual) that science descends. Beistegui: “[Philosophy and art] moves upstream, while the scientific function moves downstream, with the real itself. The real indeed runs downstream”, Truth and Genesis: Philosophy as Differential Ontology (Bloomington/Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2004, 334 (emphasis mine). What de Beistegui does not register is that it is only science that Deleuze and Guattari describe as predominantly one-directional (in following individuations, as we will see in 3.2 below, from the virtual towards actual states of affairs). Reality, in contrast, is not one-directional. The virtual is not a non-affected realm that merely gives being. The relationship between the virtual and the actual, although the former is to be understood as the latter’s generative condition, is a relationship of reciprocal determination, DR, 269; A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia 2 [1980], trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), p. 337, hereafter referenced as ATP. Miguel de Beistegui’s Truth and Genesis is as much about Heidegger, and Heidegger is de Beistegui’s background and perhaps still main concern. The perceived one-directionality of the virtual and the actual may therefore be explained by Deleuze partly being read through a Heideggerian prism.

34 Or as Smith writes: “[W]hen I actualise a virtuality, or resolve a problem, that does not mean that the problematic structure has disappeared. The next moment, so to speak, still has a problematic structure, but one that is now modified by the actualisation that has just taken place. This is what Deleuze [means] when he says that conditions and the conditioned are determined at one and the same time, and that conditions can never be larger than what they condition […],” Smith, 2007: 17.

(2007: 8). It is here that we find Deleuze’s philosophical interest in non-philosophical material such as certain strands within the natural sciences and mathematics and, more pertinent for our concerns, art and cinema. Before we more thoroughly take on the question of cinema in the next chapter, we must deal more directly with a central question of the subchapter: is the new a constant ongoing thing everywhere or is it rare? Or, as I will argue, are both true simultaneously in Deleuze depending on perspective and depending on the problem?

A Reevaluation of the “Frequency” of the New in Deleuze’s Thought

Smith gives, in several of his articles, a detailed description of one of the “models” for Deleuze found in the mathematical calculus (in its pre-axiomatized forms), from which many of the concepts that define the conditions of the real developed in *Difference and Repetition* – the differential relation, singularities, multiplicities, the virtual, the problematic, etc. – has their pre-philosophical source. As Smith shows, reworked into philosophical concepts, they are fundamental for understanding some of the intricacies of the logic of the new in Deleuze. “Ideas” – not to be confused with representations in the mind of a subject – are for Deleuze “problematic”. That is, they are defined virtual multiplicities. They are reciprocally determined relations of pure (i.e. non-negative) differences. These structures belong to the fundamental generative realms of reality (the details of these structures are described in 2.9 below). The relevance of some of these structures for the question of the frequency of the new in Deleuze will be made clear in a moment.

In his latest book, James Williams is concerned with a specific problem: explicating Deleuze’s “three syntheses of time” and their complex relations. He holds out the third synthesis as the “condition for the new”. But as we

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36 Deleuze: “It seems to me we have the means to penetrate the sub-representational, to reach all the way to the roots of spatio-temporal dynamisms, and all the way to the Ideas actualized in them: the elements and ideal events, the relations and singularities are perfectly determinable. The illusion only comes afterward, from the direction of constituted extensions and the qualities that fill out these extensions.” *Desert Island and Other Texts: 1953-1974*, trans. Michael Taormina (New York: Semiotext(e), 2004), p. 115.

37 Smith: “Plato […] famously appealed to Euclidean geometry as a model for Ideas because it defined forms (or essences) that were static, unchanging, and self-identical. Deleuze could be said to appeal to calculus for the exact opposite reason: it is calculus that provides him with a mathematical model of a principle of difference. Calculus is the primary mathematical tool we have at our disposal to explore the nature of reality, the nature of the real – the conditions of the real”, Smith, 2007: 8-9 & 20, note 12. Smith more extensively explores the specifics of the mathematical raw material for Deleuze’s philosophy of pure difference in 2003, op-cit.

38 “The third synthesis of time is not based on human experience. It is rather a speculative claim about time based on the disruptive appearance of the new. If novelty is accepted in any process (animal, vegetable mineral) then a third synthesis of time implied as condition for the
will see, Williams’ conclusion regarding the new is that it is constant in all of reality. Smith is somewhat less radical. Although he concludes that every event is new, not everything that happens is an event (2007: 17). The new is not a constant, but it is still a ubiquitous part of everyday processes that occurs between the side of a thing that is a virtual multiplicity and its actual side. And even within the virtual multiplicity, not everything is an event. Smith: “When a differential relation reciprocally determines two (or more) virtual elements, it produces what is called a singularity, a singular point”. But for Smith, this is not the entirety of what, in Deleuze, makes up a “multiplicity”. A multiplicity, or “problematic Idea”, rather, is composed of a mixture of singular and “ordinary” points. Smith argues that singularities or singular points constitute “precisely those points where something ‘happens’ within the multiplicity” – an event – or something that occurs “in relation to another multiplicity, causing it to change nature and produce something new” (2007:11). Still, he argues that an event that in this way “produces the new” are fairly ubiquitous. He offers some pedagogical examples: the physical multiplicity of a kettle of water, “where a singularity is one that occurs when the water boils (or freezes), thereby changing the nature of the physical multiplicity”; and the point where someone breaks down in tears or boils over in anger. “Every determinate thing”, he writes, “is a combination of the singular and the ordinary, a multiplicity that is constantly changing, in perpetual flux” (2007: 12). These may be singular points – but in what sense do they concern the new? Is not the kettle of water an example of a mechanical function – or what Deleuze calls an “insignificant fact” (DR, 71) – as much as a production of the new? And is not the point at which someone, however unpredictably, reacts by boiling over in anger more about fluctuations within the realm of habitual behavior (or, differently put, the gap of indetermination within a sensory-motor schema of action, to which we will return in the next chapter, C1, 62, 64)? From the perspective of the problems that Smith (and Williams) deals with and the specific aspects of Deleuze’s philosophy they focus on, these events are new: even a seemingly insignificant mechanical event retains something indefinite, as a new difference, that resonates indefinitely. But as I aim to show, there are many other kinds of problems of the new at work in Deleuze more directly pertinent for the untimely-image, especially in his post-60s work, in which the term “new” more clearly means the rare, and in which these examples offered by Smith (and Williams below) would not register as concerning the new.

But let us say some more things about Smith and Williams and the differences between them. In Smith there is a difference between ordinary points and a singular point. A singular point is an event. It is a point at which something happens in the subtlest sense of the term (although the whole multiplici-

ity is affected). With Deleuze’s concept of ordinary points we can conclude that not exactly everything is an event, not everything is “new” within a multiplicity. In a footnote, Williams corrects Smith on this point and claims – in spite of Deleuze’s frequent usage of the term – that there are no ordinary points, only singular points.\footnote{Commenting on Smith’s interpretation of the new in Deleuze and the differences to his own, Williams writes: “[A]t least for the philosophy of time, my view is that the new is better defined in a more formal metaphysical manner. So I would rephrase the following sentence form Smith’s work, avoiding the [term ‘ordinary’]: ‘Every determinate thing is a combination of the singular and the ordinary, a multiplicity that is constantly changing, in perpetual flux.’ The version closer to Deleuze’s account of time would be: Every determinate thing is a combination of singularities forming a multiplicity that is changing in multiple ways according to the syntheses of time […] and the eternal return of difference, the eternal return of the new.’” Williams 2010: 187, note 10} From this follows a more radical conception on the frequency of the new in Deleuze. Williams: “Every pace taken by every animal is new. Every roll of every stone is a break with the past”; all in all, “every event is new” even “any habitual gesture and the passing of that gesture” (2011: 106). William’s underlying point, as I gather, is to underline how 	extit{even} habit (“the first synthesis of time”) entails a process that in the most basic ontological sense constantly differentiates itself from the already given, and that this difference resonates throughout the whole. A central way that the new is a constant process in Deleuze is found in his conception of how the subject is a constant process instead of a ground. In Deleuze’s notion of “the first synthesis of time”, thousands of “passive syntheses” coalesce and form the organized “habits” or “wholes” that we experience as a self. The consistency that these “habits” makes up is nothing other than an organized multiplicity of repetitions of differences (in complex processes of convergence and divergence determined also in relation to larger networks containing external processes). It is therefore simultaneously individuated and an ongoing production of the new. “Habit”, writes Deleuze “draws something new from repetition – namely difference”, and this difference is the self that forms a whole as an effect of ongoing processes of individuation (DR, 94). Our selves, then, are not a foundation, but always a variation, “something new”. The “new” in this sense of becoming and reproduction also indicates more broadly that all individuated things in reality are bound up with constantly generative processes in this way: there is nothing static in the world. In this sense, everything really is more or less “new” all the time, that is, in the sense that the world, and everything in it, is fundamentally open.

But open and new, I argue, is not necessarily the same thing. If one has already established that there are no static grounds and that nothing is static, then other 	extit{kinds} of problems of the new can reveal themselves: if everything is new in this 	extit{fundamental} sense in which even the most habitual (or banal) is made up of processes of becoming (“passive syntheses”), then delineations
between other kinds of processes within this open world can be made in which the concept “new” acquires a different sense. I argue here that in these other senses everything is not new for Deleuze. In fact, regarding many problems he worked on, the situation presses up against the opposite: almost nothing is new. I will show that Deleuze uses the term “new” differently in different contexts.

In Brian Massumi’s preface for *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze is described to have become focused on “the world [as rarely leaving] room for uncommon intensity, being in large measure an entropic trashbin of outworn modes that refuse to die”.40 As this statement finds itself at the other (extreme) end of a spectrum, have we encountered an unresolved contradiction in Deleuze’s thought? Or is there some neat explanation like, say, Williams’ conclusion regards time and Massumi’s space? The explanation, I argue, is that Deleuze’s thought as a whole, more or less encompass both Williams’ and Massumi’s respective statements as limit points. While focusing a bit to exclusively on one side, their respective statements (everything is new/ the world as entropic trashbin), risks dragging out of context two different, but always intertwined, aspects of Deleuze’s conception of the real. For Deleuze, reality is two-fold – and in Deleuze this is not, as it is in Bergson, a division between time and space.41 The aspect Williams focuses on, here, concerns the eternal return of the different (only the different return in time). But there are other central aspects of Deleuze’s complex conception of real: actualization, “insignificant facts”, the organization and solidification of forms, or processes of *stratification* that Deleuze and Guattari describe as an inevitable phenomenon that is beneficial in many respects and unfortunate in many others […] Strata are Layers, Belts. They consist of giving form to matters, of imprisoning intensities or locking singularities into systems of resonance and redundancy, or producing upon the body of the earth molecules large and small and organizing them into molar aggregates (*ATP*, 40, emphasis mine).

Even something like an organism, a dynamic “habit” constantly re-created by “passive synthoses”, Deleuze and Guattari describe as “that which life sets against itself in order to limit itself”.42 The manifold of “passive synthoses” that coalesce in structures of “habit” is the constant production of some-

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41 On Deleuze’s critique of Bergson’s dualism between space and duration, and the different way that the relation between the actual and the virtual is structured in Deleuze, see de Beistegui, 2004: 313-317.

42 *ATP*, 503. I am not saying that that Williams, one of the most meticulous and brilliant of Deleuze scholars, would somehow be unaware of this aspect of Deleuze’s thought. See for instance, 2003: 11; 2011: 34, 42-45. But he does not particularly account for them here, or pushes its fuller implications for his reasoning to the side, which allows him to draw the conclusion that the new is everything that happens.
thing “new”, a creative repetition. But the term “new” serves here only to make a certain kind of point about the world as fundamentally open (when it comes to human thought, formations like the cogito or transcendental subjectivity are therefore an ongoing, relatively stable, effect and not a ground). Everything is on the basic level in some kind of “becoming” – in the widest sense of the term – even the most banally “actual”. Generative intensities are never cancelled by being actualized or “stratified”. They subsist or inhere and continue to affect the actual forms and identities (re)produced (in complex processes of convergence and divergence). In one sense, it is only in this genetic, “problematic” (virtual) side that inhere and subsists in all things that the phrase “only differences return” makes full sense.

Deleuze’s famous early commitment to the substitution of becoming for being (i.e. there is no other Being than that of becoming) does not mean that everything in reality is in a state of novelty-making transformation in most of the senses of how the term “new” works in Deleuze.⁴³ Indeed, Massumi’s statement speaks to the opposite being the case. But what Massumi follows through on, I argue, can only apply to the actual (or if you will “ontic”) aspect of reality, and more clearly from sociopolitical and aesthetic perspectives. Seen from such perspectives, what Deleuze’s thought on virtual potential goes up against may certainly be described as “an entropic trashbin of outworn modes” (or as what Deleuze calls a “society of clichés”).⁴⁴ From the perspective of Deleuze’s social, political and aesthetical diagnoses, Massumi’s statement, while eccentrically worded, makes sense. But how, more precisely, do these seemingly conflicting interpretations, Williams’ and

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⁴³ The notion of the being of becoming must be understood in view of the foundation-seeking metaphysical conceptions that it aims to counter. It does not imply that there are no concrete stratified entities with more or less temporary consistency – as if everything more solid than romantic chaos were only the figment of imagination or our cognitive setup. It is instead to say that “being” always has becoming at its core. That is, there is no being of static essence behind, or more fundamental than, becoming. Becoming, therefore, can no longer be regarded as mere “appearance”. Becoming is not only real, it is the most fundamental level. Since the fundamental core of all being is becoming, there is no other fundamental Being than becoming. Deleuze, Nietzsche and Philosophy [1962], trans. Hugh Tomlinson (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983), p. 23f.

⁴⁴ The use of the term “entropy” requires an explanation. Deleuze is systematically critical of, if not opposed to, entropic theories in which generative difference is believed to gradually cancel itself out in the process of generating. Deleuze argues instead that generative difference keeps subsisting in all systems, and references the physicist Ilya Prigogine who, as Deleuze writes, “spoke of states in which the slightest differences persist rather than cancel themselves out”. “May ’68 Did Not Take Place”, Two Regimes of Madness: Texts and Interviews 1975-1995 / Gilles Deleuze, eds. David Lapoujade, trans. by Ames Hodges & Mike Taormina (New York: Semiotext(e), 2007), p. 233. On Deleuze’s critique of the theory of entropy see Beistegui, 300ff; Keith Ansell Pearson, “Deleuze Outside/Outside Deleuze: On the Difference Engineer”, Deleuze and Philosophy: The Difference Engineer (London/New York, Routledge, 1997), p. 11. The point of the Massumi quote here is not the word entropy, then, but to emphasize that virtual potential and the “trashbin of outworn modes”, as will be clearer below, always co-exists everywhere.
Massumi’s, make sense simultaneously within Deleuze’s larger systematization of reality? Miguel de Beistegui comments on the two-sidedness of Deleuze’s conception of reality: “[B]eneath the surface of the world, and the empirical laws it reveals, for which things recur identically, we need to acknowledge the other ‘law’ of nature […] according to which differences only return” (2004: 322, emphasis mine.). That is, there are two aspects of reality: one realm of the organization of generative force, and one “actual” realm of more clearly defined forms and identities. While wholly intertwined – and, as Williams has emphasized in his other works, reciprocally determined – they are distinct from and irreducible to each other. One aspect organizes intensive differences with the capacity to be actualized, the other concerns the actualized realm in which more solid forms or identities are played out (and intensive process of individuation and reconstitution occurs between the two realms). So depending on whether only one of these aspects are given emphasis one can read out of Deleuze the premise that everything is new, or, especially if one focuses on the sociopolitical, that almost nothing is new, without there being any real contradiction.

The claim “everything is new” (which rightly appears as absurd from many perspectives) applies only to certain aspects of Deleuze’s philosophy seen from a certain perspective. It is more unambiguously true if referring to Deleuze’s partaking in the critique, initiated by the likes of Nietzsche, Bergson and Whitehead, of conceiving of the future of the movements of the world as potentially foreseeable. That is, conceiving of the future as somehow embedded in the past as already existing possibilities instead of regarding the universe as fundamentally open and time therefore as fundamentally creative.45 Let us look a little closer at this level in which the everything-is-new claim is most relevant. A truism of truisms: we cannot know what the future has in store. But this truism does not necessarily negate a notion of the world as following a predetermined, or predeterminable, path (progress, eschatology, apocalypse, a coming community, etc.), or that there is a transcendent power which, while working in mysterious ways, will steer where things are going. Or that we have not yet scientifically figured out all the mechanisms of the physical world in order to more perfectly predict, say, a complex system like the weather. In contrast, the basic premise for any conception of the new itself is to regard the world as fundamentally unpredictable also from an all-seeing “Gods”-point of view – that is, as in itself open.

To say that the world is “open” is to say that time is creative force. This is in conflict with mechanical and/or theological world-views, which reduces time to the measure of movement, and where everything that may appear

45 This is also the Nietzschean problem of giving the world, in all its tragic glory, justification or meaning in its own open movement as becoming (“the dice throw”) without recourse to a (higher) pre-existing regulatory instance that gives it meaning, see Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, 18-29.
new ("for us") is understood as new variations of what is already there, contained, at least in principle, in the past or present and/or in some transcendent realm. The contrasts can be summed up with how thinkers of novelty such as Bergson, William James and Whitehead were critiqued around their own time by defenders of determination such as Stephen C. Pepper and W. T. Stace. According to these defenders, radical novelty, if and when it happens, does not rely on "indetermination", which is one of Bergson’s conditions, since a determined world, in the Newtonian but also a Hegelian sense, could just as well produce what appears as "radically new". Determination in this circumstance means that the new can always be reduced to the already existing ("lower") states and the already given natural laws that it arises from. That is, all change is mere reorganization of old elements in new but already implicit patterns. In principle (even if human’s may lack the knowledge at a certain time) everything that appears to be new could (from a god’s eye) be calculable in advance since everything is determined in the sense of static laws and structures that hold all possibilities for the outcome of all future processes. The coming into existence of the new – which does not necessarily have to be linear or teleological – is therefore merely a realization of pre-existing possibilities.\footnote{W.T. Stace, “Novelty, Indeterminism, and Emergence”, The Philosophical Review, (48:3, May, 1939), pp. 296-310; Stephen C. Pepper, “Emergence”, Journal of Philosophy (23:9, 1926), pp. 241-245. We should also note how this logic is implicated within a Christian tradition in the sense of the God given. There is therefore nothing surprising in the newly discovered fact that Newton wrote more theology than science as part of his grand unified project of knowing God and the world.}

But when a different philosophy of reality is already established, in which the movements of the universe are from the outset regarded to be open, one can address other kinds of problems of the new. If the open is already assumed – comparable to, say, assuming the earth to circle the sun instead of the other way around – one can proceed to make other kinds of points. The claim \textit{everything is new} may then appear like saying that \textit{nothing is new}. Or as it makes sense to say so from certain perspectives, as Williams shows, we must conclude that it at least leads to social, aesthetical, and political impasses that have very little to do with Deleuze’s diagnoses in these areas. And certainly, for Deleuze of any period, very few \textit{thoughts} are new. Perhaps thinking in the world in general is for Deleuze not a total “entropic trashbin of outworn modes”. But the new in thought is regarded to be exceptional.\footnote{Deleuze, “What is a Creative Act?”, Two Regimes of Madness: Texts and Interviews 1975-1995 / Gilles Deleuze, ed. David Lapoujade, trans. by Ames Hodges & Mike Taormina (New York: Semiotext(e), 2007), p. 312.} In a talk given in 1987 on what a creative act is, Deleuze said: “having an idea is a rare event, it is a kind of celebration, not very common”.\footnote{D\textit{R}, 168, 185. Deleuze, \textit{Foucault} [1986], trans. by Sean Hand (Minnesota/London: University of Minnesota Press, 2006), p. 119.} This is about the rare instances when thinking reaches \textit{thought}. That is, for...
thinking “to free itself from what it thinks (present) and be able finally to think otherwise’ (the future)”, which is to say, to make “the past active and present to the outside so that something new will finally come about” (Foucault, 119.)

**Elaboration: The Shifting Position of the term “New” Across Deleuze’s Different “Periods”**

If we look at the whole of Deleuze’s philosophy we can see that the term “new” is part of a larger complex in which it has different meanings. This larger complexity of the term “new” is arguably nowhere as much in play than in Deleuze’s cinema books (especially the second book), which I aim to show across the next chapter. But that the word “new” has varying meanings in Deleuze is not only an effect of varying problems that he shifts between. Scholars like Eric Alliez and John Rajchman have shown that there is an extent to which Deleuze’s work can be divided into “periods”. I will show that this is relevant also for how to assess the problem of the new across Deleuze’s thought. Let us first see how John Rajchman conceives of these periods.

Rajchman is careful to point out that the changes he finds do not make up some linear development or “maturity” curve, but he nonetheless finds Deleuze’s thought to become “more complex and multiple in its implications and its reach, as well as its internal relations”. On the crudest level, Deleuze’s thought can in this way be divided into three “intense periods of invention”:

1. The 60s: The books leading up to the “two great works of logic – Difference and Repetition [1968] and [The] Logic of Sense [1969]”.
2. The 70s: He begins to teach at the experimental University of Paris at Vincennes in 1968, shortly after he meets Guattari, with whom he co-authors his first explicitly political work Anti-Oedipus (1972). This period culminates with the publication of the equally political sequel A Thousand Plateaus (1980).
3. The 80s and 90s: at a time of a burgeoning new world order, Deleuze turns to the problem of “belief” in the world, which, Rajchman writes, “reaches its fullest development through Deleuze’s study of the way cinema after the war introduced a new kind of relation between seeing, time and action” (25)

The shift between Deleuze’s first period and second “Guattari” period is widely recognized and commented upon. However it is conceived, many – including Deleuze himself – regard the shift to be partly radical. Eric Alliez writes that “it is the very unity of Deleuzean thought that finds itself gravely compromised after Anti-Oedipus, precisely to the extent that the latter was, as Deleuze remarked, ‘from beginning to end a book of political philosophy’” (2004a: 7). In another text Alliez describes Deleuze’s encounter with Guattari

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to have led to the “implosion” of “the project of a serial Logic of Sense”. Al- liez also quotes Deleuze and Guattari’s 1975 book on Kafka: “Of sense there remains only enough to direct the lines of flight”; and writes that they came to abide by an “asignifying, intensive use of language ‘speaking on the same level as states of things’” (2004b). Although it seems to me that the changes can be exaggerated on some points, philosophical concepts are now more clearly conceived as more than just abstract thought: a kind of political “actors” (or “guerilla fighters”). Deleuze and Guattari describe “schizoanalysis” as “the art of the new” in the sense that it “actively participates in the drawing of the lines” (ATP, 203, emphasis mine).

The first period is primarily concerned with new conceptualizations of the most primary levels of the reality – Difference and Repetition and partly The Logic of Sense (which is comparably more concerned with language, and a conception of language that Deleuze partly leaves behind latter on). While highly unique they are written in a fairly traditional style of classical philosophy. In the second period, Deleuze shifts towards more political concerns. Many if not most of the basic coordinates of Deleuze’s philosophical system will remain intact after these books – although many of the terms will shift and the system itself will continue to be in constant movement. Kept is not least the notion of a genetic differentiating capacity that “subsists” or “inheres” in things and phenomena. But the fact that this register of reality is far from always dominant becomes increasingly emphasized. While the forces of novelty are still seen as inherent to all processes, and each moment or thing is never repeated as exactly the same, but is always in a state of some kind of movement, this does not necessarily mean that it is new in any other sense than un-predetermined. It does not mean that it is new in the sense of a real becoming, or that the becoming can be evaluated as interesting, remarkable or extraordinary (which are all key markers of evaluation for Deleuze). Generative potentials are most often stifled by other forces, by what Deleuze and Guattari describe as having “a tendency to reproduce itself, remaining identical to itself across its variations”. Forces of novelty as relating to other forces now more clearly become the concern of struggle – which is the real meaning of the description of Deleuze and Guattari’s philosophy as “guerilla fighting”. Already from the beginning Deleuze saw the function of art in principally similar terms, as evident for instance in the notion of counter-actualization in The Logic of Sense (1969). Actual events, things and phenomena are counter-actualized, which is to say that one goes back up the path of actualization towards the field of potential by extracting “a pure event” from things and objects. And it is

50 ATP, 360, emphasis mine. Deleuze and Guattari here reference what they call the “State-form”. But for our present purposes this functions merely as an example of real forces that in Deleuze most obviously moves in the opposite direction of “the new”.

51 The Logic of Sense [1969], trans. Charles J. Stivale, Constantin V. Boundas, Mark Lester (London/New York: Continuum, 2003), p. 204, hereafter referenced as LS.
“here that our greatest freedom lies – the freedom by which we develop and lead the event to its [...] transmutation [...]” (243, emphasis mine).

Deleuze will increasingly focus on how art and philosophy must more radically co-create with these potentials – instead of merely revealing them. Philosophy for Deleuze becomes, as Eric Alliez writes, “biopolitical constructivism” that “invest the created from the point of view of creation”. (2004a, 10). Art becomes “a way to draw lines of life” (2004b, emphasis mine). In his 1981 book on Francis Bacon, Deleuze reiterates his notion of art as making “new forces visible” and “capturing forces” that are “nongiven”. But this is not enough: he constantly emphasizes that something must also “emerge” from the “diagramming” of such forces, which is a more challenging endeavor (FB, 56, 57, 61, 108-112, 138, 156).

Let us now look at the shift between the second and the third period. If the second period dealt with “overcoding”, “apparatuses of capture”, “anti-production”, and various other names for repressive forms of reterritorialization it was also an exuberant and “joyful” explosion of theory or “gay science” brimming with belief in the creative powers of life, art and philosophy. The third period seems marked by a certain wavering in Deleuze’s own “belief” in the contemporary world and the possibility of “creating new forms of life”. Other kinds of forces, not least a wholly new kind of logic of repression in late global capitalism (more on this below), became increasingly overwhelming. Belief in the world, as we will see in the next chapter, more clearly comes to concern struggle. And what the struggle is up against is not merely representational forms, but rather a new kind of modulating, flexible logic of “control”. Between Difference and Repetition (1968) and the end of the cinema books (1985) and the essay on control societies (1990), the enemy has gradually shifted. As Rajchman writes:

In Difference and Repetition, the stupidities Deleuze considers are often the familiar mechanistic or industrial ones, against which would be ranged the labyrinthine complications of the nouveau roman or the ‘simulacral’ deviations in Warhol’s series. But twenty years later in his study of cinema, the problem of such ‘mechanical automatisms’ has been replaced by that of the new forces of information-machines and the questions they introduce [...] Thus there arises a new enemy of thought, more insolent and self-assured than those of the last century – communicational stupidity to which corresponds a new form of power which Deleuze proposed to call ‘control’. ‘We are at the start of something new,’ he wrote in 1990 (2000: 10-11).

The latter parts of the third period are partly marked by the shadow of what might be labeled pessimistic realism (not to be confused with the sad passions of nihilism). Rajchman: “A lament starts to emerge in Deleuze’s writings [...]”

52 There is a direct contrast with Badiou here, who asserts that “philosophy itself does not make up a generic procedure”, BE, 341. For Badiou, philosophy can only think events that occur within the realms of science, art, politics, and love.

Already in his study of cinema, he sensed that the kind of ‘belief in the world’ that, following the Second World War, cinema had found a way to give us was no longer well adapted to our situation’ (141).

Deleuze shifted within all periods between different kinds of problems in which the term “new” has slightly different senses. But adding to this, as we have seen in the elaboration above, there are changes in Deleuze’s thought and focus over the years that affect how the new is conceived. The problem of the “new” is multifarious in Deleuze, and the term has slightly different meanings in different contexts. From certain perspectives it is ubiquitous and from other perspectives it is rare. I have wanted to emphasize the aspects of Deleuze’s thought in which the new is rare. This less acknowledged aspect of Deleuze’s thought will be instrumental for the development of the untimely-image. Deleuze will overall be increasingly concerned with the difficulties of creating the new. This, I argue, is nowhere as systematically played out than in his books on cinema.

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In order to reintroduce transcendence into immanence, Deleuze and Guattari write, “all that is necessary is for movement to be stopped”. To claim that the new is rare is not to “stop movement”. It concerns rather a complication and further differentiation of immanence in movement. There are many different kinds of movements, different kinds of movements of thought – this will be clearer in the explication of the cinema books below – and some movements are more dominated by open potential and others by the possible, or the already there. Deleuze is categorical and critical in his evaluations of all art: not only are there (of course) interesting/uninteresting or significant/insignificant art of many different kinds, but within the interesting and the significant art can have very different aesthetic, political and ethical functions.

54 WPh, 47. The term “movement” has a wide sense in this quote: it is certainly not limited to extensive spatial movement. Deleuze and Guattari otherwise write about “motionless voyages”, ATP, 159, 197, 199, 482 (242, 244); see also Deleuze & Guattari, Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia [1972], trans. Robert Hurley, Mark Seem (London: Continuum, 2004), pp. 318–19, 20, (380–81), hereafter referenced as AO. Similarly, they describe what they call nomad thought as intensive process while “stationed” or “seated”, ATP, 381. In these passages there is a distinction between movement and speed in which the former term is extensive and the latter intensive. The point is that in the quote from WPh the term movement incorporates both the extensive and the intensive. To stop movement in this wider sense is to hold up something as static, self-identical, or as in some (obvious or elusive) sense “otherworldly”.
The Subtlety of Extraordinary Events

Actual structures are significantly altered by extraordinary events. But “extraordinary events” are here irreducible to the majestic: Grand Events, Obvious Breaks, “Moments of Decision”, etc. Concerning neither Grand Events nor the ubiquity of events, the notion of the extraordinary of interest here is found on a virtual/molecular level. While Deleuze certainly, following Nietzsche, moved focus from the “Grand Events” towards the subtle significance of every event, this concerns the multiplicity of sense of every event rather than claiming every event to be substantially new. Deleuze: “This is why Nietzsche does not believe in resounding ‘great events’, but in the silent plurality of senses of each event […] There is no event, no phenomenon, word or thought which does not have a multiple sense” (Nietzsche and Philosophy, 4). From the viewpoint of Difference and Repetition, we can also see how there are “solutions” to every virtual “problem”. The problem is a (determined but open) multiplicity of ordinary points and micro-sense-events. The solution, on the other hand, is the actualization of the problem, which as a result can be grasped by a proposition – an actual event: “On that day there was a big battle.” But preceding and continuing to subsist in the actual event, there is the “problem”. The problem is different in kind from the solution, and it retains its nature as a non-actual multiplicity. The term “event” stretches over the actual (happening) and the virtual (problem). In doing so the term also stretches over two senses of “event” that differs in kinds. That is, the virtual “problematic” contains “ideal events” that are, as Deleuze writes, “more profound than and different in nature from the real events which they determine in the order of solutions. Underneath the large noisy events lie the small events of silence, just as underneath the natural light there are the little glimmers of the Idea” (DR, 202-203). The primary processes of transformation always occur on these more subtle and virtual levels. Manifest Grand Events (the revolution, the battle, the ta-dah of the new exciting object, etc.) are only actualized culminations of such processes (or debased pastiches of them). All this also means that in Deleuze, the new does not entail a destruction or total rupturing of the past as continuity. Historical continuity and total disruption of continuity (Grand Break) is a dichotomy that does not apply here. This is because of his conception of a two-fold ontology where the virtual past upholds a kind of continuity while serving as the condition of the new (it inheres or subsists in things). The virtual is surely transformed at the same time as it upholds its continuity, but clear-cut breaks or discontinuities only appear, when it appears, on the level of the actual or on the level of history.

However, there is, I argue, a philosophy of Grand Events also in Deleuze. He talks about the event in many senses. In his analysis of “the problem of actual historical events” in Deleuze and Guattari, Jay Lampert writes that the two philosophers conceive of large changes in social logic (such as the tran-
sition from despotic power to capitalism) as occurring “as a single breakthrough event at a certain time […] or as a small-scale transformation at a micro-level” and that a “philosophy of history needs to account for the advent of both large-scale events and small scale occurrences”. In the 1984 article “May ’68 Did Not Take Place”, Deleuze writes about the nature of “historical phenomena such as the revolution of 1789, the Commune, the revolution of 1917” (233). While his main point is to emphasize their virtual generative conditions – that which is “irreducible to any social determinism” or “causal chains” – he obviously regards these events to be rare. In what sense? The answer is complex. Deleuze refers to these kinds of events as “a splitting off from, a breaking with causality […] a bifurcation, a lawless deviation, an unstable condition that opens up a new field of the possible”. But this is not some eruption of the new from a void. We must acknowledge that the inherent virtual aspect of the Grand Event consists precisely of these conditioning structures of “bifurcation” and “deviation”, and that they are inherent everywhere all the time in complex systems of coexistence. But this is not to say that they are dominant in relation to actual fact, objects and states of affairs. Rather, what on the crudest level happens with an extraordinary event, small or large, is that virtual potential gets an extraordinary upper hand in relation to the actual. This happens more or less rarely, and clearly an event like May ’68 does not take place everywhere all the time. Rather, as Deleuze writes: “things did settle down” and looking back at it from 1984, he can conclude that “[e]verything that was new has been marginalized or turned into caricature”. Still, there subsists within this situation a “field of the possible” that “creative solutions” can tap into as they “take over where a generalized May ’68 […] left off”. But the rarity of events in Deleuze certainly also regard subtle virtual mutations that never have much to do with any Grand Event in any form. And it is such small and subtle potentials that are of interest for the untimely-image.

How do actualizations within the everyday, like Smith’s example of the boiling point in a kettle of water, fit in here? The point where water boils is indeed a point where “something happens” which changes the whole multiplicity and in which the “problem” subsists. But this process is reversible,

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56 For Deleuze, May 1968 has a complex genealogy on many levels. In his book on Foucault, Deleuze describes this event as “the product of a long chain of world events, and of a series of currents of international thought, that already linked the emergence of new forms of struggle to the production of a new subjectivity […]”, *Foucault*, 150, n45.
57 Deleuze 1984: 234, 235, 236. It is not on these levels that a more relevant comparison with Badiou’s conception of the event should be made? Deleuze says in this article that whenever a large “social mutation appears” it also “produces a new subjectivity. But when this happens, there are many “different examples of subjective redeployment, with all sorts of ambiguities and reactionary structures, but also with enough initiative and creativity to provide a new social state capable of responding to the demands of the event” (234).
predictable, and it has already “happened” in more or less exactly the same way billions of times before – it certainly comes in “well-worn and predictable patterns”. So while it may be both a virtual and actual event, it is “new” only from a very strict perspective. Otherwise, the fact that water boils at a certain point is new and extraordinary only in the general. Of course, if one speculatively imagines an immensely slow and vast process of solidification of the natural laws behind what became the fact that water boils at a certain point, then the “first” water, after water was formed, to boil at a certain degree is an extraordinary singularity in this particular sense. This expanded example, however, is somewhat hazardous in relation to Deleuze’s philosophy, since it risks reducing his concepts of singularity and the event to Grand Events, to the actual, and to linear historical time. But it is still instrumental as a contrast to another risk found in the generalization of the concept of the new in Deleuze. In *The Logic of Sense*, Deleuze writes: “This event is, of course, quickly covered over by everyday banality […]” (*LS*, 286). In *Difference and Repetition* Deleuze talks about the many conceptions within thought that can be “without interest or importance, banalities mistaken for profundities, ordinary ‘points’ confused with singular points […]” (*DR*, 191). Or as Daniel Smith himself writes in another text regarding Deleuze’s conception of the “problem”: “The fundamental question is to determine which problems are interesting and remarkable, or to determine what is interesting or remarkable within the problem as such” (2003: 434).

There are many different kinds of banalities, and banalization can be about many different things. It can have a minimum of political meaning or it can have an overabundance of political meaning. It can be hardly noticeable or aggressively overwhelming. In Deleuze’s cinema books, I argue, banalization is a central theme. We cannot yet understand exactly how before the reading of the cinema books below. But a short remark should be made already here: in the highly political sense of the term as about post-war capitalist societies that have become violently “clichéd”, everyday banality is synonymous with what Deleuze calls the “intolerable”. The intolerable no longer concerns specific injustices so much as a socially new kind of everyday banality. Seen from the perspective of cinema, it arises in the wake of what he calls the “classical movement image” and its more organic conception of history – that is, when the specific kind of link between man and nature that it implied, has become exhausted. In its place are banalities and free-floating clichés. This is a world that, according to Deleuze, “we” no longer “believe in”. This is the “intolerable” that thought, in what he calls cinematic time-images, tries to find “a subtle way out” from (*C2*, 170).
What is a “Contour”?  

Let us end this subchapter by defining the first word in contours of the new. As we have seen, the contours of the new do not regard actual new things but only its generative potential. Since an actual new thing emanating from the potential would necessarily differ from it, what does “contour” mean? The contour is not an outline of the actual new. If was, it would concern the already there – either as a new actuality or a set of prefabricated possibilities projected into the future. A focus on actual new things could also be to look back historically on a timeline where one can recognize new things that were created at point x in the past (e.g. the discourse on the new as part of art history). 58 “Contours of the new” has emphasis on contours. What is a “contour”?

Contours of the new are not a term for the work itself as new in style, form or represented content (although such aspects play a role). Instead of the actual new, it concerns formulations of genetic force. But in aesthetic discussions, the term “contour” normally means something like “outline” or the defining line of a shape or form. Even Deleuze and Guattari utilizes the term in this way in A Thousand Plateaus, as part of what they call “organic representation”: a given shape or form (ATP, 498-499). In Deleuze’s book on Bacon the term “contour” serve several functions. We have many reasons to return to this book below, but I will refrain from referring too much to its discussion of “contours” since it is too connected to perceptible lines in painting. Not only are we concerned with a concept of contour for moving images, we are more concerned with the contours of ideas or thoughts. I will therefore utilize the term “contour” primarily as it functions in Deleuze and Guattari’s What is Philosophy? As part of their description of the philosophical concept, “contour” now means “virtual form”. That is, a determined virtual consistency that, while intertwined with, is prior to any given actual form or given “outline” of a given form. 59 It regards the determined articulation of a cluster of tendencies, whose potential actualization in a state of affairs is unforeseeable (in contrast to the “realization” of an outline seen as a skeleton or blueprint). The contour is not merely more hazy or mysterious.

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58 C.f. Harold Rosenberg’s The Tradition of the New, which treats a specific tradition of discourses on the new basically in the sense of the actual new that is the artwork or a new movement in relation to artworks or movements that came before it on a historical timeline. The Tradition of the New [1959] (New York: Da Capo, 1994).

59 This is also what Deleuze seeks in art. Virtual form is not figurative but rather like what in his book on Bacon is called a “Figure”. The Figure points to something in Bacon’s paintings that Deleuze in different ways, and described with different concepts, finds in all that he calls “art”. This allows Deleuze to write in one section in this book on Bacon that he finds “a kind of Figure” in the “essences” of “pure time” in Proust, a “Figure-in-itself of Combray” that is beyond the figurative representations that arise in both memory and involuntary memory, FB, 67-68. For more on this aspect of Proust (as explain with other concepts that the “Figure”), see DR, 153; Deleuze, Proust and Signs [1964], trans. Richard Howard (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), pp. 60-1, 56ff.
than a blueprint. It expresses a different aspect of reality, with a different logic of sense. These “contours” are also not to be confused with signifiers without signified or some version of postmodern “pure visuality”. Contours concern sub-representational creation, not “signifiers” on the loose.

Contours in contours of the new must also be understood through the concept of the untimely. They concern the counter-actualization of a given states of affairs and the “summoning”, co-creation of, or even engendering of virtual seeds or potentials. Even as the term “contour” is put in conjunction with “seeds” it should still not, assuming some associations where to point in this direction, be confused with “blueprint”. This is because a formation of an actual new – which is a “solution” to the “problematic” contour – differs by necessity from the contour in unforeseeable ways. Furthermore, the contour subsists as a “problematic” potential despite of any actual “solutions”. The contour, therefore, is not an outline or blueprint.

* In Deleuze’s later works the actual new – or the new as seen from the perspective of the actual and chronological – will often be seen to be exactly what is missing. But this “lack” is an opening. At first, it indicates only a state of being stuck, and a lack of belief in the world as still capable of creating new forms for life. But as with what Deleuze formulates with what he calls the time-image, which appears more systematically after the second World War when the “movement-images” seem to have exhausted their kind of future-oriented logic, concerns the effort to find completely new kinds of paths for thinking, and even for political action, delving further into realms of reality and time that always subsists or inheres in things, always providing new fodder for real creation.

1.2. Further Remarks on the New

We have now come quite far in defining how the term “new” will function in this study. But two further remarks remain. The first deals with the hypothetical question “new for whom”? The second remark deals with how we are to understand political art as regarding the new in relation to the cult of novelty within consumer culture, and in relation to an increasingly deterritorialized capitalism.
1.2.1. The New as Irreducible to Spectators and Experiences

Despite the detailed explanations given above, it may still appear to some as if the most critical and shrewd question to ask at this point is “new for whom?” Is the new not always new for an individual or a group and therefore only relatively new – while new for some, perfectly old news for others? Certainly, this is part of the normal complexity of the world. But Deleuze and Badiou as the latest in a more than a century-long minor tradition to think the new as such, also allow us to think the new in a more “anonymous” sense. The ontologies for this are already presented in the previous subchapter. But since most other theories or philosophies concerned with the (unforeseeably) new during the last century have constructivist leanings, I will devote this first remark to explicating in what sense the new as such is not about what is new relative to a subjective perspective or to some kind of social construction.\textsuperscript{60}

The question “New for whom?” will be answered by subverting its premise. The aim is to get at a conception of the new unhinged from the relativism of being new for someone/something, which implies that the novelty may in another context be already given (“strolling through the forest, I discovered a plant that I had not seen before”). This is indeed how the world works most of the time, but the concepts of the new we are dealing with here are precisely not about how the world works most of the time. Furthermore, we are dealing with a pre-personal and comparably more “objective” or “anonymous” level than differences in subjective experience, not in the sense of new obvious turns on large “molar” levels in society or nature – the French Revolution, the first hole in the ozone layer – but in the sense of the new as irreducible to a subject’s personal discovery of what otherwise already existed as an actual fact. This is not to say that what is new for an individual subject is necessarily less important – the encounter between the new and a subject is a singular event – but this is not the level we are primarily interested in here. We are also not concerned here with something new that is implicitly already given, waiting to be revealed for the first time by someone (the encounter of, say, a previously “undiscovered” plant). What I am getting at is the new as such, which is to say irreducible to the new as phenomenological appearance. It is in this sense more “objective” or “anonymous”. By what criteria can something be deemed to be novel in this sense? Nature offers the most explicit showcase: open evolution (given that one accepts that new species are in fact new, and not merely the gradual explication of already existing possibilities whether logical, mechanistic, religious, or a combination of all three). The sociopolitical world is in many

\textsuperscript{60} Badiou: “[Constructivist thought is built] precisely around the exclusion of the indiscernible, the indeterminate, the un-predictable”, BE, 319.
ways more complex. If it contains anything like the new as such it can on the most general level be described with a utilization of Deleuze and Guattari’s concept of social assemblage. A social assemblage is a complex that consists of reciprocally determining relations of various specific micro-assemblages, abstract principles, matter, discourse, technologies, several regimes of signs, various social configurations of desires and affects, biology, social-economic and political institutions, etc.

In a globalized world, we must add, a social assemblage is seldom very local. If something regards the “new” as within such a larger assemblage, then we are closer to something like the new as such also within a sociopolitical realm (instead of the new as phenomenology or mere social construction). And of course, the audiovisual moving image is especially important here, as it constitutes an increasingly substantial aspect of most contemporary social assemblages.

But again, the contours of the new are not about the actual new, and certainly not about Grand Events like, say, women being allowed to vote for the first time or the abolition of slavery somewhere. It is instead about the role of the moving image in the formation of potential. This concerns first of all the counter-actualization of a subtle or overt, small or large aspect of a social assemblage as defined from the perspective of a specific problem. The untimely-image entails the counter-actualization of what already exists which means freeing up conditions — generative force — for the creation of contours of the new. The part that political moving images can play here must not be overrated. But it can at least be a kind of co-creation together with other forces, and as such articulate, further define or even engender seeds for that which at the most yet only exists as virtual potentials or as tendencies within other realms.

But when it comes to the moving image, does not the new inadvertently have to be about what is new for the spectator? The spectator is of course in the larger scheme of things an unavoidable part of the equation (more on this below), but nothing here concerns the new in the sense of how something appears for a given spectator. The real answer to “new for whom?” is a re-articulation of the question. The question does not regard subjective experience — which always comes after — but how the untimely can act on a given state of affairs. The question is not “new for whom?” but where and in what sense?

The Moving Images “Themselves”

Deleuze’s conceptualizations of cinematic images and signs — which are subjected to a close treatment in 2.1 - 2.4 below — are about the internal or-

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61 Deleuze and Guattari develop the concept of assemblages most significantly across A Thousand Plateaus.
ganization of the films themselves. They include spectators only implicitly to the extent that they are “drawn in”. Why the need to emphasize this point? In an article on Deleuze and theories of cinematic spectatorship Richard Rushton asks how Deleuze can have inspired so many such theories when there is no explicit theory of spectatorship in his writings on cinema. A Deleuzian spectator has partly been invented, he shows, in order to fit Deleuze’s unorthodox film theories into mainstream contemporary film studies, which after the 70s’ Screen Theory has been increasingly focused on various notions of active spectatorship. Rushton goes on to extract an implicit theory of the spectator from Deleuze’s actual writings on cinema, where the spectator is argued to be passive in ways politically radical. But although Rushton makes pertinent points he does not address our central concern here: the works themselves as consisting of that which, from a Deleuzian perspective, is primarily played up as a “spiritual automaton” at the back of the head of the viewer and only secondarily “experienced” by the viewer.

Of course, the actual social-political meanings and consequences of any work can only be fully measured along with how it affects audiences, and how exactly it will affect audiences can of course never be calculated in advance. But what political art can be interesting and significant if it does not in a defined way take on a certain leading or suggesting position in relation to audiences? It is clear from all Deleuze’s various writings on art that his philosophy primarily concerns the way that art works make up a consistency. Deleuze’s notion of the work of art is that it preserves in itself. It preserves an expression of thoughts, affects, percepts, sensations, etc., which has gained – at least works that implicitly deserves the term “art” for Deleuze – a certain autonomy from its creator(s) as well as its recipients – art that can somehow stand on its own. This does not mean it is severed from either creator(s) or recipients. Of course different spectators have more or less differing experiences of a given work, and of course a work’s “meaning” will vary relative to various cultural, socio-historical and psychological factors (just like experiences and meanings will differ in, say, readings of a book of philosophy). A work is, as stated, also not cut off from its creator(s): The author is far from simply dead in Deleuze.

63 On the cinema as a “spiritual automaton” (or “psychomechanics”) see Deleuze, C2, 262-263.
64 This is not a division between art, or more specifically films that are served as entertainment or films that have an image of being “arty”. Rather, what counts is that it has a “necessity of its own”, which is precisely lacking, as Deleuze writes, “in the mass of bad arty films”, C2, 253.
65 Deleuze writes (in 1969) about the analysis of the work of art: “It will be objected that the author is, in fact, not necessary […] But this would be to neglect the specificity of the artist both as patient and as doctor of civilization”, The Logic of Sense, p. 273. For more on Deleuze’s theory on the artists as “clinician”, see his Essays Critical and Clinical [1993],
of the other creators regarding *The Wire*, Deleuze is often in dialogue with statements from artists on their own work. But the relevance of such statements cannot be understood along the schema of a preexisting self-identical intention in the creator(s) that is merely “represented” as art that the statements help to uncover. Instead, the creator’s statements can be relevant to the extent that a finished work is still attached to the *problems* that its creator(s) worked upon, which renders the latter a certain expertise or insight concerning these problems that can still be more or less helpful for the theoretician in articulating what these problems are when studying and conceptualizing a work. But the independence of the work itself is still unambiguous for Deleuze and Guattari both in relation to the creator(s) and the spectators:

“[Art] is no less independent of the viewer or hearer, who only experience it after, if they have the strength for it. What about the creator? It is independent of the creator through the self-positing of the created, which is preserved in itself. What is preserved – the thing or the work of art – is a *block of sensations, that is to say, a compound of percepts and affects*. [...] Sensations, percepts and affects, are beings whose validity lies in themselves and exceeds any lived. [...]”

What is important for our concerns here is not the concepts of “percepts”, “affects” or “sensations” (we will in this sense be much more guided by the cinema books in which art as various formations of *thought* is more pronounced). Important is rather the notion of a “self-positing of the created”, that is, the work as a relatively autonomous consistency. This does not mean that it is static (in the sense of a closed whole ripe for interpretation aiming to extract its inherent, unchanging “meaning”). This is also not to say that works are hermatically sealed in relation to history and society. On the contrary, all works are of course always part of larger, and perhaps infinitely complex, social and historical assemblages that can subject the “consistency” of the work to more actual or direct changes. But are not certain works more resistant to such changes than others? Surely, different spectators

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66 A good example is the central place that Deleuze gives to Francis Bacon’s own statements on his work.

67 *WPh*, 164, 163; see also Deleuze, *FB*, 35. In reference to Bacon’s own words, Deleuze also talks about levels in a painting as “‘accumulated’ or ‘coagulated’ sensation [...]”, 37. See also Elizabeth Grosz, *Chaos, Territory, Art: Deleuze and the Framing of the Earth* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), p. 73.


69 And what is it that really changes over time in any work? The experience and indeed the very meaning of a work may change and vary. But unless a work has been completely mis-
have different experiences on sociological/psychological and meaning-making levels. But most art and entertainment fail to do much more than make sensory variations on such levels. Deleuze, in his quasi-modernistic fashion, is not interested in art on (or that reduces itself to) such levels. Of interest are artworks that in a specific sense manage to do something to a given socio-historical state of affairs – instead of merely being one of its symptoms – and express something beyond it. This is one sense in which the “untimely” enters the picture – art that manages to counter and extract from a given socio-historical states of affairs something that – while intertwined with and certainly not independent from – is not itself of the orders of the sociological, the causally historical, or even subjective sensory experience.

But still, if Deleuze with Guattari in this way conceives of the work of art as “independent of the viewer or hearer, who only experience it after, if they have the strength for it”, does this not inadvertently mean that art is a represented program of how spectators are to react? One may compare, for instance, with Rancière’s notion of a potential that lies in the undecidability between art and audiences, which he contrasts to political art seen as containing a given message, consciousness or feeling that the audiences are meant to programatically pick up. Rancière refers to this as an “emancipated” spectator, which entails its own kind of activity, which blurs the distinction between passive and active (an insight, one may add, which since the 70s is a staple of culture studies), and conflicts with artists assuming that “what will be perceived, felt, understood is what they have put into” the art in the sense of an “identity between cause and effect”. The effects of any new artistic idiom, Rancière writes, “cannot be anticipated. It requires spectators who play the role of active interpreters, who develop their own translation in order to appropriate the ‘story’ and make it their own story” (22). But there is, I argue, no (necessary) conflict between what we have described above and Rancière’s emancipated spectator. Art, for Deleuze, “make[s] perceptible the imperceptible forces that populate the world, affect us, and make us become” (WP, 182, 164). If art dabbles with the forces that “make us become” in a concentrated and singular way, does this mean that a

read, is there not also always an intact consistency in the work in the form of the image of thought that it presupposes or constructs?

real experience of art means a pre-programmed becoming? “Pre-programmed becoming” is an oxymoron. Let us say that art for Deleuze entails a kind of forcing of spectators, who have the strength for it, to “become”. Nothing about this claim concerns art as a pre-calculation in advance of exactly how audiences will be affected. Deleuze’s concept of becoming is in opposition to a logic of cause and effect – that is, art as represented message to be decoded or as cause of a given feeling to be felt. Rancière’s notion of an undecidability between art and audiences is therefore not in opposition to Deleuze so much as a statement of what from a Deleuzian perspective is self-evident: the actual effect of a becoming cannot be calculated in advance. But for Deleuze there are differences among living entities, such as spectators, when it comes to the capacity to be affected by generative potential (is this not the meaning of the phrase “if they have the strength for it”?). This is a criterion for evaluation in Deleuze: The measure of a spectator’s capacity to be put in a state of becoming by a work. This capacity to be affected – not to be confused with a capacity for “deep feelings” or romantic sensibility – is precisely a capacity to respond to the forces of the new. But how the forces of the new will be played out in actuality is precisely unforeseeable. The untimely-image is unconcerned with the actual new.

What art does, then, is to drag certain spectators into a consistency of forces of the new. And this requires a kind of “strength” (although this may not be the best term) in the sense of a capacity to connect with such forces. As Rajchman writes, novelty in Deleuze is “something we do not or cannot yet see is happening to us, indeed something that we ourselves need to become ‘imperceptible’ in order to see. In Deleuze’s aesthetic, a ‘will to art’ is always concerned with the emergence of something new and singular, which precedes us and requires us to ‘invent’ ourselves as another people” (2000: 122-123). It would clearly be a mistake to read this as a cause-effect relation, in which art is reduced to a “message” communicated to a receiver-spectator that “becomes” what the message says.

The untimely-image, then, is not concerned with viewers. It does not conceptualize the “affects”, meaning-making procedures, or processes of subjection in those watching the images. Viewing subjects may certainly react to an untimely-image in a plethora of different ways. It may potentially even be the case that the majority of viewers will not even perceive the qualities that I am in the processes of articulating as the untimely-image (and this is connectable to the how the (traces of) the event in Badiou’s system is at least in the beginning only perceived by some). When contours of the new replace what we already know and recognize, is it not often the case that this is met with guarded suspicion, skepticism or boredom? Of course, such a scenario may certainly only indicate that the image is unsuccessful. But it may also mean that the majority of spectators do not “have the strength for it” – or simply that the image is before, or rather running counter to, its time.
reduction of political art to the different effects it has on audiences is a view of political art that the untimely-image opposes.

**1.2.2. The New and Commodity Culture**

The “new” is the cornerstone of commodity culture, right? Certainly, a foundational tenet of advertising is to sell products as novelties – that is, attracting buyers with the appeal of the *newness* of capitalist goods. (This certainly includes the selling of films and various moving-image technologies throughout history.) Adorno asserts that the principles of the new even in modernist art – in the sense of being “modern”, exhibiting an “antitraditional energy” – tend to take part in or even duplicate commodity culture and the expanding reproduction of capital in society. Subsequently, many have emphasized how the cult of the new is one of the aspects of modernism that, in postmodernity, has been completely subsumed by advertising and various commodification processes. The commodification of the new thereby has more evidently acquired a paradoxical sense: the “new” as the sign of everything staying pretty much the same. Barring the undeniable fact of technological advancement, the commodity sense of the “new” to a large extent concerns the level of “affect”: advertising as the creation of a *feeling* of “newness” (a new iPhone compared to the previous model). Furthermore – and certain aspects of modernism are here merely extended – it regards the “new” as an actual presence: *ta-dah!* The untimely-image is not about the *actual* new X (always ripe for commercial exploitation). The actual “new” especially in the sense of commodity culture connects with our concerns only superficially. Simultaneously there is of course also a direct conflict: novelty as reified matter of fact, in the sense of “modern” or *up-to-date* is – *timely*. It is immediately part of the given. This study takes interest in that which counter-actualizes the timely – *the untimely*. This gives us two conflicting notions of the new. (But less evidently, as we shall see below, the untimely must also be contrasted with the utopian.)

Rosi Braidotti suggests that the “new”, in the commodity culture sense, functions as a form of “disciplining”: it reduces citizens’ “desire for the ‘new’ to docile and compulsive forms of consumerism” (2006: 205). She also argues that these are “conservative times that [idolize] the new as a consumerist trend, while thundering against those who believe in change” (268). But she also asserts that capitalism itself “lacks the ability to create anything new: it can merely promote the recycling of spent hopes, repackaged in the rhetorical frame of the ‘new’” (276). While I generally agree with these

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73 The concept of novelty in Deleuze, as Rajchman writes, “is not to be confused with known or visible ‘fashions’ and the manner in which they are manipulated and promoted”, 2000: 122.
claims by Braidotti, I take certain issue with the last point that capitalism is merely vampyristic. This seems to me to be a somewhat too simple black-and-white rendition of capitalism.

However it is conceived, we must acknowledge that capitalism has been a driving force of the new in a more substantial and real sense than the marketing of commodities. As David Harvey writes, “Capitalism […] is a social system internalizing rules that ensure it will remain a permanently revolutionary and disruptive force in its own world history”. Capitalism is of course also reterritorializing, but this is because it has to be – if it wasn’t it would not be able to hold together due to the radically deterritorializing nature and effects of capital. Marx already revealed how capitalism on the one hand melts into air all that is solid, sweeps away all “fixed, fast-frozen relations, with their train of ancient and venerable prejudices and opinions”, while on the other hand introducing forms of exploitation and repression on a whole new level. Capitalism, to speak with Deleuze and Guattari, decodes and deterritorializes with one hand only to reterritorialize and introduce new forms of repression with the other (more on this in Chapters 5 and 6). But what will be imperative for this study is how in contemporary capitalism also the new forms of power and repression have an increasingly deterritorialized structure. We will at several points come back to address what has been recognized as a “troubling and confusing […] kind of convergence between the dynamic of capitalist power and the dynamic of resistance”, or an “increasing isomorphism of processes of complexity and difference to capitalist productivity”. That is, many have registered a proximity of forms between a more traditionally “resisting” political art and an already decoded/decoding and deterritorialized/deterritorializing advanced capitalism. In many ways, this proximity is nothing other than the main problem concerning Deleuze and Guattari already from Anti-Oedipus (1972). Power within advanced capitalism no longer works merely as a structure of discipline, as in Foucault’s famous analyses, where a subject is produced within a set of institutions along more or less pre-determined little arcs of character-change in which it shifts between a couple of distinguishable identities. If disciplinary power was already non-localizable, although structured around given institutions, in advanced contemporary capitalist societies this non-

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74 Braidotti, more specifically, argues that capitalism lacks “genuine powers of invention”, and that it is rather a “hybridizing machine […] structurally deprived of visionary insight”, and as it “coincides with the turbulent, homogenizing flows of capital that markets hybridity and mixity” it “thus promotes the proliferation of differences for the sake of profit” (276). We will come back to this issue of “proliferation of differences” in Chapter 5.


78 Nicholas Thoburn, Deleuze, Marx and Politics (London/New York, Routledge, 2003), p. 3.
localizability is intensified. Power now works much more through the flexible and the “rhizomatic”.

Elaboration: Deleuze and Guattari’s Conception of Capitalism as “Rhizomatic”

We will discuss Deleuze and Guattari’s conceptions of capital and capitalism below, primarily in Chapter 6 – capital will be seen less as an actual quantity than a problematic multiplicity which produces deterritorialized flows and movements on various levels; and capitalism as a system as entailing the harnessing and “axiomatizing” of these flows and movements. But as a whole, capitalism is not only increasingly deterritorializing but also itself increasingly deterritorialized. Contrary to what is sometimes assumed, the view of capitalism as rhizomatic is not something that Deleuze suddenly discovers as he writes his famous article “Postscript on Control Societies” (1990).79 It is an extension of his and Guattari’s Anti-Oedipus (1972), which described capitalism as both highly deterritorializing/decoding and itself ever more deterritorialized/decoded approaching the “schizophrenic”: especially at the level of capital it becomes increasingly “nuts” as capitalism loosens its axioms while simultaneously performing new forms of harder social reterritorializations (that helps to configures people’s very desires prior to any level of “interests”).80 One of the fundamental problems investigated in Anti-Oedipus was how to conceive of more “absolute” forms of deterritorializations given this state of affairs. The follow-up A Thousand Plateaus (1980) described a new capitalist social formation that produces a new kind of subjectivity (the “dividual”). Prefiguring what is to become the article Postscript on Control Societies, Deleuze and Guattari discuss this in terms of “cybernetic and informational machines” that form a new “regime of subjection”, which displaces the previous “organic composition of capital” with its “regime of subjection of the worker” through the principal framework of which is the business or factory (ATP, 457-458). Regarding the increasingly deterritorialized and rhizomatic structures of global capitalism itself, the 1980 book does not mince words: it describes the “commercial organization of the ‘multinational’ type” as a “diffuse and polymorphous” version of what they call a “war machine” which “exists only in its own metamorphoses” (360); its “organization exceeds the State apparatuses and

79 Deleuze, “Postscript on Control Societies” [1990], Negotiations (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), pp. 177-182. A more parenthetical note is that the concept of “control societies” was actually publicly formulated by Deleuze at least two years earlier in his talk “What is a Creative Act?”.
80 It is “nuts” in the sense that, as Deleuze says in 1973, “Everything about capitalism is rational, except capital or capitalism. A stock-market is a perfectly rational mechanism, you can understand it, learn how it works; capitalists know how to use it; and yet what a delirium, it’s nuts. [---] Something that has not been discussed in Marx’s Capital is the extent to which he is fascinated by capitalist mechanisms, precisely because, at one and the same time, it is demented and it works.” “On Capitalism and Desire” [1973], Desert Island and Other Texts, p. 262.
passes into energy, military-industrial, and multinational complexes” (387, see also 434-435). It “exceeds” the State apparatuses in the following sense: capitalism “by virtue of its superior deterritorialization” subordinates the State and turns it into one of the (needed) “models of realization” of its “worldwide axiomatic” dealing with decoded flows” (453-467). And these decoded flows themselves are increasingly let loose on a “new smooth space” in “which capital reaches its ‘absolute’ speed” (492).

In short: forces or phenomena like deterritorialization, decoding, the war machine, and the “smooth space” it traverses, have from the beginning of Deleuze and Guattari’s work been conceived as a fundamental aspect of capitalist power – that which empowers its other side: unprecedented exploitation and repression (457, 480). Generally, we must therefore note that these kinds of concepts, contrary to popular belief, are not conceived of as a given value or guarantee but a kind of organization of forces whose value is determined by the situation. These things therefore “do not have an irresistible revolutionary calling but change meaning drastically depending on the interactions they are part of and the concrete conditions of their exercise or establishment” (387). All this is important to point out, since, surprisingly, Deleuze and Guattari are often read as blind to this aspect of capitalism, when in fact it was the very problem they articulated and investigated from the very outset. The source of this misunderstanding, I believe, is the two author’s systematic attacks of the “tree”, the “State”, etc. But this must be read as an attack on a certain way of thinking, not unimportantly often found in the left, unable to pose a serious threat to a rhizomatic capitalism.

In Postscript on Control Societies (1990), Deleuze sketches the outlines of a burgeoning new logic of capitalist societies which exercises power increasingly less through moldings of individuals through disciplinary social institutions, which are crumbling today, than through “control” of flexible and fluid “dividuals” (we will return to this problematic in 2.7 below). But in many respects Postscript links up his writings on Foucault with his and Guattari’s by then two-decades old analysis of the increasingly deterritorialized logic of capitalist power. Throughout this study we will have many reasons to come back to the relation between our concerns with that which generates the new, and expanding or fluctuating movements within the status quo of a contemporary capitalism that is itself hybrid, modulating and flexible and happy to incorporate just about anything that is hybrid, modulating and flexible – although most often in its own insidiously reterritorializing ways.

The dominant economic determining structures today – contemporary global neoliberal capitalism – exercise power increasingly less along the lines of representation and static identity than through the modulating, fluid and flexible (although relative to balancing reterritorializations). A challenge of these kinds of structures (to the extent that that is in a specific case desira-
ble) therefore, I argue, can no longer merely be a countering – or the “dis-
identification” – of static identities or forms. This study will to a large extent
examine what I will call “stretched-out” or “supple” representation that is
capable of incorporating the fluid and processual, and then juxtapose it with
the untimely-image.

Potential or Generative Force
Wrapping up Chapter 1, we may say that it has described the various impli-
cations of how the untimely-image concerns the new in the sense of creative
formations of generative force. The generative “contours” to be investigated
here, is on the most basic level compatible with what Deleuze often referred
to as the register of the virtual. For Deleuze everything in reality consists of
actual and virtual elements. A full philosophical account of reality requires
conceptualizing both its actual and virtual sides. The virtual designates the
genetic side of a something, which is in reciprocal determination with its
actual side – intensity and extensity. As implied above, there is a vast philo-
sophical complexity hiding behind these terms, which besides being im-
mersed in a long scientific-philosophical history of debates, involves also a
speculative aspect on Deleuze’s part. But there are aspects of Deleuze’s sys-
tem – not so much the virtual itself as the process of actualization – that are
“vitalist”. But Deleuze, as Daniel Smith writes, “uses this biological term in
a somewhat provocative manner, divorced from its traditional reference to a
semi-mystical life-force” (2003: 432). It concerns the “inorganic life of
things”, but in Deleuze this is not about some naturalist romanticist concern
with expressive essences, or various conceptions of mystical union between
the soul and Nature contrasting with industrial society.81 Most importantly,
his vitalism is only a part of a larger system of complexity and multiplicity
(more on this in 2.9. below). Virtuality is therefore not a mystic, romantic or
escapist concept. Virtuality is completely immanent, and always specifically
determined in relation to a specific situation. But while specifically deter-
mined and structured it can still be generalized as an “outside” within the
given in reality – it is like the creative artifice within the social and within
nature. In its widest sense it can be said to summarize, without therefore
constituting some substance-whole, creative intensity and potential in all
aspects of reality – spanning “nature”, the social, art, language, concepts, etc.
A pedagogical example: a virtual genetic “problematic structure” on a
level of society may on the simplest level be understood in terms such as
Paul Patton’s rendition of the “virtual Idea” based on Kant’s distinction be-

81 See also Keith Ansell-Pearson, Germinal Life: The Difference and Repetition of Deleuze
tween the concept of the revolution, and how it actually turned out as an actualized event in history. That is, in Kant “the ’enthusiasm’ of the Europeans, their becoming-revolutionary, is explicitly linked, not to the historical revolution as it unfolded before them in France, but rather to its concept [...] almost as if the revolution itself was something secondary.”

This does not mean that the virtual, even on this general and somewhat simple level, should be equated with historical or social context. It should also not be reduced to historical preconditions (i.e. the technological, social, economic, etc. condition of possibility). But less obviously, and Patton’s example may be somewhat misleading in this sense, it is not merely about the comparably more abstract “force of history”. The term virtual designates processes that, as Deleuze and Guattari write of becomings, “do not belong to history even if they fall back into it [...] History today still designates only the set of conditions, however recent they may be, from which one turns away in order to become, that is to say, in order to create something new.” “Virtual” is nothing but an aspect of reality, and it is always intertwined with historical forces: “Without history, [virtual] becoming would remain indeterminate and unconditioned, but becoming is not historical.”

Deleuze’s concept of the virtual, in its full complexity, is not Bergson’s virtual or merely his notion of the “open whole”. In the next chapter, at several points, we will see how Deleuze’s own concept of the virtual differs, in part quite significantly, from Bergson’s. Deleuze’s concept finally stems more from readings of other thinkers, notably Proust and Nietzsche. Bergson’s notion of the “open whole” is ingrained in Deleuze in the following two senses: 1. as a negative axiom in its debunking of various more mechanical or theological theories that subordinates the future to what (at least in principle) is implicitly given, already contained in the past or present, or that postulates a beginning and/or end; and 2., as a positive axiom in the notion of the “pure past” as one aspect of his own philosophy of time (the “second synthesis”).

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83 WPh, 96. See also their critique of Hegel and Heidegger on this point, 94-95. For more on the distinctions and relations between history and becoming see ATP, 296 f, 347.
84 This is evident not least in the second chapter of Deleuze’s Difference and Repetition. Here Bergson give certain content to what Deleuze calls the second synthesis of time, which regards the in-itself of the past, that is, pure past or Time as “being” (more on this below). In the third synthesis Deleuze takes inspiration instead from Nietzsche and Proust, which means a more disjunctive and “empty” time of the future. In relation to Bergson’s “open”, this means also a conception of the processes of novelty irreducible to a vitalism of organic continuity. The question of how Deleuze’s thirds synthesis and conception of novelty differs from Bergson’s is also addressed by Constantin Boundas in “Deleuze-Bergson: an Ontology of the Virtual”, Deleuze: A Critical Reader, ed. Paul Patton (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1996), p. 98-103.
We started out this subchapter by implying that the forces of the new as such are detached from discourse or experience. But while irreducible to them, these forces are certainly not separate from discourse or “experience” (in the wide sense of the term). But if the forces of the new are irreducible to discourse and experience, how is it possible to know them? The not-yet-reified new is precisely outside existing knowledge. It is that which cannot be recognized by existing knowledge. But for the untimely-image we must further emphasize a conception of the new that is nothing other than its generative force. While the contours of the new cannot be known in advance, it can, however, be sensed by those sensitive to its signs. The important aspect here is not affect but thought. That is, thought capable of thinking at the edge of the thinkable. Under normal circumstances, thought can only think (good or bad, poorly or wisely) the possible. It is within the unthought in thought that new potentials – or potentials for the new – can arise in thought. It is the (virtual) “shape” of these new potentials that I refer to with the term “contours of the new”. This study’s interest in moving images with sound is as systems of thought, systems of thought that can either think merely the “possible” or seek other paths.
Chapter 2. The Untimely-Image: Basic Components and Characteristics

In the first chapter we worked out specialized definitions of the terms “contour” and “new” as they apply for the concerns of this study. The discussion will now more clearly be narrowed down to moving images. This chapter proceeds with the development of the most basic components of the untimely-image as regarding moving images with sound. We will work our way up towards a more direct formulation of this concept – which is to say, linking up the basic components as regarding moving images with sound, to its more central characteristics: contours of the new, counter-actualization, and an interlinked concept called the untimely-site. The first four subchapters (2.1 – 2.4) are chiefly, but not exclusively, concerned with extracting certain vital parameters from Deleuze’s cinema books. My readings of these books – which spans their ideas of image, their taxonomy of different kinds of moving-image thought, and what I will reveal as its concern with the creation of the new as an aesthetic-ethical-political struggle – are specific but also detailed and somewhat extensive. This is needed, I argue, in order to be able to be creative with these complex books in any substantial sense. But my reading is guided – and increasingly so as the chapter progresses – by what is relevant for the development of the untimely-image. The reading includes conducting close examinations and re-readings of nuances, implicit themes and implications often glossed over or missed in much of the literature on these books. Most important are the cinema book’s intricate dealings with the problems of the new and its political implications. The following subchapters (2.5 – 2.9) give a more direct definition of the untimely-image, and also begin to formulate some of its complications and challenges.

2.1. Thought & Politics in the Realm of Moving Images

Throughout film history, there have been many different kinds of ideas about thought and cinema. In its first decades, filmmakers and film-theorists recognized a great potential in the very movement of cinematic images. Not only do cinematic images move, they move automatically. As Deleuze writes, it is an “image which itself moves in itself” (C2, 156). But what is so...
specific about this movement? Are not images in choreographed dance or theater also moving? Dance and theater are basically tied to the movement of bodies. It is not the image itself that moves automatically – it is also not repeatable, exact, and seen from one perspective. What about the implied movement in certain works of art? A painting, a photo or a sculpture may represent movement, or even be as if moving, but the actual movement is here made in the mind of the viewer. Cinematic images move themselves and they do so with a comparably exact automatism. Precisely because it is primarily moving, automatically, in itself, instead of merely in the minds of the viewer (of performed by bodies), many of the early political filmmakers and film-theorists saw cinema as thought-force working directly within the heads of spectators. They saw in cinema a unique potential to move the minds of audiences. Directors and theorists such as Eisenstein, Vertov, and Gance saw in cinematic movement a means for producing a “shock to thought” – in Eisenstein, and this is perhaps the single most influential idea for political film across the ages, this meant actualizing socio-historical contradictions in the minds of audiences by showing one image that collides with another image – that would force audiences to “think the whole”.85 This was conceived to work by directly and automatically “communicating vibrations to the cortex [and] touching the nervous and cerebral system” (C2, 156). But this is irreducible to the relation between the screen and the audience per se. Rather, the maximization and intensification of the “shock to thought” worked as an aesthetic guideline: that is, to put the “shock” in the composition of the images and montage between images.

Of course, this power of the cinema for affecting an audience was also discovered by others, and would quickly be utilized for many ends, most obviously totalitarian propaganda. But like the other arts the cinema was also, as Deleuze writes, “overlaid with experimental abstractions, ‘formalist antics’”, and a commercial cinema that would “confuse” the classical political cinema’s “violence” of the direct movement-image with the “figurative violence of the represented”.86 But if we bracket all these other uses, and focus only on the classical political filmmakers’ efforts to put a shock to thought in the audience through direct movement-images, we must ask: did it really amount to anything? This is Deleuze’s view:

Everyone knows that, if an art necessarily imposed the shock or vibration, the world would have changed long ago, and men would have been thinking for a long time. So this pretension of the cinema, at least among the greatest pioneers,

85 Eisenstein: “It is the duty of the cinema to grab the stunned spectator by the hair and, with an imperious gesture, bring him face to face with the problems of today”, quoted in Aumont, Montage Eisenstein, trans. Lee Hildreth, Constance Penley & Andrew Ross (Bloomington/Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1987), p. 45.
86 C2, 157, 264, 164. In his book on Francis Bacon, Deleuze equates “the violence of the represented” with “the sensational, the cliché”, FB, 39.
raises a smile today. They believed that cinema was capable of imposing the shock, and imposing it on the masses, the people […] (C2, 157).

How strangely the great declarations, of Eisenstein, of Gance, ring today; we put them to one side like declarations worthy of a museum, all the hopes put into cinema, art of the masses and new thought (C2, 164).

But the politics of thought and cinema is for Deleuze a problem that very much remains. But cinema-thought is a fairly empty notion. This is so, even if we by “thought” mean only advanced thought. The first thing to ask, and I believe that this is precisely what Deleuze’s cinema books are meticulously categorizing, is what kind of (advanced) thought. What kind of thought is implied in classical political cinema? Thought in the classical political cinema referenced above, entails, generally speaking, only one type of (political) thought: thought as organic representation – including organic emotions and an organic conception of the subconscious. The “whole” that the audience was to be “forced” to think, according to the classical theorists, is an “organic totality”: the whole produced by moving parts, and moving parts produced by the whole. That is, a representational whole – a concept – already given. In the actual films, a montage of movement-images indirectly represents this already given whole or concept. Deleuze’s descriptions of Eisenstein’s cinema in this sense stands for all of “classical cinema” (including the American action-image): “The whole forms a knowledge, in the Hegelian fashion, which brings together the image and the concept as two movements each of which goes towards the other”. In this way, “The concept is in itself in the image, and the image is for itself in the concept”. The movements of thought entailed here abide by a specific logic that Deleuze calls “action-thought”. And here we come to an imperative aspect of one of the large categories or modes of moving images that Deleuze calls the “movement-image” (the other is the “time-image” and they will both be extensively treated below). This imperative aspect concerns a specific mode of belief as a link to the world. “This action-thought”, Deleuze writes, “indicates the relation between man and the world, between man and nature, the sensory-motor unity.” This is an organic relation, which also entails a representational form of man: the mass, the people: the individuated collective that has become subject (C2, 161-162). There is an overall organic logic, regardless if it is the individual-subject or the collective-subject that makes up the agent of action.

Of course, this is not to say that thought in classical cinema is homogeneous. Deleuze recognizes in it “many ways in which cinema can carry its relationships with thought into effect”. But there are fundamental characteristics that can be generalized regarding the kind of logic of thought implied. Everywhere within classical cinema, he summarizes, “three relationships seem to be well defined”: “the relationship with a whole which can only be thought in a higher awareness, the relationship with a thought which can
only be shaped in the subconscious unfolding of images, the sensory-motor relationship between world and man, nature and thought. Critical thought, hypnotic thought, action-thought (164, 163, emphasis in original). In the relation between thought and cinema in the classical regime, there is a knowledge-whole that involves two merging movements – that constitute an “action-thought” – of image and concept. The relation between man and world implied is not only organic but as such particularly powerful: It is a “sensory-motor unity”, which Deleuze describes as raised “to a supreme power (‘monism’)” (161).

In the regime of moving images he calls the “time-image”, in contrast, Deleuze sees a different kind of thinking based on a different relationship to time. This is no longer an exhibition of a thought-action displaying, through montage, the power to think a represented whole. With references to Artaud, Blanchot and Heidegger, Deleuze speaks here of a recognition of a fundamental powerless – a powerlessness at the very heart of thinking, even an “impossibility of thinking that is thought”, which the cinema is particularly suited to express. But what is this “powerlessness” and “impossibility”? Is it a mere lack of capacity? For Deleuze, the powerlessness regards only a particular kind of thought: the inability to think an organic, preconstituted whole. And as he writes,

Artaud never understood the powerlessness to think as a simple inferiority which would strike us in relation to thought. It is part of thought, so that we should make our way of thinking from it, without claiming to be restoring an all-powerful thought.

Clearly, then, it is not incapacity but puissance, a “powerlessness” – arising in encounters with signs that we cannot in principle recognize – that forces us to think. Beyond the organic (the gradual recognition of the already given), this “powerlessness” is actually a power and an opening. Thought can

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87 The quotes in the rest of this paragraph are taken from C2, 165-170.
88 See DR, 176. This encounter with a radical outside occurs when the sensible has been pushed past its limits and appears therefore as something of a “shock” to thought, but in a non-organic sense, in which “thinking always comes second”. This forcefully raises thought to a second power; this is where “the slow, tentative, and creative work of thought begins”. For a good elucidation of these matters in Deleuze, not least also how they both connect with and differ from the Heidegger’s themes of how we are “not yet thinking” and what “calls for thinking”, see de Beistegui, 2004: 281ff. Deleuze specify his points of connection and divergence with Heidegger’s What is Called Thinking in DR, 181f; 210-11, note 11. Heidegger himself writes that man has the possibility to think but is still incapable to think – “we are still not yet thinking” – since what remains to be thought. Being, withdraws – but it simultaneously gives itself as a gift, an “event” that is also an “incomparable nearness”, that calls to be thought in the sense of being “drawn into the withdrawal”, which signals the condition of possibility for man learning to think, which first means to “radically unlearn what thinking has been traditionally”. What is Called Thinking? [1954], trans. J. Glenn Gray (New York: Perennial, 2004), pp. 3-10, 17-18.

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now venture into different realms based on a different notion of thought and what it means to think. These realms will come to concern, more or less, the “reverse side of thought”, its “core”, or the “unthought within thought”. What this means, not least politically – and indeed, ethically – and how it concerns cinema more specifically will gradually be shown below. But let us begin from the most basic components of Deleuze’s conceptualizations of cinema and work our way up from there.

2.2. Image – Representation – Thought-Image

Representation, in various forms, is a certain type of relation that images can find themselves in. On the most primary level images do not represent. Before we explicate what this statement means by returning to Deleuze’s cinema books, let us first make an effort to say something more general about the difficult term “representation”. This is obviously not the place to chart the vast multiplicity of usages of this term across history. But I will make some generalizations in light of our specific concerns here. “Image”, in the sense of representation, can mean standing in for, making (at least seemingly) present what is absent, resemblance, appearance, copy, imitation, signification; but also what is created by sense perceptions, interpretation, mediation, re-articulation, ideological mystification, religious idolatry (to which there may be iconoclast or iconophile theological dispositions), etc. Why lump all these very different notions and examples together without further explaining their respective complexities and differences? The point is only to extract if not a commonality at least a dominant tendency: “image” re-presents and may even measure itself by something else that pre-exists as a given. (This includes when the pre-existence is itself regarded to be more or less inaccessible, at least outside mediation.) The “something else” that is re-presented may regard many different things: a thing, an object, a state of affairs, an “in-itself” or “essence”, a regulative Idea or Concept (e.g., “Justice”), the memory of a specific experience, sensation, or perception, objects in front of the camera, a specific group of people, a story, a fantasy, a myth, a god, etc. While the pre-existence is in some sense a given, this does not necessarily mean that it is completely static – the representation may be of a kinetic

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89 This may be compared with how the romantics’ concern with elaborating “a material of thought in order to capture forces that are not thinkable in themselves”. But in Deleuze and Guattari’s conception the romantics were still concerned with “forces to be captured” that “still constitute a great expressive Form”, ATP, 342-343. For a comment on the Romantics’ notions of Spirit, Nature and a Whole that is organic, see also C1, 54.
movement or, say, a change in a state of affairs, or of a group of people in a certain heterogeneous flux.

The representation-image itself may be a graphical depiction (figurative mimesis) just as much as the illustration of the most abstract signification of ideas or concepts through a figuratively deformed image. At this point we can see why we will have little use for a distinction between on the one hand a figurative “stand[ing] in for” that “produces the likeness of an original”, and on the other “alterations of resemblance” in the sense of deformations of or artistic additions to figurative mimesis. Rancière describes this as a distinction between the “two different things” to which the term Image refers. If the first sense of the term concerns figurative likeness, the second is artistic images that produce a “discrepancy, a dissemblance”, which he exemplifies with “brushstrokes that are superfluous when it comes to revealing who is represented in the portrait; and elongation of bodies that express their motion at the expense of their proportions; a turn of language that accentuates the expression of a feeling or rendering the perception of the idea more complex” (6). But this second idea of image, I argue, does not necessarily break with representation any more than the first. In the present discussion, figurative mimesis “that produces the likeness of an original” is far from the only determining factor in distinguishing whether an image is representational.

Representation, rather, regards “givens” in the sense that “figurative givens” are only one example among other, often more abstract, givens. “Givens”, or as Deleuze calls them, “clichés”, are therefore far from necessarily challenged by pictorial deformations. Rancière further on notes that the second type of image, the “artistic” image, distances itself from producing (figurative) resemblance only to “discover a different resemblance”, which often concerns an “absolutely other which is also absolutely the same”. This all

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91 And this is finally also a point that Rancière shares. He makes the distinction quoted above only as a lead up to making other kinds of points about various ideas of “image”. What are to be extracted from his rather complex discussion, however, are only his problematizations of oppositions between figurative resemblance and non-figurative images. One thing is that he identifies in the modern another idea of the artistic image, which does not counter figurative resemblances or the mere mirroring of reality by disfiguration but through immediate “material presence” which is basically a non-signifying visual “showing” but given meaning by its venue of presentation as well as the surrounding discourses of commenting and historicizing knowledge (8-9, 23, 26). Another thing is what he calls a “representative regime in the arts” as not at all “the regime of resemblance to which the modernity of non-figurative art, or even the art of the unrepresentable, is opposed” (12, 119f). We should add, however, that his notion of a “representational regime” refers to a historical phase with a certain logic for configuring the sensible that since the 19th century has been supplanted by “an aesthetic regime”. This is important to mention only to point out that we are not presently concerned with those aspects of his thought (they will be briefly be discussed in an elaboration in 5.1 below). Against, what are retained from Rancière’s here are only his problematizations of the idea of an opposition between representation and non-figuration.
means, I argue, that in determining the representational function of “image”, we are not particularly helped by distinguishing between whether it is figuratively resembling or not. Reversely, the case may be, as Deleuze writes in his book on Bacon, that the “greatest transformation of the cliché [...] will not produce the slightest pictorial deformation” (FB, 92).

A representational function of images, then, is not reducible to pictorial depiction in the sense of graphic resemblance/figurative mimesis (this was perhaps more obvious before Alberti’s systematization of artificial perspective in 1435). Furthermore, pictorial abstraction or images of something imagined or immaterial far from necessarily removes the image from a representational function. Often a signifying function can be even stronger when graphic depiction is de-emphasized, as with an abstract painting or “pure form” signifying a concept. Certainly there are notions of certain artistic images as being “non-representational” in more strict senses – such as paintings conceived to be merely a play with colors on a surface (or expressions that are regarded to pass under representation and directly affect the body). This may be seen to be an exception but it may certainly also lead in a narrower direction – for instance what Deleuze in the cinema books calls “formalist antics” and to which we can add digital-effects trickery – than the concept of the sub-representational we are leading up to, and our concern with thought and not merely bodily affect.

A more difficult complication is found in culture studies leaning conceptions of the term, in which representation is irreducible to mere secondary mediation. Cultural “texts” are rather active participators in the distribution of ideas and sentiments within a larger cultural context – that is, they have “effects”. But this, it seems to me, does not necessarily go against claiming that the overwhelming majority of moving images participate in larger cultural contexts precisely by expressing ideas that do little more than, if not merely reproduce, shuffle around or hegemonically “negotiate” more abstract ideas, figures and structures that pre-exist (or remain more or less undisturbed). This is so even when they are stylistically or sensorially inventive, such as forming or anticipating new trends, or when having a somewhat critical stance towards what is represented. Representation is a complex part of social reality. It can certainly be active and innovative, even when concerned with finding fresh new forms for the effective re-production of dominant ideas and structures. Few today would argue that cultural representations are merely about transparent mediation. What is at stake here is certainly not representation in the most naïve sense of being a pure “window on the world”. A representation, of course, always includes that the pre-existing represented is subject to some kind of selection and alteration (and

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92 On some of the intricacies of the “effects” of the image on social reality and vice-versa in this sense, see Jane M. Gaines, Fire & Desire, Mixed-Race Movies in the Silent Era (Chicago/London: The University of Chicago Press, 2001), pp. 228-229, 253-254.
this insight follows the most traditional platonic conception of the image as secondary and limited).

On the level of concrete objects and practices, image as representation can regard many things from artistic or ordinary communicational pictures (like advertising or information signs) to textual metaphors or images in the mind. The commonality in at least traditional conceptions of “image” lies in the image regarded, or ultimately functioning, as an image of something else. Representation, however, even in its traditional meaning, certainly is a very common function of images in culture.

*Bergson makes a drastic move here, utilized by Deleuze for his own ends, which open up for substantially different conceptions of images. The universe of matter is conceptualized, on its most primitive level, as a non-centered (“acentered”) aggregate of moving images (in processes of differentiation and specification). “Bergson”, writes Deleuze in Cinema 1, “was writing Matter and Memory in 1896: it was the diagnosis of a crisis in psychology. Movement, as physical reality in the external world, and the image, as psychic reality in consciousness, could no longer be opposed” (C1, ix). It was no longer possible, that is, to place images in consciousness (qualitative and without extension) and movement in space (extended and quantitative). It was precisely around this time that the cinematic moving image was developing, but the philosophers discussing movement and image at the time were uninterested or unimpressed. Deleuze on his part argues that cinema “would produce its own evidence of a movement-image” (C1, 56). Husserl offered one solution for the crisis: “all consciousness is consciousness of

93 For an insightful run-through of much from the “incredible variety of things that go by” the name of “image” throughout the history of Western philosophy, science and art, see W. J. T. Mitchell, “What Is an Image?”, New Literary History (15:3, Spring, 1984), pp. 503-537. When it comes to the cinematographic image and the figurative representation of things and objects in reality, Trond Lundemo gives an excellent overview of theoretical problems and notions. He begins by charting some of the early theoretical reactions to cinema’s at the time unrivaled capacity to produce reality-effects or mimetic illusions. Those that argued that cinema was not an art pointed to this mimetic capacity as evidence (it merely imitates reality); and those that argued in favor of cinema being art tended to point instead either to its mimetic limitations (and the compositional aspects involved behind making a film), or its other kinds of mimetic abilities (such as mimicking psychological processes). “The Colour of the Invisible; Methodological Remarks on Haptic and Optic Visual Modes”, Seijo Journal of Aesthetics and Art History (16, 2004), pp. 41-45.

94 This includes images/representations taking on a life of their own regarding meaning (or some endless deferral of meaning), which in turn effects reality, since it on a basic level represents something – even if only a representation of a representation.

95 “Images” equates matter-movement-light, C1, 49, 56-60. See also the first chapter of Bergson’s Matter and Memory. More specifically, in Bergson matter-image is a form of vibration, with different levels of contraction and relaxation, in which light is one of its aspects.
something”. Bergson, more strongly (or even reversely), claimed that consciousness itself is something: it is a living moving image among other moving images.

This move has far-reaching implications. Not only is consciousness already a moving “image”, so are the things we perceive: the moving images that we consciously perceive are already light-perceptions-images in-themselves. All matter-images across the universe are luminous perceptions in-themselves, in contrast to objects waiting to be illuminated by a perceiving (human) consciousness. Images of things are therefore not born in our heads; the perceptions are primarily in what we perceive. Images are therefore not primarily images of. Images are primarily in themselves and for themselves. In this sense there is nothing behind the image. Consciousness, as a specific kind of “living” image, is an image experienced from the “inside”. Images do not arise merely in our consciousness, but consciousness, reversely, arises within an image. Is one of the implications here a path to the most naïve realism, that is, a direct transparency between consciousness and other things? No. The “inside” of consciousness extends to a complexity that we can of course not grasp with mere natural perception, and certainly not from the perspective of our daily habitual lives. This ontological notion of consciousness and things as “moving images” is therefore not at all an epistemological claim in the sense of assuming some transparent knowledge about the full nature of the “images” perceived by our consciousness. On the contra-

96 This image ontology should of course not be confused with a presentation of Deleuze’s own philosophy of matter (or Bergson’s) in its full complexity. But it serves to conceptualize reality from a perspective important for the problems worked on in the cinema books – and as we shall see, the final problem, extended in What is Philosophy? is the nature of thinking from the perspective of immanence. Consciousness and things are both moving images, which means that thinking and things, while clearly distinct, can be found on the same plane of immanence. Notwithstanding the complexity of this concept, what Deleuze and Guattari calls “the plane of immanence” has “two facets as Thought and as Nature […]”, WPh, 38.

97 Deleuze and Bergson are concerned with putting forth positive speculative philosophies, that is, in contrast to negative philosophies restricted to dealing with the limits of knowledge. This means, of course, a concern with metaphysics – in a particular sense. This is not the place to elaborate on the many complexities and nuances of what this means in Deleuze at large. But here are some summary comments: in clear contrast to most of the other known philosophers of his generation, Deleuze described himself as a “pure metaphysician”. This is, however “metaphysics” in a very non-classical sense. It does not mean that he was a naïve realist, a mystic or that he tried to construct a metaphysical system of representation. It means that he, like the Greeks and a plethora of philosophers throughout history before him, made positive philosophical claims about the fundamental nature of reality (in contrast to the dominant 20th-century views that reduced reality, in the sense of what we can say or think about it, to how it appears for us through the shifting prisms of phenomena like language, discourse or “natural perception”). Deleuze – like so many philosophers across the ages – was attuned to and informed by a selected amount of findings from the natural sciences, since they too, although in different ways and with different aims and conducts, are interested in the fundamental constitution of being and not simply how it appears for us. But Deleuze’s interest in science (and mathematics) was substantially different from a “philosophy of science” (which is basically concerned with the logical argumentation of scientific discourse). Following
ry, the images we tend to make are *subtractions*, or “framings”, determined largely by our needs, interests, and capabilities (*C1*, 63). “No doubt there can be *more* in matter than the image we have of it,” Deleuze writes in his 1966 book on Bergson, “but there cannot be anything else in it, of a different kind”.

Human perception is not static, but it is certainly limited. Of the acentered universe of moving images, or “[u]niversal variation, universal interaction […] what Cézanne had already called the world before man”, Deleuze says: “It is not surprising that we have to construct it since it is given only to the eye which we do not have” (*C1*, 81). But there are many things that exceed natural perception, perhaps most importantly science, scientific technology and art. And it is precisely in its potential to exceed and challenge “the images we have” that the cinema, along with other phenomena that surpass the conditions of “natural perception”, can serve to widen what can be thought.

We will return to the various potentials of cinema below.

The point with the notion of “image” that we have discussed here is *not* to give some crude *ground* to the universe. The point is instead that there is no in-itself beyond moving images. There is only a more or less unfathomable *moving* complexity across many dimensions within this universe (or, I may add, sets of universes in the sense that scientists now refer to as a “multiverse”). On a larger scale, the point with all this is to ward off *transcendence*, that is, a presumed realm or some in-itself that is believed to be other than the images (whether this realm or in-itself is considered to be accessible or not is beside the point). On a smaller scale, more important for our concerns here, the point is to underline how images as representation, as images *of*, is only an effect of certain logical relations between images. The relation between cinematic moving images and things/objects are only artificially reduced to signification, denotation or depiction. It unavoidably “represents” in the most basic sense of *subsuming* stuff that was in front of the camera into a cinematographic image. But this is part of the creation of its own, autonomous cinematic “reality which ‘speaks’ through its objects” (*C2*, 136-156, 157-181).

Bergson, Deleuze saw himself as a metaphysician in the more creative and autonomous sense of aiming to extract and conceptualize from science (although only as one of many non-philosophical realms that interested Deleuze) the metaphysics that it lacks. In other words, extracting the “transcendental horizon” that is the “unthought” in science, which can only be formulated on a philosophical plane of thought (a plane of immanence) and not on a scientific plane of thought (a plane of reference). For an ambitious and dense explication of these matters, see de Beistegui, 2004: 1-26, 187-334.

The question of how to be able to think a “not yet individuated world of movement of things themselves” is discussed by Pasi Väliaho, as part of an interesting analysis of the development in Nietzsche towards a non-representational, “differential” conception of “image”, and how this relates to “potentialities in cinematic expression and thinking”, Mapping the Moving Image: Gesture, Thought and Cinema circa 1900 (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2010), 136-156, 157-181.

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77
That is, it is not an “autonomous” image of reality, but a making into a new reality. This autonomous new reality of moving images “speaks” not as a language or a language system, but as a signaletic matter, that is, as an “a-signifying and a-syntactic material”.

Or rather, this is the primary material of the cinematic moving-image, its most basic level. But of course, this does not in any way hinder films from being assembled according to logics of representation and signification. What is revealed here is only that this is not a given, and that moving images therefore may be assembled otherwise. “Otherwise” may be returning to the zero-degree of perception-image-matter (“zeroness”) that we have just described; or it may concern the pure expression of a quality or affect that refers only to itself (“firstness”); or the multiplying of relations beyond referenced/reference (action-reaction) into a relation-image (“thirdness”). But more importantly, and this is what we will investigate as part of the “time-image” below, we can go from there into time and multiplicity.

Deleuze’s cinema books can in this way be said to investigate basically two paths towards states prior to representation: zeroness and multiplicity. It is the second path that offers the more important raw material for the untimely-image.

The zero-level of images remains important, however, for the basic reimagining of what the term “image” entails. Some further remarks on this perhaps somewhat counterintuitive notion of images as matter-movement: This is not an absurd claim that reality is two-dimensional or reducible to surfaces, information or representation, or some reductionist conception of nature and reality. The aim is not to make reality less, but to make “image” more, for particular philosophical reasons having to do with univocity and immanence – an immanence that is not only completely differential and (self)-differentiating (and in Deleuze also disjunctive and non-harmonious), but that in its basic form makes up an acentered universe: things do not become images only when they are images for or images of; they are already images in themselves and for themselves. Clearly, this is a very different kind of claim about images than what is found in Baudrillard, Debord or even Deleuze and Guattari on a more general note than the cinema, the sense expressed by signs – “linguistic” or not – is not primarily about their “meaning” or “signification” (or even connotations), ATP, 65-66. But what is instead of interest in art is not only how images and signs that constitute sense through how “expression precedes content and draws it along (on the condition, of course, is nonsignifying) […]”, but more profoundly in how signs are conceived of as “signals”, Deleuze & Guattari, Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature [1975], trans. Dana Polan (Minneapolis/London: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), p. 41, see also 55. “A matter of expression is never a vestige or a symbol. […] It is an operator, a vector”, ATP, 324-325. On how Deleuze sees the relation between images and signs, see C1, 69.

On Deleuze’s notion of pure perception-image as “zeroness”, his readings of Peirce’s “firstness”, “secondness”, “thirdness”, and how thirdness can be combined in ways that, beyond the regime of the movement-image as well as Peirce’s analysis, extend to “produce any multiplicity”, see C2, 30-34.
Heidegger. Despite the significant differences between those thinkers, there is a common structure where the (historical/social/ontological) real/Being has, objectively, become image/representation for humans (in the West), at the same time as a more authentic reality has receded for whatever reason. For Bergson, and Deleuze from this perspective, the authentic real itself is “images”, and it has been that way since “the world before man”. The “black screens” that constitute consciousness are an interruption and subtraction within and among the universal flow of moving-images-light, which curves the universe and gives it a center or point of view – conscious perception (C1, 60-64). From a vast amount of surrounding images and actions the subtractive process selects a limited few that is dragged into a frame. Beside the limitations in our perceptions, this selection tends to be determined habitually by the subject’s interests and needs, which in turn tend to be dictated by its capacity for action. The subject constitutes, however, a “center of indetermination”, a gap between action and reaction where incoming perception-stimuli is processed in never fully predictable ways before the acting out of a sensory-motor response. For Bergson this is where freedom and thinking is made possible. The needs and interests, and correspondingly the complexity of consciousness, are (generally) different for an amoeba and a human being. The aggregate of different images that is the amoeba is likely only able to perform the simplest of sensory-motor functions, with not much

102 Paola Marrati: “[H]eidegger gives a powerful interpretation of the ontological status of images in modernity. He describes the modern age as a double movement by which man becomes subject and the world as image are the two faces of representation, which is the real ontological foundation of modernity. [T]he world itself […] has become image because its essence is to be given to a subject in representation. [I]t is precisely insofar as modernity is the age of representation that it is also, inseparably, the age of technics and science: as an object of representation, the world becomes an object of calculation and mastery. The objectivity of science is secured by the objectivity of representation: subjectivity and objectivity is the two faces of a single ontological condition.” Paola Marrati, Gilles Deleuze: Cinema and Philosophy [2003], trans. Alisa Hartz (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008), pp. 27-28, see also 3.

103 Baudrillard, in contrast, famously talks about “postmodern” images in terms of “simulacra” where images no longer even reference reality but has become “hyperreal”, Simulations, trans. Paul Foss, Paul Patton, Philip Beitchman (USA, Semiotext[e], 1983). On the vast differences between the basic meaning of concepts such as image and “simulacra” (and virtual and actual) in Deleuze’s and Baudrillard’s very different respective philosophies, see Claire Colebrook, Gilles Deleuze (London/New York: Routledge, 2002), pp. 99-101. But we must add to Colebrook’s points here: after having for two decades used other concepts “to designate multiplicities” Deleuze says in 1990, that “it seems to me that I have totally abandoned the notion of simulacra, which is all but worthless”. Deleuze, “Letter-Preface to Jean-Clet Martin”, Two Regimes of Madness: Texts and Interviews 1975-1995 / Gilles Deleuze, eds. David Lapoujade, trans. by Ames Hodges and Mike Taormina (New York: Semiotext(e), 2007), p. 362. The concept “simulacra” made sense to Deleuze as part of an early Nietzsche-inspired discussion of an anti-Platonist tendency found in parts of Plato himself. Deleuze then “drops the notion as he forges his own ontological terminology”, Daniel Smith, “The Concept of the Simulacrum: Deleuze and the Overturning of Platonism”, Continental Philosophy Review (38, 2006), p. 116.
need of a complex center of indetermination in between. How is this relevant for the cinema?

Here is a basic but imperative point as all this applies to the cinema: to reveal the possible ability for non-human images – even images produced by machines – to think. Cinematic technology can produce moving-image systems, which includes sounds and speech acts specific to the moving image, with the capacity to form thought. Such non-human images can form various kinds of thought-images. As images produced by, or through machines, the cinema, wholly irreducible to, or even contradictory to, “natural perception”, holds the potential not only to further deterritorialize an anthropocentrically anchored view of the world but also to expand what it means to think, and potentially even allow us to think what is “unthinkable”.

But we must also recognize that cinematic images can form sequences that make up any kind of “thinking” in the widest sense of the term: habitual, stupid, intelligent, new, clichéd, original, derivative, disruptive, non-reflexive, non-linear, etc. It can be an amoeba that hardly transcends the simplest sensory-motor functions, an unforeseen cinema-philosophy, or anything in-between. My claim here may at first seem unorthodox given that Deleuze tends to reserve the term “thought” for what he considers to be a advanced, high level thinking (in addition to his more or less exclusive involvement with films he regards to be “masterpieces”). In one interview Deleuze famously says: “My argument is simple: the great auteurs of film are thinking, thought exists in their work, and making a film is creative, living thought”. But in the context of Deleuze’s cinema writing as a whole it is clear that the term “thought” basically has a less exclusive meaning. “[M]ost cinematic production”, Deleuze says in another interview, “reflects mental deficiency rather than any invention of new cerebral circuits.” This is another way of saying that it reflects ready-made and clichéd thought or even “the most basic conditioned reflexes” (Negotiations, 60, 61). In the famous interview called “The Brain is the Screen”, Deleuze argues that cinema “puts the image in motion” such that it manifests nothing less than “movement of the mind” (that is, “mind” in the sense of irreducible to the human mind). Cinema is like an actual thinking brain a “tracing and retracing of cerebral circuits”, but as Deleuze less famously adds, this “can be the deficient idiot brain, as well as the brain of a creative genius”.

The openness of ways that moving images and sounds can be put together – an openness which is irreducible to human “natural” capacity, or to lan-

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104 “[T]he specificity of cinematographic perception lies precisely in the fact that it cannot be referred back to any subjective center. […] Deleuze’s project is thus to […] describe what belongs exclusively to cinema, and to analyze how and in what singular modes cinema thinks in images themselves”, Marrati, 2008: 2. On cinema as the exceeding of as well as contradiction of natural perceptions see C1, 8; C2, 201.

105 “Portrait of the Philosopher as Moviegoer”, Two Regimes of Madness, 220.

106 “The Brain is the Screen”, Two Regimes of Madness, 284.
guage or “discourse” – holds potentials to expand thinking from the outside. But it could also have the reverse function. The cinema, with its montage and movement, came with the basic potential (but far from guarantee) for breaking with what Deleuze labels dogmatic or representational thought. In *Difference and Repetition*, Deleuze primarily equated the word “image” with such thought (“the image of thought”) and called for a *thought without image*. It has been argued that the cinema books therefore express or are the result of important new developments in Deleuze’s thought. In slightly different ways, Paola Marrati and Raymond Bellour suggest that a decisive shift is evident in the cinema books: the much more positive and pluralistic conception of image-s of thought.

**Elaboration: From One to Many Images of Thought?**

In this elaboration I will critically examine this notion of a shift. That is, the assumption that early Deleuze had a negative conception of “image-thought” and/or “image of thought”, calling for “thought without image”, which then changes to a positive conception of many different kinds of thought-images as evident in the cinema books (first volume published 1983, second 1985). I will argue against this and show that the cinema books represented not a shift but a systematization and development of ideas already present in early Deleuze. There are changes, but compared to Marrati and Bellour’s respective claims there is more continuity in Deleuze’s thinking about the relation of thought and images from the 60s up to the cinema books and beyond. This continuity also entails Deleuze’s notion – borrowed from Foucault who borrows it from Blanchot – of thinking in relation to an “outside”, a concept that neither Marrati nor Bellour discusses. The elaboration ends by linking the concept of the “outside” with Deleuze’s take on thought and images. The point of this somewhat extensive and technical elaboration are twofold: to help advance the understanding of how Deleuze’s conception of thinking and images in the cinema books relate to the conceptions of thinking and images in his other writing; and to further qualify parameters for the discussions of thought-images and the problem of the new in thought-images.

First, what exactly does the proposed change or development consist of? Marrati writes that Deleuze’s “encounter with cinema” led him “to reconsider the ontological status of images. Images are capable of all sorts of movement and are affected by all dimensions of time” (2008: 4). And, as she goes on to argue, this new Bergson-derived conception of images leads Deleuze to his formulation of the different planes of immanence of thought developed in *What is Philosophy?* The plane of immanence of thinking came to form a kind of continu-

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107 As Tom Conley writes: “Deleuze’s work as a philosopher and critical writer […] needs to be read in its totality; from the linkages and ruptures of its details and from its isolated fragments productive itineraries and connections can be made”, *Cartographic Cinema* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007), p. 10.
um, spanning human thought and the open universe of moving matter. Following the study of cinema, this means according to Marrati that images have gained “all sorts of speeds and movements, all sorts of depths of time [since] infinite movement and image have become unified and inseparable, constituting a plane of immanence” (2008: 93). Raymond Bellour, on his part, outlines what he considers to be Deleuze’s path from an earlier call for a “thought without image” to an affirmation of different thought-images. He argues that in the cinema books “the split between image-thought and thought without image posed in Difference and Repetition gets reframed purely in terms of differences between images”. (Before we move on here, I must add something central that is forgotten in these discourses: sounds and speech. The moving image as concerning “all sorts of depths” of time and thought must include the various relations between the visual moving images and sounds and speech acts that are specific to the moving image, that may also constitute “framed” audio-images of their own.)

Let us now problematize this notion of a development. As a first step we can utilize one of Marrati’s own claims. In a footnote she argues that Deleuze since his 1962 book on Nietzsche has “hesitated” between “the call for a ‘thought without image […] and the hope of creating a ‘new image of thought’”. What is “decisive in What Is Philosophy?”, she continues, “is that images of thoughts are multiplied and are henceforth endowed with the same mobility and depth of time as those of cinema” (2008: 124-125, note 32). But we can complicate the notion of a development much more than what Marrati does here. First of all, in A Thousand Plateaus (1980) there is a hint towards at least a pluralistic notion of images with the suggested concept of “Noology” as “precisely the study of images of thought, and their historicity” (376). In this book, “private thinkers” like Nietzsche are said to “destroy images” (376-377). But the word “image” is here used in a restricted sense: as dogmatic images. This kind of image is referred to as a “classical image” and as “this image” (379), not as thought-images per se. This was the case already in Difference and Repetition (1968), in which the notion of a thought without image was exclusively about “a thought without Image” – that is, Image with a capital “I”. This Image was defined as a “dogmatic, orthodox or moral image” with many variants (DR, 168,

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108 Bellour, “The Image of Thought”, Afterimages of Gilles Deleuze’s Film Philosophy, eds. D.N. Rodowick (Minneapolis : University of Minnesota Press, 2010), 5.
109 Deleuze discusses the various functions of specifically cinematic forms of sound and speech primarily in Chapter 9 of Cinema 2. At times Deleuze also implies that the cinema is actually capable of thinking visually “without image”. For instance in quoting Jean-Louis Schefer’s analysis of the beginning of Kurosawa’s Throne of Blood/Cobweb Castle (1957) that concludes with describing a section as “thought, without body and without image”, a quote that Deleuze uses to extend to other examples “This was also the case with….” C2, 169. This interestingly helps to problematize the notion of a shift in Deleuze’s thinking of thought and image from the opposite direction – that is, the particular notion of thought without image is retained in the cinema book not discarded.
It is furthermore doubtful that Deleuze’s early discussion of a creation of a “new image of thought” in Nietzsche is reducible, as Maratti writes, to a “hope”. Already in Deleuze’s 1964 book on Proust, he writes that the latter “sets up an image of thought in opposition to the [essential presuppositions of a classical philosophy of the rationalist type]” which is “an image of thought under the sign of encounters and violences [that forces us to think]” (Proust and Signs, 94, 100) (Worth mentioning is also the positive notion of a plurality of images as “simulacra” in Deleuze’s 60s critique of Plato.)

But let us now directly address the question of cinema. The “encounter with cinema” that Marrati mentions, had actually occurred for Deleuze decades before he published his cinema books, and the reconsidering of “the ontological status of images” where images gains “all sorts of speeds and movements, all sorts of depths of time” may not be explicit in his 1966 book on Bergson, but a Bergsonian and Nietzschean notion of images as applied to cinema and thinking was present at the time. The connection between cinema and sub-representational thought-images is something that Deleuze gave voice to in an interview in 1968, right before the publication of Difference and Repetition:

Godard transforms cinema by introducing thought into it. He didn’t have thoughts on cinema, he doesn’t put more or less valid thought into cinema: he starts cinema thinking, and for the first time, if I’m not mistaken. […] Godard knew how to find both a new means and a new “image” […]

In an interview with Cahiers du Cinéma in 1976 Deleuze furthermore makes explicit how many of the constitutive parts of his reading of the cinema through Bergsonian thought with its plurality of different images are already in place (Negotiations, 42-43). Deleuze’s notions of the relation between thought and images, then, follow no clear arc of evolution. Rather, there is a large degree of continuity to his views, which are multifaceted and differently emphasized when dealing with different problems. But there is another parameter that must be added to “thought” and “images”: the outside.

The concept of the “outside” is not included in Marrati’s discussions (and less in Bellour’s). The outside is the unthought in thought and the condition of the new. Thought-images are not only imbued with “all sorts of speeds and movements, all sorts of depths of time”, as Marrati writes. They also have a relationship – beyond the Bergsonian – with an outside. In Deleuze’s Nietzsche

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110 One may object by pointing to how Deleuze also writes in this text that “It is not a question of opposing to the dogmatic image of thought another image borrowed, for example, from schizophrenia […]”, DR, 185. But this, I argue, is merely to say that it is not about pitting one representational (general, preconceived) image against another. That is, to make sure that thought conceived as not adhering to the dogmatic image is perceived as something that will in the end present nothing other than an alternative representational image.


112 On the unthought in thought as the “outside”, see Deleuze, Foucault, 96f.
and Philosophy (1962) the dogmatic Image is pitted against a “new image of thought”. Along with a new notion of “sense and value”, this new image is concerned with “the real forces that form thought”.113 Such forces are the forces of the outside. A Thousand Plateaus describes how the concern of a certain tradition of “counterthought” (e.g. Nietzsche) was to “place thought in an immediate relation with the outside, with the forces of the outside” (376-377). But can the outside itself be an image in any sense? Can it ever be a direct image? Here lies the importance of the specificity of moving images with sound and all the possibilities that lies in composing them (shots and framings) and creating linkages (montage) between them, as well as between the visual and the audio. Marie-Claire Ropars-Wuilleumier, referencing the specific kinds of thought-images conceptualized towards the end of Cinema 2, asserts that while the outside cannot be a direct localized image it will nonetheless find itself incorporated “into the image’s inside, thus proposing a sort of visibility of the invisible itself”.114

But creative thought can never be anything but intertwined with images, with a more stable territory. Why? The lines that lead to the outside are “deadly”, as Deleuze says in 1986 in an interview about Foucault. The line has to be harnessed. As he goes on to say: “[W]e have to manage to fold the line and establish an endurable zone in which to install ourselves, confront things, take hold, breathe – in short, think” (Negotiations, 113). The ending of Cinema 2 can perhaps be said to deal with a relation between the image and outside that is their point of co-existence where the most productive thought occurs. Cinema 2 goes far in conceptualizing this co-existence made visible as or between images (or between images and sound).

On the most general level, to think means to orient oneself in a thinking-milieu, or a “geography” of thinking. This geography can be more or less pre-determined and more or less determined by the belief that to traverse it is to exercise a natural faculty (extended in a proper method). Representational thought – covering both the empirical and the “transcendental” – envisions its own activity as the exercising of a pre-given capacity and desire to seek

113 See section called “New Image of Thought”, 103-110. Deleuze: “By placing thought in the element of sense and value, by making thought an active critique of stupidity and baseness, Nietzsche proposes a new image of thought”, 107; and later on he writes that Nietzsche actually set “up a new image of thought”, 195.

114 Ropars-Wuilleumier, “Image or Time? The Thought of the Outside in The Time-Image (Deleuze and Blanchot)”, Afterimages of Gilles Deleuze’s Film Philosophy, eds. D.N. Rodowick (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010), p. 17. Jean-Clet Martin discusses Rembrandt’s painting as wearing the mask of the old image of thought in order to smuggle in the subtle expression of a new image of thought and even of the outside, “The Image of Thought”, Deleuze Studies (3, 2009), pp. 1-25. But it seems to me that painting, however expressive in other respects, will in contrast to moving images with sound always be comparably more like representations of a new image of thought and the outside than itself directly expressive of them. C.f. footnote 235 below.
the truth (battling error/false recognition). For Deleuze, in contrast, to think is not based on pre-given universal coordinates, but on coordinates that are themselves temporal and more or less in a state of transition (see 1.1. above). Classic representational thought (actively) excludes temporality and transition in this sense. It makes up a naturalized set of coordinates, axes and orientations that form a generalizable image – based on certain presuppositions of what it means to think – that Deleuze terms “representation”. Its elements are identity for concepts, opposition for determining relations between concepts, analogy in relation to judgment, and resemblance in relation to objects – all grounded in and centered on the practice of recognition and the form of identity (which all difference, reduced to mediation, is subordinated and measured in relation to) and a thinking I that unites them. It is therefore unable to think generative force and difference in itself. But although this kind of thought is critiqued, this is not to say that it is to be dismissed. A main point of the critique is to not mistake representation for a ground. Representation and its forms – “opposition, resemblance, identity and even analogy” – are not illusory but have a certain correspondence with real states. More precisely, representation is not illusionary as long as one realizes that it is no fundamental condition but rather concerns more or less temporary effects of more primary processes of difference (DR, 182).

Cinema provided Deleuze with a concrete way to think through and conceptualize differences between organizations of thought in these senses. It also gave the opportunity to nuance the generalizations of thought-types into an almost endless plethora of types or sub-types. Deleuze’s vast “taxonomy” of different kinds of moving images in the cinema books are really a logic, or a “cartography”, of thought-images as within what he regarded to be extraordinary films extracted from film history (determined of course by what was available to Deleuze in Paris) up to the time of writing the cinema books.

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115 On these elements and how they interrelate specifically see DR, 174; on further details of Deleuze’s critique of representational or dogmatic thought see the whole third chapter of DR. This critique is subsequently extended, varied nuanced, and developed, not least in the cinema books.

116 Deleuze’s cinema books are a taxonomy instead of a history of the cinema. This is important to point out since they have often been misunderstood as a history and criticized on such grounds. This is despite the fact that Deleuze opens the original preface to the first volume with the following statement: “This study is not a history of the cinema. It is a taxonomy, an attempt at the classification of images and signs”, C1, xiv; and the preface to the English edition with: “This book does not set out to produce a history of the cinema but to isolate certain cinematographic concepts” (ix). This means that if one argues that there is whatever historical mistake somewhere in Deleuze’s theories, this is not automatically to argue against a mistake in the taxonomy.
The cinematic image is not an image of movement so much as an image that moves in itself. As correspondingly consisting of self-moving movement-images, the universe itself can be seen as a “metacinema” (C1, 59). This is why Deleuze as he lays out the basic components of the cinematic movement-image in the first parts of Cinema 1 simultaneously talks about the abstracted basic components of the universe. The “mother movement-image” of the cinema corresponds with a kind of raw “state of nature” of universal variation. The narrative that spans across the two books also read like a dazzling map of the evolution of thought, from the most chaotic states of matter forming subjective centers up until the practicing of contemporary philosophy.

2.3. Thought & Belief in Two Different Regimes of Images

The two cinema books are generally divided to cover two types of moving-image organizations, which are based on two different kinds of images of thought. These are the two largest categories, each covering a potentially infinite array of different types of images and signs, and mixed formations and combinations of images and signs.117 Cinema 1: The Movement-Image centers on discussions of images that give images of time – time represented. The open whole of time is represented by movements in shots (positions in space) and in montage that creates the whole which represents time. The movement-image in this sense has “two faces”: “one turned towards the characters, the objects and the actions in movement, the other turned towards a whole which changes progressively as the film goes on”.118 So “the cinematographic image [is put] into a relationship with a conception of a whole of time. In this way it gives an indirect image of time, simultaneously in the individual movement-image shot and in the whole of the film” (C1, 55). The whole that it relates to is indeed a whole that changes – it is time as the open.119 But these changes are only expressed as movement and as represent-
ed and implied by montage.\textsuperscript{120} Time is shown “only by association and generalization, or as concept” (C2, 43). It is an image of time, since time is “deduced from movement-images and their relationships” (C1, 29).

The whole that changes is open but only as simultaneously given on the levels of thought or signification: “a whole of the film [...] in which the world [...] formed a signifying unity, working through figures which were themselves significant” (C2, 182). “Given”, then, not in the sense of a given or closed spatiality, but as the unfolding of organic, pre-conceived meaning: Universal History/Progress/ etc., or abiding by some other grand Idea or organic Unity (the People, Spirit, etc.) that the whole of the film (implicitly or explicitly) presupposes, points towards, or tries to give organic expression to, basically through movement-action.\textsuperscript{121} The “whole” is therefore both open and already given simultaneously. Deleuze:

\begin{quote}
The concept as a “whole” differentiates by “externalizing itself in a sequence of associated images, and the images do not associate without being internalized in a concept as the whole which integrates them. Hence the ideal of knowledge as harmonious totality, which sustains this classical representation. Even the fundamentally open character of the whole does not compromise this model, on the contrary, because the out-of-field shows an associability which extends and goes beyond the given images, but also expresses the changing whole which integrates the extendable sequences of images [...] (C2, 210, 238).
\end{quote}

In contrast, the “time-image”, which is primarily dealt with in the second volume of the cinema books, deals with images that show time directly – not an image of time, but a direct time-image. From the most organic time-images and signs which only give glimpses, these images open up towards more complex co-existences and linkages of virtual time and thought. Time is no longer represented by linkages and stretches of movement within the confines of an organic whole, but now settles directly into singular images

\textsuperscript{120} Deleuze: “[T]he open [whole] merged with the indirect representation of time: everywhere where there was movement, there was a changing whole open somewhere”, C2, 179.

\textsuperscript{121} Among the more obvious cases are American and Soviet cinema’s respective beliefs in a finality of universal history, C1, 148 (on “organic composition”, 151). But this type of logic is also mostly concurred by the two most in-organic of movement-images: the French “impressionist” school and the German “Expressionist” school with their “mathematical” and “dynamical” sublime, respectively. In different senses, both schools express that which is outside the limits of the imagination (in the sense of organic composition), which therefore “arouses a thinking faculty” to provide a conception of it nonetheless. Through the conception produced, everything expressed is (safely) collected into a whole that can at least be thought without terror respectively: “a measureless whole” of absolute movement, and a “supra-organic spirit which dominates the whole inorganic life of things” (this “supra-organic spirit” while at least quasi-religious, also point in time-image-like directions, but is still clearly described as indirect representations of time, C1, 53, 55 (45-54); C2, 157. In contrast, the time-image no longer gives “the consolation of the sublime, which [...] would gain control of the spirit”, C2, 40, 41. Furthermore, the “inorganic life” in German expressionism is “within the confines of a problem of Good and Evil”, C1, 185-186.
(and signs) opening up for new kinds of linkages, movements and rhythms. This is what is played out in what Deleuze calls “modern” cinema. We will come back to the “modern” time-image in a moment.

The movement-image has an internal tendency towards the external, to expand towards grander and grander “sets” and “worlds”, montage cutting its way to the moon in an instant, or vast circuits of fantasy, dreams or remembrance. But these elements tend to be contained within an organic-rational whole. Deleuze: “The model of the whole, of an open totality, presupposes that there are commensurable relations or rational cuts between images, in the image itself, and between image and whole” (Negotiations, 63). “The plane of consistency [and image of thought] of the cinematic movement-image”, writes D.N. Rodowick, “is the open totality of movement that gives rise to the model of the True as totalization.” We shall add, even as “the power of a whole which is constantly becoming”, it is still an organic-rational whole (C1, 82).

We cannot go into the details here of the sub-categories of movement-images. But the three most central are perception-images, affection-images, and action-images. They form around the structure of a “subjective center” in the Bergsonian sense of a gap in a sensory-motor interval that we discussed above, that is, a center of indetermination in between received perceptions and executed action. A subjective center is a curving of the universe not merely as perception but “already from the point of view of action”. The center analyses the received movements and performs a selection in regard to what movement to be executed. But action performed by a center/subject therefore also means “the delayed reaction of the centre of indetermination” (C1, 64). That is, action – as it follows from a certain freedom to decide how to react to the received movement – is that “which present[s] something unpredictable or new” (C1, 62). That is, this concerns the “new” only in the sensory-motor sense of a certain freedom of choice in how to react (how to extend incoming stimuli in a new action). But in this delay, there is also something that can appear more or less autonomously: affection or affect. In a basic ontological sense, this is the subject as perceiving itself as object – the experience or feeling of itself from the “inside”. As a type of image, it mostly regards when perceived incoming movement in a character, especially when it is “troubling”, is not merely reflected but also absorbed. The prolongation onto new action is momentarily delayed, and is instead acted out as a motor tendency on the nerves, which can translate to an expression of a

122 In the regime of the movement-image, the film frame makes up a closed, measured selection or “set”, where there is always a link (actualized by moving the camera or cutting) to external, unseen sets. The montage and the shifting of frames within a moving shot tend to contain a drive towards larger and (infinitely) larger sets that that in the end make up an unlimited “set of all sets”. But this is an infinite extension of spatial content and not a whole of time (which is not a set and that lacks “parts”). Time is therefore only indirectly shown.

123 Rodowick, 1997: 177; Deleuze, C2, 276-277.
pure “quality” or a pure “affect” (“pure” in the sense of a sign that refers only to itself, or what Peirce called “firstness”\textsuperscript{124}). Most typically as a close-up (of a “face” in a very wide sense) but can also regard the whole of space, this is about images that temporarily abstract from the spatiotemporal, and/or human coordinates of a state of affairs “just enough to open up in space a dimension of another order favorable to these compositions of affects”.\textsuperscript{125} Affects can as such be more or less non-human and more or less “virtual”. But, at least in the regime of the movement-image, they are still linked in with an organic thought-whole (or “spiritual” whole), and logically centered as interval in a sensory-motor schema (\textsuperscript{C2}, 40). In the regime of the movement-image all these three types of images – perception-images, affection-images, and action images – are distinct points of views on, or a “reading” of the film as an organic whole (\textsuperscript{C1}, 70).

Each of these images-types can take the movement-image far towards different limits (and when they are part of time-images more clearly go beyond them). But it is a “mental image”, introduced by Hitchcock, with “a new, direct, relationship with thought” that according to Deleuze brings the logic of the movement-image as far as it can go (at least in the sense that it starts to open up for new kinds of thought-images). Instead of following any of the three images-types to their limits, the mental image abstracts them all into a direct thought-image. This image interprets the other images – as objects outside thought they become objects of thought. It gathers up the relations in the whole of the sensory-motor schema (perceptions, affections, actions) into a direct image of mental relations. The affection-images and action-images certainly contain thought and reasoning in one form or another (from the more or less habitual tasks of thought performed between affect and action to more advanced “figures of thought” at their limits to the thought-action of Eisenstein). But the mental image introduces something slightly different. In \textit{Cinema 2} Hitchcock and Eisenstein are postulated more like two different ways “in which cinema can carry its relationships with thought into effect” (\textsuperscript{C2}, 163-164). But what Hitchcock’s cinema of mental

\textsuperscript{124} \textit{C1}, 98f. Describing Peirce’s theory of “firstness” Deleuze writes that it “is difficult to define, because it is felt, rather than conceived: it concerns what is new in experience, what is fresh, fleeting and nevertheless eternal. Peirce gives, as we shall see, some very strange examples, but they all come down to this: qualities or powers considered for themselves, without reference to anything else, independently of any question of their actualisation. It is that which is as it is for itself and in itself”, \textit{C1}, 98, see also \textsuperscript{C2}, 30.

\textsuperscript{125} \textit{C1}, 101, emphasis mine. While somewhat unclear how Deleuze uses the term “possible” in the description of affect in \textit{Cinema 1} (since it here seems to function as a synonym to “potential”), it is noteworthy that he puts them in “category of the Possible”, and describes qualities as “pure ‘possibles’”, \textit{C1}, 98, 102, 109, 112, 117, emphasis mine. See 1.1 above for the imperative distinction in Deleuze between virtual potential and the possible. It should also be stated that some of Deleuze’s descriptions of affective space or “any-space-whatever” in \textit{Cinema 1} already here tend to ventures across to time-images; these tendencies crystallize on pages 120-121.
The relations between objects, perceptions, affections, and actions become objects of thought in a more open reasoning process. Actions become “acts”, perceptions become “interpretations”, and affections become “intellectual feelings of relations”. The latter appear around “the use of the logical conjunctions ‘because’, ‘although’, ‘so that’, ‘therefore’, ‘now’, etc.”. These conjunctions are a “third” intermediating between terms or sets of terms that form relations, which on a larger scale either make up logical series or logical wholes. This may sound merely like representational thinking in purer or more abstract form. But especially when the relations form series, they are not necessarily representative of anything other than the immanence of their very relations that are subject to modifications that can stretch out indefinitely (and that can contain terms that leap out of their places in a series in ways that completely shift things around). The “mental” abstractions do things to the movement-image that indicates openings for other kinds of thought-images (openings that are partly passed through in some of Hitchcock’s later films such as *Vertigo* and *Rear Window*). The emphasis on conjunctions and relations points towards the potential to make other kinds of linkages. Hitchcock abstracts the relations themselves, from character-subjects into a thinking image, from character-subjects as the locus of reasoning and thought to a camera that becomes increasingly “conscious”. He thereby externalizes relations and creates within the image a direct relation to thought.

What took the classical movement-image furthest, then, were not some modernistic extravaganzas, but the introduction directly into the image of a more open thought. The rational wholes of the movement-image could otherwise be exercised in dynamical ways and contain thought without leaving organic representation and an organization around action. For instance, the respective montage principles of Griffith and Eisenstein (organic/dialectic), are in their respective ways both rooted in a view of human society as an organic unity made up of a coherent system of necessary ties between its elements (although the elements come into conflict which means that the unity must be restored). Griffith conceives of the elements of the unity as naturally given binaries (rich/poor, good/bad, etc. whose unity is threatened only by individual passions and actions) and Eisenstein conceives of the elements as produced through historical dialectical processes which divide the unity into oppositions and conflicts only to reproduce a new unity on a higher level. Despite having different conceptions of its constitution both subscribe to organic unity whose dramatic movements are driven primarily by action – human agency.

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126 Deleuze describes the mental image in *C1*, 196-205.
127 *C1*, 30-40, 148-150; *C2*: 157-164. See also Marrati, xi f, 49-51, 98-103.
generally, History has often been seen as the results of subjective human actions (even when the action is performed by a collective, it is a collective that has “become subject”) that manage to exceed the structures or material conditions that bound them in a given state. But there are other ways to conceive of forces of transformation than action-movement within an organic whole.

The movement-image (famously) “subordinates time to movement”. But Deleuze subjects this view of time not only to a philosophical critique but also to a political critique. Maratti importantly notes how the cinema books’ repeated critical discussion of time understood as the measure of movement is due to how it also applies to

notions of subjectivity and history structured around the primacy of action. Such a primacy curves the universe, as Bergson writes, giving to it an organizing center, and in doing so, action shapes both space and time. Time takes on the form of the linear sequence of the past, present, and future of the action: it measures the movement of an acting subject. For Deleuze, such a logic of action presents a powerful and consistent way of understanding the bonds that humans create between them, their social and natural milieu, their individual and collective history. Such a logic of action is, for Deleuze, what sustains a specific form of subjectivity, as well as dominant conceptions of politics.¹²⁸

Dominant conceptions of politics here include not only liberal theories of democracy (Rawlsian or Habermasian) that “rely on, explicitly or implicitly, the notion of an individual subject whose rationality is primarily understood as a capacity for action”, but also more left-oriented political theories, of the sort that are based on the idea of the collective and the historical that share the adherence to defining subjectivity in terms of “action”. Or as Maratti writes: “The action-image is a cinematographical devise, but it spells out the continuity of individual and collective ways of understanding social and historical life as oriented by and towards action”.¹²⁹ But action is only one side here. The other is representational thought. Action in the movement-image is certainly often about change and a sense of being orientated towards the future. But this is tied to a sense of the future that follows a set of axes and coordinates connected to an already given Whole projected onto the future – an already conceived notion of the future may not have arrived (it may even only serve as utopian horizon that is regarded to be unreachable), but it is still already given. So what is different with the time-image?

¹²⁸ Marrati, “Preface to the English-language Edition”, Gilles Deleuze: Cinema and Philosphy [2003], trans. Alisa Hartz (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008), xii. Around this point, Maratti can claim that Deleuze’s cinema books are his most important political works, including his works with Guattari, p. x

¹²⁹ Ibid. In what seems like a nod to Agamben et al., Maratti argues that “recent theories of sovereignty do not question the primacy of action but only displace its actor: the decisive action is no longer carried out by an individual or collective subject but by an almighty and unfathomable ‘sovereign power’”, ibid.
First we need to understand why it appears. The classical movement-image’s action-images and sensory-motor linkages have lost their ability to convince in the sense that they have become clichés. A plethora of tendencies culminate into a more systematic change after World War II. The cinema books, as stated, are a classification of cinematic images and signs. They are not a history of the cinema (at least not in any ordinary sense). But Deleuze still situates this change, this “crisis of the action-image”, within a wider context. The crisis, he writes,

depended on many factors which only had their full effect after the war, some of which were social, economic, political, moral and others more internal to art, to literature and to the cinema in particular. We might mention, in no particular order, the war and its consequences, the unsteadiness of the ‘American Dream’ in all its aspects, the new consciousness of minorities, the rise and inflation of images both in the external world and in people’s minds, the influence on the cinema of the new modes of narrative with which literature had experimented, the crisis of Hollywood and its old genres.\(^1\)

The crisis concerns a loss of a natural link to the world. Lost is a certain kind of belief in the world: belief in organic unity and in action as capable of modifying a situation. Lost is belief in “majestic” political and ethical visions projected into the future. Much of the logic of the action-image remains, of course, at work in mainstream cinema (“the greatest commercial successes always take that route”). But in the more extraordinary cinema of interest to Deleuze, this logic comes into crisis; or rather, much of it remains – but as clichés. In a “world without totality”, where linkages are weakened and de-naturalized and images more free-floating and dispersed, as evident in this new cinema, what manages to still form and maintain sets or ensembles of images “are clichés, and nothing else” (C1, 208). This is so at least in an initial state, as the action-image comes into “crisis”. What is revealed is not a “society of the image”, but a society of the cliché. Its dominant powers have an interest in denying non-clichéd images (C2, 21). This state produces a specific form of subjectivity – it folds this external world to the inside. Or rather, this is one way, a cynical way, of coping in this world. Deleuze describes such social and subjective states, as expressed in the new American cinema of the 60s and 70s (Altman, Lumet, Scorsese, etc.), with the following terms:

\(^{130}\) C1, 206. As stated in a footnote above, these historical data are not in the service of doing a “history of the cinema” but in the service of isolating “certain cinematographic concepts” (ix). But there is another aspect here where the historical and the taxonomical may be seen to blend: what comes into crisis with the action-image after WWII is the very concept of History. This opens up for other conceptions of time that itself makes possible the non-historical relation to the history of films in Deleuze’s taxonomy. This latter point is suggested in Marrati, 2008: 64-65.
these floating images, these anonymous clichés, which circulate in the external world, but which also penetrate each one of us and constitute his internal world, so that everyone possesses only psychic clichés by which he thinks and feels, is thought and is felt, being himself a cliché among the others in the world which surrounds him. Physical, optical and auditory clichés and psychic clichés mutually feed on each other. In order for people to be able to bear themselves and the world, misery has to reach the inside of consciousnesses and the inside has to be like the outside (C1, 208-209).

The New American Cinema with its specific kinds of time-images followed this morose path in a self-conscious and reflexive (although often quite funny) way. There is here a romantic pessimism – expressing “the idea of one single misery, internal and external, in the world and in consciousness” – which parodies or otherwise critically catalogues clichés. This is often in conjunction with projecting a notion of a large overwhelming conspiracy, “a powerful concerted organisation, a great and powerful plot, which has found the way to make clichés circulate, from outside to inside, from inside to outside”.

But are there not more productive ways to deal with this situation? Surely, this is, as Deleuze writes, “only the negative or critical aspect of a more profound and more important positive transformation” (C2, 182). What is at stake for political cinema is not to somehow immediately escape or transcend this society. What is at stake is to “extract an Image from all the clichés and to set it up against them. On the condition, however, of there being an aesthetic and political project capable of constituting a positive enterprise” (C1, 210, emphasis mine). The term “positive” here should not be confused with the cliché of a “positive image of” a given. It means instead an affirmation of life in the senses of an ethics of the new – it is not about providing a just image of, but about extracting just an image from the clichés. How can cinema deal with this new world of clichés in this more “positive” and creative senses than parodying or cataloguing? The different ways that different time-images deal with or try to deal with this issue is imperative. Deleuze’s explanation for why The New American Cinema (as well as much of the French and German new wave) falls short is worth quoting at length:

All the aesthetic or even political qualities that it can have remain narrowly critical and in this way even less ‘dangerous’ than if they were being made use of in a project of positive creation. Then, either the critique swerves abruptly and attacks only a misuse of apparatuses and institutions, in striving to save the remains of the American Dream, as in Lumet [as in The Wire?]; or it extends itself, but becomes empty and starts to grate, as in Altman, content to parody the cliché in-

131 C1, 209. “It is no longer the case, as in the film noir of American realism, of an organisation which related to a distinctive milieu, to assignable actions by which the criminals would be distinguishable [...]” ibid. I may add here, that film noir are in Deleuze’s conception typical action-images (although mirroring the sordid underbelly of the “healthy” belief in Progress/Universal History, etc.).
stead of giving birth to a new image. As Lawrence said about painting: *the rage against clichés does not lead to much if it is content only to parody them; maltreated, mutilated, destroyed, a cliché is not slow to be reborn from its ashes.* In fact, what gave the American cinema its advantage, the fact of being born without a previous tradition to suffocate it, now rebounded against it. For the cinema of the action-image had itself engendered a tradition from which it could now only, in the majority of cases, extricate itself *negatively*. The great genres of this cinema, the psycho-social film, the film noir, the Western, the American comedy, collapse and yet maintain their empty frame.\(^{132}\)

It is with its “positive creation” from a situation of “loss” in a situation of clichés that we find a specific importance of post-war European cinema of the time-image – first in Italian Neorealism. The importance of Italian Neorealism here is first of all to systematically introduce the conditions and co-ordinates for a “new image” of cinematic thought. But a more specific importance of Italian Neorealism, I argue, was the providing of conditions for a new *political* thought-image. That is, Italian Neorealism did not invent the time-image per se. I do not merely mean this in the sense that there where many harbingers of time in the regime of the movement-image. Rather, as Deleuze is much more clear to point out in *Cinema 2*, the direct time-image, before Italian Neorealism, started with Orson Welles and *Citizen Kane* (\(^{C2}\), 105, 143) and before that with Yasujirō Ozu (\(^{C2}\), 13-17, 19, 246, 273). More specifically, Italian Neorealism was important also for *not* being content with critically cataloguing clichés. It was concerned with a cataloguing of the proliferation of both internal and external clichés (such as clichés of national identity). But it was also a positive vocation that opened up new paths. The Italian Neorealists were for various post-war socio-economic reasons in a position that allowed an artistic freedom. They had to begin “again from zero” which lead to the creation of a new kind of “tale”, “a new image” that was “capable of including the elliptical and the unorganised” (\(^{C1}\), 211-212).

What happened with the appearance of the French New Wave a decade or so after the appearance of Italian Neorealism, were generally two things. First, the new conditions and open coordinates given by Italian Neorealism were more fully realized as a *new kind of thought-image*.\(^{133}\) The thought-image was further freed from the “spatio-temporal co-ordinates that were left over from the old Social Realism” (\(^{C1}\), 214). Second, new “powers of the false” come with this new kind of image, but this was combined with the *difficulty* of doing more than merely critically cataloguing or parodying clichés (often

\(^{132}\) *C1*, 210-211, emphasis mine. Merely to break with clichés does not take things very far also in the sense that one has to provide an Idea beyond it, not least an artistic Idea. See *Negotiations*, 37-50 and 133.

\(^{133}\) This new thought-image goes beyond the limit that Hitchcock’s mental-image “constantly refused”. Beyond merely “weaving a set of relations” it had to “form a new substance”. It “had to become truly thought and thinking, even if it had to become ‘difficult’ in order to do this.” *C1*, 215.
combined with implying a world-wide conspiracy from which resistance is impossible). So while more fully realizing a new thought-image and introducing new powers of creation in the image, the French New Wave seem in Deleuze’s conception to run up against similar limitations as the Americans. The Italian Neorealists can be contrasted with this. Deleuze:

What do the neo-realist mean, on the contrary, when they speak of the respect and the love which is necessary for the birth of the new image? Far from being satisfied with a negative or parodic critical consciousness, the cinema is engaged in its highest reflection, and has constantly deepened and developed it (C1, 214).

And as he goes on, this problem will eventually be deepened and developed in Godard as a problem and a set of questions: “[I]f images have become clichés, internally as well as externally, how can an Image be extracted from all these clichés, ‘just an image’, an autonomous mental image? An image must emerge from the set of clichés [...] What is an image which would not be a cliché? Where does the cliché end and the image begin?” (C1, 214-215).

Italian-neorealism then, not only introduced a new type of open coordinates for a “new image” of thought, but it also tried to, or even managed to extract a positive image from the clichés it catalogued. But it did not go as far in developing and performing a “truly” thinking image as The French New Wave: “The neo-realist resolution”, Deleuze writes, ”still retained a reference to the true although it profoundly renewed it [...] the new wave deliberately broke with the form of the true [...]” (C2, 135). (That is, it broke with the specific form of the true as representation.) But the French New Wave on its part, while introducing advanced thought directly into the image in more fundamental ways, never strayed far from “a cinema of parody or contempt”. The Wire, as we will see, is as inspired by the ethics and aesthetics of Italian-neorealism, and it is certainly far from parody or contempt.

To more fully understand the ethical aspects involved here, we must first go back to the basics of the time-image. What happens here, first explicitly evident in Italian Neorealism, is that characters are increasingly unable to know how to extend their perceptions into action, since they fail to (habitually) recognize what they perceive.134 This is a loss of a belief in a certain logic for linking (sensory-motor). A problem appears that is structurally similar, in part, to the Nietzschean problem of overcoming nihilism: how to establish new kinds of links to and reasons for believing in this world when the classical links and reasons have exhausted their ability to convince. This exhaustion is not merely a loss but an opening. That is, the loss of adherence to action does not merely have to lead to passivity or cynical resignation but

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134 This is not the same as a character that is temporarily undecided or disabled from taking action – we have to remember that even the Bergsonian “center of indetermination” is nothing other than a part of the sensory-motor schema. Rather, something in the fundamental logic of the film must be altered.
can also open up for other modes of being, perceiving and thinking – and to modes of political agency and movement that are beyond individual and collective action. In general, time-images, while certainly working with the logic of a new image, also struggle between these poles of nihilism and creation. The problem is not the old problem of the death of God. The problem – in the sense of an opening – is the loss of a natural link to the world. Exhausted with classical cinema, as it interests Deleuze, was habitual perception/action organized around secular transcendent structures (pre-established, often majestic ideas). An implicit or explicit belief in Progress of Humanity or a People driven by individual or collective Agency, Universal History, etc., conjured up in a form of Truth and Meaning as Totality. Evident in the first Neorealist films is that these links between humans and the world has been lost. The world has become “unthinkable”, difficult to relate to, or even “intolerable”, not only because of specific new injustices or situations that are “too powerful” or “too beautiful”, but also and more importantly, because of a new intense form of daily banality.

The time-image appears as a means and practice for the search for new ways to believe in the world, without reference to transcendent static reference points, or organic action-driven wholes with a given rationale for their linkages. What is politically and ethically powerful with the time-image is to the extent that some of them aim for or succeed in doing this without resorting to romantic disillusion (in spite of the aesthetic and critical qualities of such films that resort to such modes, they tend to finally only mirror the clichés). The cinematic time-image is forced to turn from the secularly transcendent to search for a new faith in immanence. The worn-out belief in Universal History opens up for explorations of time and thought (which now subordinates movement). These images turn their gaze, and their search for a new ethics, towards that which exceeds the actual and the pre-conceived, within the rich and creative immanence that is life. This problem of belief,

\[135\] “Atheism is not a problem for philosophers or the death of God. Problems begin only afterward, when the atheism of the concepts has been attained. It is amazing that so many philosophers take the death of God as tragic. [Belief becomes a genuine concept only when it is made into belief in this world]” WPh, p. 92.

\[136\] C2, 18. This is not quite the same, then, as the commonly discussed notion of a flood of media images of injustices or horrible events that in their proliferation banalizes their content. It is rather about images that already are banal which in their proliferation become horrible. And as Rancière points out: “the dominant media by no means drown us in a torrent of images testifying to massacres, massive population transfers and the other horrors that go to make up our planet’s present. Quite the reverse, they reduce their number, taking good care to select and order them. They eliminate from them anything that might exceed the simple superfluous illustration of their meaning. What we see above all in the news on our TV screens are the faces of the rulers, experts and journalists who comment on the images, who tell us what they show and what we should make of them. If horror is banalized, it is not because we see too many images of it. [...] The system of information does not operate through an excess of images, but by selecting the speaking and reasoning beings who are capable of ‘deciphering’ the flow of information about anonymous”, 2009a: 96.
“the immanent conversion of faith” in the cinema books is well elucidated by Maratti (2008: 85-89). But the crucial qualification to this belief she states a few times but does not elaborate upon: “What we lack is an immanent belief in this world: not a belief in its existence, which no one doubts, but in the possibility of creating new forms of life in it” (2008: 5, emphasis mine).

The belief in this world is about the belief in its capacity to create new forms of life in new ways – belief without reference to transcendent static reference points (either in a different world or an ideal transformation of it projected onto a future). In What is Philosophy? Deleuze and Guattari write that it “may be that believing in this world, in this life, becomes our most difficult task, or the task of a mode of existence still to be discovered on our plane of immanence today. [W]e have so many reasons not to believe in the world; we have lost the world […]” (WPh, 74-75). Besides the further complicating fact that “our plane of immanence today” is, in one sense, nothing less than contemporary capitalism, Deleuze’s concept of “immanent” belief, then, is very specific. It concerns the search for a belief in the possibility of creating new forms of life beyond the various classical notions of the future that have lost their power to convince. The central stake for the political time-image is to reimagine faith in the future beyond the preconceived and linear, as well beyond the reduction of progressive force to organic action. In an age where there is hardly any faith in organic human agency, time-images are about finding new kinds of paths for believing in reality’s capacity for giving “birth to new modes of existence”.

137 C2, 171-172, 176-178, 181-182, 201-202. Deleuze’s concept of “belief”, the subject of an “empiricist conversion”, is certainly atheist (following Hume’s conception of knowledge as well as Nietzsche’s notion of tearing “belief from every faith”, 176). But he still recognized much of cinema to have a certain theological leaning. This included certain time-images – most clearly in filmmakers such as Dreyer, Bresson, Rossellini, Rohmer – but as concerned with a new kind of belief much more like a problem within this world. Discussing these problems, while reassembling them for his own immanent “empiricist” concerns, Deleuze also borrows aspects of his notions of belief from their more theological senses found in Pascal and Kirkegaard – and not only from Hume and Nietzsche. As Rajchman points out, he finds already in the two former thinkers a replacing of “belief in God with a question of the mode of existence of the believer, pointing the way to another kind of conversion: a belief or trust placed in this world rather than in an [sic] another”, 2000: 26. For a very interesting discussion of points of contact between the Catholic tradition and Deleuze’s conception of “modern” cinema, extending Deleuze’s own comments on this relation, see Astrid Söderberg-Widding, “Belief in the Body? Moving Images and Catholic Contexts”, Cinema Studies Into Visual Theory?, eds. Anu Koivunen & Astrid Söderberg-Widding (Åbo: University of Turky, 1998), pp. 79-92. For an account of how Deleuze creatively references Kirkegaard conceptions of repetition and belief, see Ronald Bogue, “To Choose to Choose – to Believe in This World”, Aftersimages of Gilles Deleuze’s Film Philosophy, eds. D.N. Rodowick (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010b), pp. 115-132.

138 We will deal with capitalist immanence in part of Chapter 6.
Elaboration: Three Steps in the Passage from Crisis of Action-Image to a “New Image”

A break with sensory-motor action is not enough. The “new image” of thought that comes with certain time-images is set up in what I perceive to be three “steps”. The first two steps present two levels of conditions of possibility for this new image. First there is the “preliminary conditions”. These conditions are what come out of the break with the logic of the action-image. This break gave rise to new characteristics that included a situation that is now “dispersed”; a consciousness of (a multiplication of) clichès, and a slackening of the sensory-motor in favor of deliberately weak links (even between events and those they happen to) (C1, 210; C2, 3). This is only a first step – these characteristics “did not yet constitute […] the new image”. They released, however, an important set of new coordinates which provided the conditions of possibility for the second step that “takes the place of the [merely] faltering sensory-motor connections”: the sensory-motor is slackened to the point of reaching pure optical and sound images/signs. This second step is not a removal of movement but a release of bits of “time in its pure state” to which movement itself becomes subordinated.139 But this is not enough either. It provides the second condition of possibility for the new image. But if these pure optical and sound images/signs did not extend into something more, they will easily fall back into (new forms of) the clichéd – postcards of idle time, if you will. The importance of these “pure optical situations” is that they make possible “connections of a new type” and bring a “direct relation with time and thought”.

The first level of a decrease of sensory-motor movement, or the second level of pure optical and sound images and signs taking over, then, are no ends in themselves as regarding the new thought image. The point is “the very special extension of” these signs and their ways of making “time and thought perceptible” (C2, 17, 18, 19, emphasis mine).

However, Deleuze first describes the pure optical and sound images themselves (e.g. Ozu’s “pillow shots”) not as conditions but as the “new image”. As I can see there are two interrelated reasons for this: 1., pure optical and sound images set the stage for direct and open thinking in the image; and 2., another way to say the same thing while connecting with the language of What is Philosophy?: they set up a (new) “plane of immanence of thought”. As is clear from this latter book, the creation of a new plane of immanence of thought, while important, difficult and rare, only sets up a playing field that makes possible the more concrete practice of thought (in philosophy most importantly the

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139 This reversal of subordinations in which movement becomes secondary also connects with how movement, on the physical or material level for Deleuze really is an effect of more profound forces. Deleuze writes that “it subordinates movement to force” about “deformation” in Bacon’s paintings, which reveals how movement “is an effect”, FB, 59, 58.
Deleuze: “pure optical, sound (and tactile) image […] was not enough: it had to enter into relations with yet other forces, so that it could itself escape from a world of clichés”. It had to open up to what he calls “the readable image and the thinking image”, where cuts, camera-movements and “reframings [are] functions of thought” or movements in time more than descriptions of space. The optical and the sound, but also “the present and the past, and the here and the elsewhere, constitute internal elements and relations which must be deciphered, and can be understood only in a progression analogous to that of a reading […].” (C2, 23, 24). This notion of “reading” and the image becoming a “readable” image must not be confused with conceiving of moving images as having linguistic components. Instead, Deleuze conceives of cinema as consisting of audio-visual signs and structures that belong only to the cinema.

The time-image introduces a new image of thought for the cinema. But it is not enough that sensory-motor connections are “relaxed” by characters no longer knowing how to extend incoming stimuli into action (or even affect). But is also not enough that this break with the sensory-motor leads to the formulation of pure sound and optical images. These pure or “lacunary” sound and optical images would merely be empty (creating no new links to

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140 This plane of immanence may also be what is discovered at the other extreme ends of thought, having passed beyond its coordinates to a kind of “substance without stratification” which is like “time as primary matter” C2, 115; see also 208.

141 C2, 24. Within Deleuze’s analysis this is at its most explicit in a filmmaker like Resnais. Here montage and tracking shots are movements of thought as part of a “mental cartography” or a “brain-world” made up by the film itself, 121-122, 125, 208-210; see also the passages on the new function of depth of field in Welles, 107-108. Thought, and even “psychology” in a wide sense of the term, is lifted from individual characters to the level of the composition of the film itself. In Pedro Costa’s documentary about the strenuous editing process in Straub and Huillet, Où gît votre sourire enfoui (2001), Straub says: “Some people have the impression – because we reject verisimilitude and TV-style cinema, Dallas and all that shit, and even Woody Allen and Cassavetes, etc. – that there is no psychology in our films. But that’s not true. All this is psychology. There is no psychology in terms of the performances of the actor because there is a dramatic abstraction that goes deeper than so-called verisimilitude. But its there, in between the shots, in the very montage and in the way the shots are linked to each other, it is extremely subtle psychology.” This must be understood in relation to how Straub several times emphasizes how form always must be subordinated to the Idea. In other words, the “psychology” referred to by Straub seems to me to be a word for ideas and thoughts instead of a mere (metaphorical) displacing of the individual psychology of the characters to the film form.

142 Deleuze is unambiguous about this and describes extensively, notably in the following second chapter of C2, his theory for a conception of cinema’s images and signs as specific to the cinema and as wholly irreducible to signs as “signifiers” or to any linguistic components (they are rather “pre-linguistic”), see also 262-263. The image is “readable”, however, in very different ways, depending not least on the logic of how the audio functions in relation to the image, see Cinema 2, Chapter 9 (on the specific kinds of readability that arises with time-images and their complex and non-organic relation between sound and image, see 229, 235, 245, 279).
the world) if they did not form the requisites for new relations. This break with the sensory-motor forms the condition of possibility for a new logic where time flows out in new directions, forming new kinds of links and relations having to do less with action than thought—not representational thought, but thought that includes time as the primary matter of its very being and movements. On the first level, this is made possible by a crisis in the confidence of thought’s ability to form a rational totality—the whole is not given—which forces thought to hesitatingly search for new ways to organize thinking. A more wandering and non-linear form of thinking can occur, which has to start from the “middle” without knowing exactly where to end up. This new form of thought implies new forms of political agency. As Maratti writes, Deleuze saw in modern cinema

a cinema in search of more thought. This is not to say that classic cinema was stupid; it is to say, rather, that new situations require new cinematic forms because the old ones have lost their power to convince us. [---] Along the same lines, certainly there is no politics without agency, but agency requires more than the fiction of a self-transparent and almighty subject. [---] In Deleuze’s view, we need more thought to [...] create ‘new forms of life’. But this request for more thought would be trivial, adds Maratti, “if Deleuze, following Heidegger, did not constantly remind us how difficult it is to think, and that in fact, most of the time, we do not think”. I am here concerned with conceptualizing specific connections between thought-images and the spawning of potentials for the new. I have already stated that Marrati is not directly concerned with the question of creating the new (although she acknowledges its importance). But we can nonetheless pick up on an imperative subtlety present in the above quote: the implicit link Marrati makes between thought crucial for the creation of the new, and such thought being extremely rare. I must also add here that the politics of the time-image is not to be understood as a replacing of human action with abstract thought. It is to be understood as a subordination of action/movement to thought—and to

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143 This is not merely an opening up for Bergsonian duration. Bergsonian duration may account for the most organic time-images, but it is clearly broken with otherwise. “[I]t is from Proust,” writes Keith Ansell Pearson, “that Deleuze gets his crucial definition of the virtual.” Keith Ansell Pearson, “Deleuze on the Overcoming of Memory”, Memory: Histories, Theories, Debates, eds. S. Radstone & B. Schwarz (New York: Fordham University Press, 2010), pp. 161-79. We should also notice that Deleuze wrote of Proust’s conception of time as “extremely different” from Bergson’s. Bergsonism, 126, n 16.

144 This thought beyond representation has introduced time into thought in a specific sense: “[...] not in the form of the empirical time of the thinker subject to factual conditions, and for whom it takes time to think, but in the form of an in-principle condition or time of pure thought (time takes thought).” DR, 206.

145 Marrati, 2008: xiii-xiv. Deleuze describes a cinema that “demands increasing thought, even if thought begins by undoing the system of actions, perceptions and affections on which the cinema had fed up to that point, C1, 206.
an open searching, sub-representational thought, which can be conceived as
its own kind of action or practice.

2.4. The Crystal: Cinema 2’s Introduction of the New as Struggle

The difficult endeavor to help create “new forms of life”, I argue, is the cen-
tral, although implicit, theme throughout Cinema 2. A variety of struggles,
spanning form and content, are made visible through all of Deleuze’s ana-
yses of individual films and filmmakers. In this section I will take a closer
look at what Deleuze calls crystal-images. These are the first of the various
types of time-images – or in a certain sense the primary ontological level of
the time-image – systematically described in Cinema 2. And in this seeming-
ly less political section of that book, I argue, we are introduced to the theme
of the new as delicate and rare. Deleuze’s discussion of the crystal-image
mostly concerns what goes on within the film (or within the “crystal”),
which can partly be contrasted with the struggle in other types of time-
images that are more directly political, social and ethical (for instance in the
“struggle” to tear from the dominant and the preestablished a “pure speech-
act” in Straub and Huillet or the endeavor to extract “just an image” from the
clichés in Godard). But more or less all time-images, very much including
the crystal-images, concern in some ways the question of the new as a rarity –
either within its narrative universe or more directly in relation to larger
socio-political contexts. But in the “crystal-images” this problem has some
particular characteristics: these are images that primarily dwell, or are even
stuck, in the “pure past” – but not altogether, and in revealingly different ways.

The crux of this subchapter is to analyze the ways that Deleuze juxtaposes
different kinds of crystal-images and how this plays out like a map of strug-
gles for the new from the perspective of a virtual past. But first we need to
give a description of the basic structure of the crystal-image – and I will
keep this description as brief as possible since its basic structure is well doc-
umented and analyzed by others.¹⁴⁶ A crystal-image is an image with two co-
exisitng sides: actual and virtual. But what is a “virtual” image? Various
virtual images or large and even pure optical and sound images are certainly
part of many movement-image films. They come as part of fantasy sequenc-
es, recollection-images or dream-images – large expanded “worlds”. But
these images are also within a logic of representation: they are logically cen-

¹⁴⁶ See, for instance Rodowick 1997: 90-95; Ronald Bogue, Deleuze on Cinema (New York:
Routledge, 2003), pp.107-133.
tered on a dreamer or an actual present that grounds them; they are “slackened” or “diluted” virtualities at a safe distance from the actual which can therefore form their clear center and the site in which they appear only as representations. The flashback is directly centered on an actual present (a character remembers something which actualizes specific recollection-images in the present), the dream sequence is routed back to a dreamer, etc. There are limit-cases, exceptions and complications of this (a whole film may be a long dream, recollection, or a character’s imagination, or it may have a very complicated temporal structure), but the virtual as a representation in the actual is basically intact within the movement-image. The virtual of the time-image, although it may contain memory and dreams, is of a different order. First of all, the pure past, as the underlying condition for every recollection-image, is revealed in itself. The crystalline image, by exceeding organic links between the virtual and the actual, can place itself within the pure past directly. It is not an actual image rooted in the present, but an image first of all expressive of the pure past itself, which reversely draws in the actual present as one of its dimensions. What is this “pure” past? It is the most primary level of the past that is beyond being a mere pool of former presents. It pre-exists the present, but as a pre-existence in general. It is a synthesis of the whole of time. In Bergson’s ontology of time, the pure or virtual past is only secondarily a collection of former presents (that can be reached as representations by active memory in the present). The past is primarily not what was (actual former presents), but what is (Past/Memory=Being). This (constantly changing) being of the past might be “virtual”, but it is nonetheless fully real. It is a non-subjective memory, as Bergson writes, “always present in its entirety to itself […]”.147 As such it does not follow the present, although the flow of presents falls back into the past; the present, rather, is the most contracted point of the past (C2, 98-99; Bergsonism, 74). The pure past is therefore not in a specific memory-image, nor an actualization of a specific historical era (the costume film), but a “pure” non-subjective past, a “past-in-general”. Basically, it is a past that was never present, a past that “has not yet received a date”.148 (The more over-arching point here is not necessarily tied to this implied metaphysics of time in its specificity – this is furthermore still fairly within a Bergsonian scope that Deleuze complicates, and partly leaves behind, especially in the second half of Cinema 2. The over-arching point is rather that the image becomes able to systematically articulate directly other logics, planes or dimensions of reality and thought, without the limitations of having to ground them in representations.) Aesthetically, these new images can there-

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148 C2, 79, 98-99, 109. But although the past is pure in the sense of not made up of former presents, it is organized into “regions”, “strata” and singular points in which recollections find their virtual material to actualize. The pure past is therefore anything but non-differentiated. It is replete with shifting relations of virtualities (“pure recollections”) not yet actualized.
fore remain within the everyday or the “small”. These levels are breached into not by directly linking the actual to the obviously dilated (such as an extravagant dream sequence). They are reached from within the actual, at the point where it directly opens up for its own virtual aspect.

In the crystal-image, the past image and the present image have crystallized to the point that they co-exist in the same image. The past or “virtual” image and the actual image are still objectively distinct, but they can no longer be discerned as distinct (they chase after each other in continual, reciprocal exchange). Precisely at this most contracted point the present is revealed—and this may be the most well-known and discussed aspect of the crystal-image—as no longer a point but a double flow: the present as a constant split between the actual present (which flows to the future) and its co-existing past (which it flows back to). The present, as this double movement, is merely the most contracted point of the whole of the past (as illustrated by Bergson’s cone). So far we have kept fairly consistent with established readings of the crystal-image. But we can go further.

The crystal shows the point at which the past makes the present, which it co-exists with, pass. This operation can more or less be recognized as the “founding” operation of the second synthesis as described in Difference and Repetition. From the perspective of the second synthesis, the present and the future are dimensions of the past. But there is in Difference and Repetition also a third synthesis of time that is not necessarily evident in, but also not absent from, all crystal-images. In the third synthesis, the past and the present are dimensions of the future. This opens up a third aspect of the past and the present. It is the third synthesis which is the condition for the new. “[T]he past and the present, as rendered in the first and second synthoses”, writes Williams, “rest on the future and on the third synthesis, because it is the condition for the new in both”. What is the “being” of this synthesis? Does it have a being? No, at least not in any essential way— the third synthesis is, Deleuze writes, “pure and empty”. It acts on the present and through and with the pure differences and potentials within the pure past: it “selects

149 The virtual past coexists with itself in all its levels of contraction and relaxation, with its most contracted point being the present, which is a process that constantly splits up the present in two dissymmetrical flows: back to the virtual past and forward to the future, see C2, 81-82; see also Bergson, Matter and Memory, 193ff. In Bergson, the present does not pass merely because a new present takes its place. That is of course what happens, but only secondarily: presents are not a line of discrete instances. What explains why the present passes to be replace by another, is that it passes at the same moment that it is present. It therefore co-exists with its own past—it is, as Deleuze writes, “still present and already past”. At the closest point between the past and the present, the past therefore does not follow the present that it was, but co-exists with it.

150 “The Proustian formula ‘a little time in its pure state’”, writes Deleuze in Difference and Repetition, “refers first to the pure past, the in-itself of the past or the erotic synthesis of time, but more profoundly to the pure and empty form of time, the ultimate synthesis, that of the death instinct which leads to the eternity of the return in time”, DR, 149, emphasis mine; see also 153.
pure differences to return in a singular way among all the differences of the pure past”. While providing the (empty) force of the new, the third synthesis therefore in turn depends on the two other syntheses for a kind of potential-content. Most importantly it depends on the second synthesis: the pure past is a “reserve of difference”, of virtual potential, which avoids “the need for creation out of nothing” (Williams, 2011: 95, 87, 16, 136).

**Elaboration: On Cinema 2 and Deleuze’s “Three Syntheses of Time”**

Deleuze leaves behind the notion of three syntheses of time after *Difference and Repetition*. But he keeps a more general division between the times of Chronos and Aion/Aeon (*LS*, 186-193; *ATP*, 262-267). I would argue that the time-images spread over a time of “Aion” which cover both a “pure past” and the empty force of the future, as they deal with encounters between the second and the third “syntheses of time” which both “gnaw” at the present. What does it mean to “gnaw” at the present? Deleuze describes the “membrane” in filmmaker Alain Resnais’ thought-images as what makes an “inside” and an “outside” correspond “in the most varied ways” as the former is “emanating from an inside which is always already there [pure past]” and the latter is arriving “from an outside always to come [force of the future], the two gnawing at the present which is now only their encounter” (*C2*, 207).

The various accounts of time in the cinema books, however, are based on a specific empirical material of films that can certainly provide limitations for a more general philosophy of time not concerned with analyzing cinema. The accounts of time in these books do not merely correspond schematically to the complexities of Deleuze’s three syntheses of time as developed in *Difference and Repetition*. James Williams makes this point, but only as part of a somewhat superficial dismissal of the cinema books (2011: 162). I do not think that Deleuze’s philosophy of time is necessarily statically tied to the three syntheses (and as stated, Deleuze never directly returns to them, at least not in unchanged form, after *DR*). But the three syntheses can still be a tool, along with other tools, and adapted for “problems that necessarily change” (*WPh*, 28), for entangling some of the structures of time discussed also in the cinema books. I consider the images in *Cinema 2* not to be more or less reducible to one of the syntheses, as Patricia Pisters suggests, but rather to spread out – in complex and varied ways – across both the “second syntheses of time” (pure past, the past in itself, whose processes makes the present pass) and the third synthesis (the force of the future, the condition for the new in the first and second synthesis) in a relation of political and ethical struggle.\(^{151}\)

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\(^{151}\) When it comes to analyzing the cinema books from the perspective of the three syntheses of time, Patricia Pisters is a pioneer. However, I make somewhat different interpretations of the three syntheses and I conceive very differently of how they relate to the cinema books. With some caveats in place, Pisters argues that the time-images described in *Cinema 2* express more or less only the second synthesis, and that the third syntheses is expressed rather in contemporary digital screen culture that is dominated by what she calls the “neuro-image”.

104
The new does not come from the future. For Deleuze the future is an “empty form”. That is, it has no content. The future is empty in every sense other than consisting of the intensity that drives individuation as well as the formation of new potential. As we saw above, the force of the future draws the “content” of the new from the realm of the problematic that is the “virtual past”. Jay Lampert even writes that Deleuze and Guattari are “anti-future”. As he goes on to say: “Since the new is not the future, but has been achieved as the co-ordination across mutually available time-lines, the New is the Past” (2006: 140). If we modify this statement slightly, we can say the past is the New in the sense of a combination of creative force (future) and potential (virtual past) – a mix of differential processes that Deleuze calls “dif-ference/tiation”. How is all this played out in Deleuze’s concept of crystal-images?

It goes without saying that historical and social structures can be imprisoning. But the virtual past can be a prison as well. This is what is shown in certain crystal-images where the circuit between the actual and virtual forms a closed circle. In the films of Ophüls, characters, according to Deleuze, are “imprisoned”, and “[c]rystalline perfection lets no outside subsist: there is no outside […]” (C2, 83, emphasis mine). The circuit is so contracted that nothing can escape. Does this mean that the crystal is sterile? No, only that it needs a passage on to new life. The pure past (the second synthesis) does more than making the present pass. It is itself a variation and experimenta-
tion of virtual differences, ideas, potentials. Crystal-images tend to display a theatrical uncertainty, where new things are tried out, before the right role is found which can pass on to new life. But while “we are born in a crystal”, the crystal (something like an egg that never hatches) “retains only death, and life must come out of it, after trying itself out”. It needs a crack to be opened up to an outside, to difference, to the future. The “perfect crystal” shows time as splitting in two, “but a time that has already rolled up rounded itself, at the same time as it was splitting”, writes Deleuze, and adds: “The dividing in two, the differentiation of the two images, actual and virtual, does not go to the limit because the resulting circuit repeatedly takes us back from one kind to the other. There is only vertigo, an oscillation” (C2, 84).

Pisters has developed these theories in articles and conference papers, but they have found their most developed form in the book length study The Neuro-Image: A Deleuzian Film-Philosophy of Digital Screen Culture (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012), see especially pp. 127-155.

152 Williams: “The second synthesis of time is dynamic, in the sense that it is an ongoing variation of relations in the pure past; the past is always synthesising its relations in different ways and is never static (against usual intuitions about the past [...]”, 2011: 89.
Renoir’s crystals contain a crack where something escapes.153 His films deal with levels of theatricality “absorbing the real” into a crystal circuit. But these crystals are always “flawed”, and something “is going to slip away in the background”. These little slips are vital. It is precisely here that “a new Real will come out beyond the actual and the virtual” (C2, 85, 86). The dividing in two, writes Deleuze, “did not achieve completion in Ophüls because time rolled itself up, and its two aspects relaunched themselves into the circuit whose poles they recharged while blocking up the future” (C2, 87). Ophüls’ crystals will in the end only contain death; roles and identities already tried out and finished. In Renoir’s crystals one of the two flows is directed towards the future, which is to say that it flows away from that which “falls back into the crystal and stays there: […] dead roles or roles of death, the macabre dance of recollections that Bergson speaks of […]” (C2, 87). There is here a creation of “this future as a bursting forth of life” from the crystal, which is to produce “a new distinction”, “like a new reality which was not pre-existent” – all “provided that it leaves the crystal”.154

This is not something that comes about easily in any crystal-image, even in the more future-oriented images in Renoir. The “new Real” is what towards the end of the film may take flight or sneak out in its background through a crack.155 The new Real also tends to have a subtle and downplayed position in Renoir, and in some of his more “pessimistic” films it may never come about. The new Real passing through the crack is an event in which the pure past is drawn outside itself (by the force of the future, the third synthesis). But although directly implied or hinted at by a camera, the new reality is seldom if ever shown as a present actuality, and if it is very briefly (like the camera panning out into the water at the end of The River, 1951). Rather,

153 Richard Rushton discusses the crack in Renoir’s crystals from the perspective of articulating a “Deleuzian imaginary” that he in interesting ways contrasts to the critique of the imaginary in 70s and 80s film theory, see his “A Deleuzian Imaginary: The Films of Jean Renoir”, Deleuze Studies (5.2, 2011), pp. 241–260.

154 C2, 87, 88. On what they call a “refrain” seen as a the circle that is opened with a crack, not towards the “side” which would destroy the creation, but towards a new future that has been created by the circle itself, see ATP, 311.

155 Deleuze’s conception of the “crack” originates primarily from his two readings – first in The Logic of Sense (1969) and then In A Thousand Plateaus (1980) – of the “crack-up” in F. Scott Fitzgerald. Fredrika Spindler has performed an excellent elucidation of these two readings and what has changed in Deleuze’s thought between them. The first reading focuses on processes of micro-events in a “crack” at the virtual “surface” that only secondarily culminates in a perceivable “crack-up” on the actual level (a point of no return). Here the crack (virtual) as well as the crack-up (the actual) is conceived of as a breaking down. In the 1980s reading, there is an emphasis instead on a third factor adding to the virtual micro-events and the level of actual events: the line of flight. The line of flight may either end up turning on itself and imply death or be where something manages to seep out and take off in another direction as something radically new. Fredrika Spindler, “Event, Crack-up and Line of Flight – Deleuze Reading Fitzgerald”, in (eds.) Hans Ruin & Andrus Ers, Rethinking Time. Essays on History, Memory, and Representation, (Södertörn Philosophical Studies 9, 2011), pp. 257-265.
the new Real appears in these crystal-images more like the hint of the actualization of the future as seen from the perspective of the pure past. And how could the future as actual content ever be more than that?

There are several kinds of crystals. Some manage to produce or hint at a subtle actual new, some retain only “death”. But still, no crystal is ever sterile. And is not what is created in the crystal, and the milieu of potential that it constitutes, always more interesting than the actual new reality that will have been produced from it? As stated, the second synthesis is “dynamic”; it consists of variations of virtual differences and ideas. These virtual differences and ideas can at a later stage be creatively actualized (if “selected” by the forces of the future). In reference to Renoir, Deleuze writes: “Everything happens as if the circuit served to try out roles, as if roles were being tried in it until the right one were found, the one with which we escape to enter a clarified reality. In short, the circuit, the round, are not closed because they are selective [...]”. In other words, the experimentation with roles is no empty role-playing. Rather, “something takes shape inside the crystal which will succeed in leaving through the crack” (C2, 86, emphasis mine.).

In other crystal-images the idea of a something that “takes shape” is more like the whole crystal or the whole film. But in such films, the direction of the forces of life is reversed: in Fellini life does not flee from a past that retains only death; in Fellini it is instead the actual of passing presents that marches towards death. This means that life now rather seeks entryways into the crystal, entryways that themselves form “seeds” (some abort while other are successful) and that make up a crystal “in the process of being made”. Here it is in the crystal that we find the very creativity of life (in contrast to the bursting out from it). This is a kind of virtual that “holds in its depths or in its sides the surge of the new reality” (C2, 92) – the world, if you will, as a growing egg. For our concerns with formulating a concept of contours of the new we can take specific notice of these seeds, in Fellini as well as the “something” that “takes shape” inside Renoir’s crystals.

Deleuze’s initial discussions of the crystal-image, as I have interpreted them here, lay out the fundamental parameters that the rest of the Cinema 2 complicates and develops. The struggle to find ways for the creation of new forms of life continues throughout the book, although in vastly different ways, in practically all the time-images that Deleuze discusses. The chapter on the crystal-image, I argue, does not merely formulate the parameters of the time-image in the sense of the well-known temporal structure of the splitting in two of the present (Bergson’s cone, etc.). Rather, what I have aimed to show in this subchapter is that the crystal-images provide fundamental parameters for the theme of the struggle for and the rarity of the creation of new forms of life. The variety of kinds of crystals leave us with a question: is the art at hand, to the extent that it is concerned with creation

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156 C2, 88, 90, 92. On seeds and crystals see also ATP, 106.
within a “virtual” realm, finally only achieving a repetition of “dead roles”, a “macabre dance of recollections”, or does it result in new contours “taking shape”?

Many of the time-images are obviously concerned with “memory” in a specific sense. But a main political problem of the cinema books implicitly, I argue, concerns how to get out of the “black hole” of memory. The time-image is not a mere celebration of memory that is structured non-linearly and non-subjectively. Especially for what we will retain for the untimely-image from Deleuze’s time-image, we must certainly part ways with interpretations of the latter in which it is implied that the mere mixing of past and present in ways that “break with linear chronology” somehow has inherent political and aesthetic value. This risks being an empty negation of the linear, and this is not, I argue, the lesson to be drawn from Deleuze’s concept of the time-image. The untimely-image may go, or even have to go, beyond linear time. But if so it must be as the natural extension of an aesthetically and politically untimely Idea.

2.5. The Untimely-Image

In Renoir the force of life bursts out from the crystal. In Fellini, it bursts into the crystal. But the Fellini crystal contains another important aspect for the specification of what is to be extracted for the untimely-image from Deleuze’s Cinema. Let us look at this passage from Cinema 2 describing how Fellini’s images express movements within a pure past:

[T]here, a fixed shot isolates a character, takes him out of the line, and gives him, even if it is only for an instant, a chance which is in itself eternal, a virtuality which will be valid for ever even if it is not actualized. It is not that Fellini has a particular taste for memory and recollection-images: there is no cult of former presents in his work. It is in fact like in Péguy, where the horizontal succession of presents which pass outlines a route to death, whilst for every present there corresponds a vertical line which unites it at a deep level with its own past, as well as to the past of the other presents, constituting between them all one and the same coexistence, one and the same contemporaneity, the ‘in-ternal’ [internet] rather than the eternal (C2, 91).

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157 This is not so much an opposition as an accentuating of two different aspects of the creativity of life as seen from the perspective of Deleuze’s larger philosophy – one focusing on the dynamic shaping of virtual ideas (differenction), and the other on their actualization or “individuation” (differentiation). These are the two sides of creativity that Deleuze in DR calls different/citation.
But why refer to Péguy and not Bergson? One reason is certainly the view of the present as a march to death. But does this reference not also imply a slightly different “pure past” or “virtual” than Bergson’s? What is made clear with the different crystal-images is that the crystal, as concerning the pure past, can have a quite varied constitution. They may “retain only death” as in Ophüls, or be crystals “in the process of decomposition” as Deleuze conceptualizes the crystals of the vanishing, former rich aristocracy of Visconti’s later films: Visconti’s films express decomposing crystal-worlds that are outside history (although history “growls at the door” or “cuts into the crystal”). But these crystal-worlds are also outside life and creation (they survive because the crystal is “artificial”) (C2, 94-95). In other cases the very seeds of life constitute the crystal. But these are not seeds of the given. These seeds, I argue, are untimely. The concept of the untimely [intempestif], which Deleuze extracts from Nietzsche, is not explicitly present in the cinema books. But is it not implicitly present in this reference to Péguy in the discussion of Fellini? In What is Philosophy? Deleuze and Guattari write about what is “no longer the historical, and […] not the eternal” as something Péguy labeled “the Aternal [Internel]. Peguy had to create this noun to designate a new concept. Is this not something similar to that which a thinker far from Péguy [Nietzsche] designated Untimely […]?” (WPh, 111). So how does Deleuze himself conceive of the untimely? One aspect of the untimely is that it constitutes an “infinite now”. This is not to be confused with an infinite present. It is even less to be confused with the permanent present of timeless eternity. In certain correspondence with counter-actualization, the untimely acts on the past and the present with the force of an outside. An untimely philosophy or art acts “counter to the past, and therefore on the present, for the benefit, let us hope, of a future” (WPh, 112). Does this mean that the untimely is a utopian concept? According to Deleuze and Guattari, this is not the case. The “future” in this quote, they explain, “is not a historical future, not even a utopian history, it is the infinite Now […] the Intensive” (112). The untimely “is not a prefiguration of a future that is still part of our history. Rather, it is the now of our becoming” (112). The two authors claim that “utopia” fails to be a good concept “because even when opposed to History it is still subject to it and lodged within it as an ideal or motivation. […] What History grasps of the event is its effectuation in states of affairs or in lived experience, but the event in its becoming, in its specific consistency, in its self-positing as concept, escapes History” (WPh, 110). The untimely, then, is not concerned with postulating a utopian horizon to aspire to (regardless of whether this horizon is meant as regulative direction

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158 As the untimely acts on the present, it relates to the present in the opposite way from the reactionary, which re-acts upon the present from the perspective of (a reified conception of) the past. It must also not be confused with being a little behind on the level of fashion or being “up-to-date”.

109
for political imagination or as an actual achievable goal). The untimely, as I see it, extracts and helps to shape certain kinds of generative forces whose actual future outcomes, being unforeseeable, are not the (primary) concern.

As specifically pertaining to moving images, and inspired by Deleuze’s conception of the untimely in philosophy, I offer my own concept called the untimely-image. The untimely-image is a specific kind of expression of generative forces within moving images. Similar to the philosophical concept as Deleuze and Guattari defines it in What is Philosophy?, the untimely-image, as we saw in Chapter 1, provides “the contour, the configuration, the constellation of an event to come” (WPh, 32-33). This notion of contour, configuration, and constellation, as pertaining directly to generative forces themselves rather than a utopian horizon or the blueprinting of an actual new phenomenon, is a core aspect of the untimely-image. The untimely-image counter-actualizes a given phenomenon or state of affairs and shapes contours of the new within it. This is not creation from nothing, as if the contours dropped down from the sky, unrelated to that which already existed. Rather, there is a counter-actualization of the already given in a way that opens up towards generative forces that subsists or inheres within the given as tendencies, providing (virtual) “material” for art or philosophy to co-create with. This gives the term “contour” in art a different sense than the figurative: a contour that is as much “in the service of [a disturbance or] vibration” (FB, 73) as it is the creation of a potential “of an event to come”.

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We have to halt here, go back to our reading of Deleuze’s cinema books, and make a historical note. Although many of the same problems remain, we are no longer in the era of the “modern” time-image. The untimely-image must be conceived of in ways relevant for contemporary situations. It certainly cannot follow some blueprint of “modern” time-images. This is not, at least not primarily, a point about the new media landscape. No moving-image form, within any media technology, is itself immune to being appropriated and/or pacified. Many “modern” time-image films are extraordinarily resistant—they certainly still stand on their own to a large degree. But the regime of the time-image itself, “no less than the old one”, as Deleuze himself wrote, “throws up its ready-made formulas, its set procedures, its labored and empty applications, its failures, its conventional and ‘second-hand’ examples offered to us as masterpieces” (C2, 132). And somewhere

159 Deleuze’s thought is also in conflict with notions of the utopian that are part of, as John Rajchman writes, “some sort of mystical messianism of a ‘non-identity’ called upon to interrupt continuities”, 2000: 7.

160 Marrati: “Cinema of time, in Deleuze’s eyes, was also the response of filmmakers to the ambivalent power of the movement-image, the attempt to create images that could not be hijacked, or not so quickly […]”, 2008: 81.

110
along these lines, things change over time. Not necessarily for individual films, but for formal traits. Mainstream cinema, television, and advertising in the period after the publication of Deleuze’s books has more systematically hijacked certain formal characteristics of the time-image – or more broadly the so-called counter-cinemas of the 60s and 70s. As Rosi Braidotti writes, “in postmodernity, de-territorializations are followed by re-territorializations, which means that yesterday’s blasphemies constitute today’s banalities […]” (2006: 219). One may argue that this was basically the case also before, but postmodernity entails an intensification and escalation of the capitalist system’s ability to absorb countering impulses and transform them into safe commodities. Formal figures such as non-continuity, the dispersed, the “serial” and even certain “irrational” linkages between images, etc. have to some extent been safely folded into the society of the cliché. This is not to say that the “modern” time-image was mere “formal antics”. Rather, what is not hijacked, at least not to the same extent, is its efforts to think openly in moving images in ways that drag along clichés and that present strong and resilient virtual ideas. But the formal means of performing such thought, and of extracting an image from the clichés, has become even more difficult: the more general problem of how the reactions against clichés themselves turn into clichés is intensified in the sense of the formally countering and now having been increasingly absorbed by the timely status quo of “postmodern” visual culture. But this is not merely about history or our present state of advanced capitalism. Formal traits never have inherent value also for the following reason: they on the one hand serve a function only in relation to a specific situation and on the other are expressive of a more abstract principle or Idea.  

**Elaboration: The Case of Michael Bay**

The false-continuity editing of Hollywood blockbuster director Michael Bay can serve to illustrate how formal traits do not have inherent value and in what sense this is important. Steven Shaviro makes an interesting equation between Bay’s films and Deleuze’s time-image based on the former’s “fundamentally falsifying” status of narration” that “reject organic unity, and are littered instead with gaps and false accords” and “disjunctive cutting.” This comparison is thought provoking, but it is also questionable in a way that allows us to make a point. What we must ask is: cannot these traits be precisely in the service of organic unity on a higher level? In contrast to Shaviro, I regard the

161 The function a formal trait serves is irreducible not only to its own formality but also to notions of “pure” aesthetic qualities more generally. In Deleuze and Guattari’s “functionalist conception” one can only consider “the function a quality fulfills in a specific assemblage, or in passing from one assemblage to another”, see ATP, 306, 303. See also Deleuze, “What is a Creative Act?”, or as it is alternatively, and more aptly, titled, “Having an Idea in Cinema”.

“gaps and false accords” and the “disjunctive cutting” of Bay’s films to harmonize with the organic logic of the movement-image – on all levels (C2, 41, 128, 142). Firstly, on the level of the logic of movement: Deleuze describes how the classical movement-image was “already made up of aberrant movements and false continuity shots”, but without being able to give body to virtual time. In this image-regime, as Deleuze writes, “false continuity function as […] voids which are still motor, which the linked images must cross”.¹⁶³ But let us hold on to the hypothesis that Bay’s films go further and actually utilize film forms that correspond with the time-image, and even suggest that there is if not an exceeding of the sensory-motor at least some kind of transformation of it, for instance an updating of its logic more in conformity, perhaps, with parts of contemporary physics. If there is an organic unity of Michael Bay’s films, this unity is not necessarily challenged by such an update. Bay’s films indeed contain an “organic unity”, an abstract form of the True as a preexisting whole, which links up its disjointed parts. Its conservative/semi-reactionary adolescent affects are an easily recognized unifying principle.¹⁶⁴ Bay’s “gaps and false accords” do not open up towards the unthought in thought. They inject steroids into the openly clichéd.¹⁶⁵

Political thought-images that opt for other kinds of principles have to, in order to find new paths for thinking and avoid being exhausted, find their own formal routes. They cannot of course merely try to imitate, say, Godard’s serial structures or the Straubs’ sound-image disjunctions – which are singular solutions to singular problems – as some magic formula. As problems are altered new ideas and “solutions” are needed.

But how are we on the most general level to understand the untimely-image in relation to the time-image and the movement-image as categories of thought-image logic? First of all, the untimely-image is not meant as a large general category in the sense that the time-image conceptualizes a vast amount of films in post-war cinema. It is a more specific concept. The basic idea of structuring of thought and time in the untimely-image will, however,

¹⁶³ C2, 213. On a more general philosophical note, Deleuze describes how “aberrations of movement were” in pre-Kantian philosophy “in some sense corrected, normalized, ‘elevated’, and brought into line with laws which saved movement, extensive movement of the world or intensive movement of the soul, and which maintained the subordination of time”, ibid., 39.
¹⁶⁵ This can also be seen through the lens of more familiar theories. Someone like Fredric Jameson (bracketing his seemingly different views on “affect” as “waning” in the postmodern) would see here a different kind of uniting principle given by the historical context: how Bay’s fragmentary forms typically express the very ills of a postmodern cultural logic. What is important to note here is that also this unity is found on a more abstract plane than the stylistic traits seen in isolation; see Postmodernism, Or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1991), pp. 4, 83-89. (Jameson’s theories will be more extensively treated in Chapter 6.)
have to retain more from Deleuze’s conception of the time-image than the movement-image. But this is not as clear-cut as it may appear. The untimely-image must remain open to utilizing many aspects inspired also by elements of the movement-image – whatever is required regarding the specific problem at hand for the creation, first of all, of some kind of counter-actualization and second of all, of contours of the new. The cinema books themselves include openings for thinking an untimely-image that does not necessarily have to retain coordinates only from the time-image. In Cinema 2, Kurosawa’s films are implicitly ascribed the function of time-images. But in Cinema 1 they were described as one of the ways that the “action-image” was drawn to a limit (C1, 189f). This may stem from a slight shift in Deleuze’s thinking between the two books (two years passed between their publications). It also underlines how we within one film may “go from one regime to the other” or how there can be “imperceptible” passages or “constant overlapping” between regimes (C2, 126, 127). But a different point can be added. In both books Kurosawa’s films are described as expressing a “problem which is more profound than the situation” (C1, 189, C2, 128). The “problem” that “exceeds the situation” is not some empty abstraction. It exceeds the situation in the sense of an “outside”. The problematic outside is what inheres or subsists in a situation (on the logic and structure of “problems” see 2.9. below and parts of 1.1. above). If this “problem” is made explicit without being reified, it “introduces an event from the outside” into the situation. The outside is neither “reducible to the exteriority of the physical world” nor “the psychological interiority of a thinking ego”, but is rather “beyond the outside world, but capable of restoring our belief in the world” (C2, 175, 181). It is the “unthought in thought”, or the problematic within a situation. One may say that it is reached by counter-actualizing the situation, which then provides the possibility for co-creation as the problematic is the conditions for the new. Deleuze’s slightly shifted description of Kurosawa provides means taken also from the cinema books themselves to say that an “untimely-image”, despite its basic characteristics, does not have to be bound to connect exclusively with only one of Deleuze’s two regimes. As long as it manages to extract from a situation a problem which exceeds the situation, it may belong to a limit case of one, be within the other – or perhaps be part of a different regime altogether. The below treatment of The Wire, which in many ways constitutes its own kind of image-type, allows us to further think through the concept of the untimely-image.

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The untimely-image is irreducible to merely revealing lacunae, cracks and fissures in an existing representational order. It is also more than the mere Deleuzian notion of freeing “life” from where it is constrained. It is even more than merely bringing out a problem that exceeds the situation – alt-
hough this is an important precondition. It must help to express and directly shape and re-shape potentials for the new. Counter-actualization only, especially if the “problematic” extracted is not particularly profound, may risk falling into a mere “negative critique” that does not extract a “new image from the clichés”. One of the difficulties here is that clichés – just like “reactive” sentiments in Nietzsche’s sense – are productive. The kind of countering of clichés at stake here must not be confused with innovative movements of the clichéd itself. Are not struggles against clichés so often within the confines of the clichéd on another level? There is a well-known “battle against clichés” on the level of style in, say, journalism. But so often this can be regarded as the finding of fresh new ways to perpetuate, often unconsciously, more substantial or abstract forms of clichés on other levels (more explicit examples of this kind of “battle against clichés” are found in certain advertising or PR). It is the incorporating of exiting new forms in the sense of, borrowing a succinct phrase from Badiou, “wanting the Other only in its capacity as a new support for the Same” (BE, 202). In moving-image drama this may entail spicing things up with “unusual”-looking camera angles, objectives, graphics, lightning techniques, etc.

In general, there are several, although interrelated, usages of the term cliché. One is as a mere synonym for proverbs (e.g. “love is blind”). This is what is referred to with the cliché that “clichés are true”. Similarly, the term may also be used to describe empty standard phrases used in formal settings, say, when talking to an elderly neighbor about the weather. Motifs or stylistic figures in art or communication (e.g. journalism) that have become standard are another example of how the term is used. The historical origins of the term cliché may be relevant to point out. It comes from a “stereotype plate” used in printing. In order to simplify things at a time when type had to be set by hand letter by letter, commonly used – “stereotypical” – words or phrases was put on a single lead slug. It could thereby be mechanically repeated.

For Deleuze clichés are, on the basic level, habit and already given probabilities. In terms of the cinema books they are sensory-motor thoughts or affects, dictated by “economic interests, ideological beliefs and psychological demands. We therefore normally perceive only clichés” (Cl, 20). A break with the sensory-motor is therefore a break with naturalized clichéd perception. But such a break comes with no guarantee that what appears in its place does not itself quickly sink back into cliché. In What is Philosophy? Deleuze and Guattari describe, as further investigated in 3.2 below, how philosophy, art and science struggle with creating sense from chaos in three distinct ways. But they all do this in relation to clichés of opinion (and indeed the classical philosophical enemy of doxa). (Well-functioning) philosophy, art, and science, in their different ways, take on “chaos” head on in their efforts to make sense of it. Opinions, in contrast, eliminate chaos from the equation. It sets up a shelter from chaos that consists of clichés. This is a very powerful shelter. Artists struggle less with chaos than with the clichés
of opinion. But even if an artist is successful in extracting an image from the clichés (and not merely from chaos), it remains involved in a struggle against “falling back” into cliché.166 We are wrapped up in clichéd images, within our heads and in our surroundings. There is no blank canvas, the canvas is always already filled. “The painter does not paint on an empty canvas”, Deleuze and Guattari write, “and neither does the writer write on a blank page; but the page or canvas is already so covered with preexisting, preestablished clichés that it is first necessary to erase, to clean, to flatten, even to shred, so as to let in a breath of air from the chaos that brings us the vision” (WPh, 204). What are we to make of terms such as “erase”, “clean”, “flatten”, “shred”, “chaos” and “vision”? And aren’t these terms, and the acts they refer to, themselves modernist clichés?

In his book on Bacon (1981), Deleuze already dealt with the same problem: how the “entire surface is already invested virtually with all kinds of clichés which the painter will have to break with”. That is, the canvas is already filled with “all these ’givens” (FB, 10-11, 86-87). But Deleuze has specific ideas about what needs to be done to them, ideas that sharpen the meaning of acts such as to “clean”, “flatten”, or “shred”. This has a lot to do with what needs to be cleaned, flattened or shredded. Deleuze: “even the reactions against clichés are creating clichés” (FB, 89) One of the stakes here, one may say, concerns the undoing of the clichés of what it means to act against clichés: “[I]f the painter is content to transform the cliché, to deform and mutilate it, to manipulate it in every possible way, this reaction is still too intellectual, too abstract: it allows the cliché to rise again from its ashes, it leaves the painter within the milieu of the cliché, or else gives him or her no other consolidation than parody” (FB, 87). (We can recognize here central aspects of the discussion in the cinema books, described above, on the difficulties of extracting an “Image” from the clichés, and how The New American Cinema and even The French New Wave were too involved with merely parodying the clichés.) In the contemporary world, in which there has “been a multiplication of images of every kind, around us and in our heads”, again, “even the reactions against clichés are creating clichés” (89). So how does one battle clichés given this predicament? Deleuze: “Great painters know that it is not enough to mutilate, maul, or parody the cliché” (89). But there are no “universal solutions” – one “can fight against the cliché only with much guile, perseverance, and prudence: it is a task perpetually renewed with every painting” (96). So to the extent that “erase”, “clean”, “flatten”, “shred”, “chaos” and “vision” are modernist clichés, Deleuze does to these terms themselves what he describes to be their function in art – that is, he extracts them from the clichés they have become, and sharpens, updates and revitalizes their meaning.

166 This is also to paraphrase the idea from What is Philosophy? of “falling back into history”, 110.
In art, then, the canvas is always already filled with “givens” that one has to work backwards to remove, counter-actualize. This is strenuous work. But it is a condition for there to be creation in art. The situation is no different for philosophical thinking. Creating a non-cliché thought-image or concept is extremely difficult.\textsuperscript{167} And the stakes are political. Clichés do not merely curb chaos, they also counter or stifle productive becomings. The untimely is resistance to the present as a stifling of productive becomings. When untimely expressions are appropriated, when they “fall back”, they lose their ability to resist the present. But as defined force, as a virtual idea, it can potentially be creatively repeated by a new image – in a new present, in a different context, with a different problem. In general a certain amount of clichés, habits, are needed in life. But clichés can also be quite repressive. It is when a cliché begs to be countered from the perspective of a given aesthetic-political problem, that it becomes the concern of the untimely-image.

\section*{2.6 The Wire & the Untimely-Site}

The untimely-image, it seems to me, is more powerful and interesting if it erupts within a more unexpected context than the festival circuit, alternative cinema, or the explicit avant-garde or the “art-world”. That is, if it erupts within a somewhat wider cultural context than spaces in which countering political art is normally confined and that, measured from the perspective of directly affecting the cultural imagination, tends to reach few people. Here we find a first point of relevance for discussing the untimely-image across \textit{The Wire}.

In a discussion of political filmmaker Pedro Costa, Rancière acknowledges how cinema, “the popular art of the twentieth century” in the classic sense of its large-scale political potential, “is no longer what it was once hoped it would be”. And as he goes on to write: “Neighbourhood cinemas have been replaced by multiplexes that supply each sociologically determinate audience a type of art designed and formatted to suit it. [---] And Pedro Costa’s films, like any work that eludes this formatting process, are immediately labelled film-festival material, something reserved for the exclusive enjoyment of a film-buff elite and tendentiously pushed in the direction of museums and art lovers” (2009a: 81).

In its own subtle ways – it is far from explicitly avant-garde in its form or narrative – \textit{The Wire} pushes the forms and ideas of what political art can be. But it simultaneously borders the mainstream. It is within the mainstream certainly when it comes to channels of distribution. It therefore exceeds the

\footnotetext{167}{On the difficulty of creation and the “major undertaking” it entails, see \textit{The Brain is the Screen}, 288f, 291.}
audience compartmentalization that Rancière describes. We should also mention the well-known problem of how in avant-garde or art-world kind of settings, especially in their institutionalized forms, it is arguably more expected, not to mention tolerated, to be at odds with the given: small spaces for “exceptions” allowed or even included in the liberal democratic order as exceptions (this area is marked “art” – whether inside or slightly outside the institution or the art market – and here outrageous things may occur). Of course, there has been much political art at odds with the functions of art institutions and markets aiming instead either to spread “art into life” or to create some kinds of “non-art” that is a critical negation. But these strategies, perhaps, are no exceptions to being exceptions.

Are we then driven all the way to the other pole? That is, must the untimely-image erupt within a completely actual, mainstream, normalized or clichéd setting? Certainly not: conditions of possibility must be supplied – and as I will show, it is from such a perspective that The Wire will be investigated (the French New Wave will also be discussed in these terms in 5.3 below). I call a setting – that is, a work, a group of works, or perhaps even an environment or a movement – that provides the condition of possibility for a specific untimely-image an untimely-site. What is an untimely-site?

In order to explain the distinction between the image and the site, we can utilize aspects of Badiou’s distinction between the event and what he calls an “evental site” [site événementiel]. If an event occurs, it is necessarily so that an evental site would have had to be in place. The site, for Badiou, is properly named or even noticed as evental only retroactively: if there is an event, the local site in which it erupts is named evental. Before the retroactive “naming” of the site as evental, the site “opens up the possibility of an event” (BE, 179). But this is not the same as saying that an event will occur. In order for this idea of a site to be of use for our concerns, we must augment this aspect of an event possibly not occurring and bracket Badiou’s notion of the eventual site as only retroactively noticeable. As described in chapter 1, we are concerned, in contradistinction to Badiou, with the genetic “contours” and conditions before any actual event of the new – and we precisely do not, as Badiou tends to do, understand “conditions” in the sense of preceding the event as reducible to the calculable and foreseeable. What we will take up is the notion of the site as a needed condition of possibility, but as a noticea-

168 As stated above, the implication of Badiou’s discussion of Leibnitz in Being and Time is that the only possible meaning of the term “conditions” for the event is the mechanically causal. Deleuze has as we know a very different point of view: “When a social mutation appears, it is not enough to draw the consequences or effects according to lines of economic or political causality.” Rather there is, “always one part of the event that is irreducible to any social determinism, or causal chains” that is rather like an “unstable condition which opens up a new field of the possible”, “May ’68 Did Not Take Place”, 234, 233. And the important thing here is that this is not some “void” or outside of being, but rather the level of the “problematic” (more on the “problematic in 2.9 below).
ble part of reality “before” or aside of the fact that an event has been actualized.

A situation containing an evental site is a “situation in which at least one multiple on the edge of the void is presented” (BE, 179). We will be somewhat creative with Badiou’s definitions also in this sense, and re-determine the “site” to be the situation itself. I modify this so that a whole “situation” functions as a site. Not in the sense that the whole situation (necessarily) becomes evental, or in our case untimely, but in the sense that it includes it. In Badiou’s system, the evental site is positioned “within a situation” as a specific “multiple in a situation” (BE, 524, 507). In my modification the site is the combination of the local “multiple” and the situation it is within. It is a situation that includes within it at least one aspect on the edge of a “void”. If in these ways somewhat reimagined or as Badiou would say “subtracted” from the exact structure of his system we can acknowledge that The Wire has elements “at the edge of a void”:

So far we have described and reimagined the “evental site”, but what about the event itself? In Badiou, the event itself is not as the evental site “on the edge of a void”. The event, instead, “mobilizes the elements of its site, but it adds its own presentation to the mix”, on “the basis of a provocation of whatever unpresentability is contained in the site” (182, 192). We need not, at least not here, be concerned with the exact meaning of Badiou’s concepts like “unpresentability” or “void”.

169 In a critical remark on Badiou’s theory of the event, contrasting with my comparably freer utilization in this paragraph, Deleuze and Guattari understand his conception of the “void” (and the “evental site” as connected to it) as a form of transcendence, WPh, 152. From the perspective of Deleuze’s radical immanence, we can add here, Badiou’s notion of the rupturing and “unpresentable” event appears as in harmony with 20th-century phenomenology and post-phenomenology. Deleuze and Guattari speaks of a “modern moment” in philosophy, stretching from Husserl and onwards, that was “no longer satisfied with thinking immanence as immanent to a transcendent”, and wanted instead “to think transcendence within the immanent, and it is from immanence that a breach is expected”, WPh, 47.

170 But these concepts do contain aspects that we can keep in mind for the discussion in Chapter 6: Badiou’s notion of the “unpresentability” of the void has resonances with the below discussion of The Wire and the problem of how to represent the “unrepresentable” of abstract flows of global finance capital. There are differences and similarities. On Badiou’s part the problem is formulated as follows: “The striking paradox of our undertaking is that we are going to try to name the very thing which is impossible to discern. We are searching for a language for the unnameable. It will have to name the latter without naming it, it will instruct its vague existence without specifying anything whatsoever within it”; BE, 376. But Badiou’s object is the event and his aim is exactly to preserve its unnameable character while “naming” it. In contrast, the below discussed theories of how to represent the “unrepresentability” of global flows of capital basically has the aim of finding ways to make them wholly representable.
for an expression of generative force, and 2., the generative expression itself, which would have to, so to speak, “add its own presentation to the mix”. Transposed to the concepts of this study, this spells:

1. An untimely-site: a situation containing at least some of its elements on the edge of generative forces and/or the non-actual in some form, and which therefore seem to contain conditions of possibility for

A certain work or even a certain area of filmmaking tendencies, can be investigated as an untimely-site. That is, a material that seems to provide conditions for, without assuming that it actually expresses, untimely-images. Given its unusual form, content, uncompromising political errand, and production-context, does The Wire in the end constitute an untimely-site? Does it in the end even contain clear untimely-images? Or even: what are the natures of its specific ways of failing to, while perhaps being close to, express untimely-images? The Wire constitutes an intriguing site in which to put these kinds of questions to work.

2.7. On Truth Taking on a “New Sense” & the Limitations of this New Sense for Political Art

In Deleuze’s descriptions, the organic regime of the movement-image is structured around the “form of the true”, and the time-image tends to abide by a “power of the false”. Neorealism took up some middle ground, as we saw above, by laying a foundation for a “new image” while still keeping a reference to the form of the true. But what is this “power of the false” and what are its values and limitations? Is it false merely in the sense of being a lie? Or is it about something else entirely? The “power of the false” implies a different conception of truth – a “truth of time”. This is a conception of time itself as openly creative (“open” in contrast to time being the medium for the coming into being of the preconceived). At the beginning of his book on Proust, Deleuze claims that In Search of Lost Time is not about memory but a search for truth. Memory and involuntary memory are merely stages to be passed through in this search.\(^\text{171}\) The search finally leads beyond what already exists, including what existed in the past, revealing a more profound truth as force of the future that Deleuze calls a “truth of time” (Combray arises as it never existed).\(^\text{172}\) Is this merely a notion that what is considered to be true “varies” within different eras and cultures? Is it merely one in the

\(^{171}\) Proust and Signs, 4, 26, see also ATP, 186, 306; DR, 149, 153; WPh, 167-8.

\(^{172}\) Truth is “always a truth of time [...]”, Proust and Signs, 17; see also Negotiations, 126.
endless rows of epistemological points about how we can never really know the real truth? This “truth of time” is a different kind of point altogether. The truth of time is the open becoming of life. This is the opposite of subjective relativism (not to mention “anything goes”).¹⁷³

Falsehood is generative power. Instead of the truth as recognition of what is already given and remains given (whether realized or as a given possibility), we have a “falsifying” of what is given in order to put it in a state of open becoming. This kind of falsehood is not (yet) within the scope of either true or false – or rather, it is true in the sense of generative force in action.¹⁷⁴ Artists deal with (or at least the good tries to deal with) these kinds of “falsifying” truths. In his book on Nietzsche, Deleuze suggest that truth here “perhaps takes on a new sense”, and references Nietzsche’s discourses on “‘we the artists’ = ‘we the seekers after knowledge or truth’ = ‘we the inventors of new possibilities of life’”.¹⁷⁵ In the cinema books, Deleuze utilizes the term “power/s of the false” to pinpoint an aspect of (artistic) creativity present, more or less, in most time-images. This is about the creation of new possibilities: the impossible out of the possible. That is, artistic images concerned with the true that do not reference something that pre-exist, so much as co-create new (real) truths – an inversion of truth as representation.

But let us now bring in a different perspective. What are we to do with the opposition between “the form of the true” and “the power/s of the false” in view of contemporary capitalism? Has not capitalist power exceeded the form of the true in favor of a more nebulous structure? Capitalism, writes Deleuze and Guattari, works through “the immanence of an axiomatic, and not under the transcendence of formal Unity”.¹⁷⁶ At this point what is important to notice is the second part of the quoted sentence: that capitalism does not work “under the transcendence of formal Unity”. As we have already seen above it works rather, at least on the one hand, as a quite deterritorialized, metamorphosing structure, that is happy to incorporate – albeit by also reterritorializing it – the deterritorialized, nebulous, metamorphosing. So how does “the form of the true” relate to all this? In the cinema books

¹⁷³ To a large extent we can also add sophism. In his early readings of Plato, Deleuze picked up some things from Plato (e.g. the basic schema of remembrance and “Ideas” but in a time-wise inverted and made-immanent form) and some things from the sophists. Or rather, Deleuze wrests from the sophists’ own shallow adherence to empirical examples only a certain type of questions (how? where? who? etc.) that are inadvertently better than Socrates’ questions (What?) for getting at the transcendental – and differential – essence or nature of things and Ideas.

¹⁷⁴ Given that this has to be explained, however, Ronald Bogue makes a good point in preferring Deleuze’s bordering concept of “fabulation” since, as he writes, “the phrase ‘the powers of the false’ too readily invites a reintroduction of the true/false distinction in its orthodox formulation”, Deleuzian Fabulation Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010(a), p. 12.

¹⁷⁵ *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, 103.

¹⁷⁶ *ATP*, 458. In Chapter 6 we will look more closely at what “the immanence of an axiomatic” entails.
Deleuze refers to “the form of the true” as abiding precisely by what he in his other works says *capitalism does not* abide by: the transcendence of formal Unity. Furthermore, “the form of the true” was described as tending “to the identification of a character” through the recognizing filter of identity (“his discovery or simply his coherence”), which Deleuze then contrasts to “the power of the false” as a breaking with the form of identity. In contrast to the form of the true it “cannot be separated from an irreducible multiplicity” in the sense of “‘I is another’ [‘Je est un autre’]” which has “replaced Ego = Ego” (C2, 133). But how is this to be read in relation to what Deleuze says about forms and forms of subjectivity in *Postscript of Societies of Control*?

Before the societies of control let us look at the “prior” so-called disciplinary society (roughly spanning from the end of the 18th century to the middle of the 20th).177 As Deleuze shows in his book on Foucault, not even in disciplinary societies does power have given forms (forms of the visible and the sayable). It is rather “knowledge”, in Deleuze’s conception of Foucault’s power/knowledge, that “concerns formed matters (substances) and formalized functions” and which is “endowed with a relatively rigid segmentarity”. Power is comparably “diffuse” and “diagrammatic” – it does not primarily belong to anyone but traverses the social field. It “passes not so much through forms as through singular points which on each occasion mark the application of a force […]” (Foucault, 73, translation modified). But power as force tends to be bound up with the reproduction of a form: a specific regime of power/knowledge. Power (force) and knowledge (form) are different in nature, but this “does not prevent mutual presupposition and capture, a mutual immanence” (74). Institutions of knowledge “actualize, modify, and redistribute” the power-relations (77). But power itself is fundamentally unstable, “molecular”. Through a “general reshuffle” power’s “diagrams” can be disrupted by the “outside”, and then tweaked in other directions.178

Deleuze conceives of capitalist societies in general as no longer based on identity. But the deterritorializations of identities and codes continuously reach new level of intensification. After the Second World War disciplinary society – which was comparably more striated – begins to crumble and a new social logic begin to emerge. Deleuze labels this new logic *control society*. In his famous 1990 essay on this topic he gives only a brief sketch (although, as we saw in 1.2.2 above, it is clearly based on his and Guattari’s analyses of capitalism). Disciplinary societies were structured around the

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177 “Prior” does not mean a simple linear line of succession. There are vast points of overlapping and interaction between these types of society and certainly discipline remains also in societies of control, although its logic has basically changed.

178 94, 96. The outside may be said to function like a “third synthesis”, a pure and empty form/force that is the condition of the new. Deleuze: “The diagram stems from the outside but the outside does not merge with any diagram, and continues instead to ‘draw’ new ones. In this way the outside is always an opening on to a future […] [F]orce displays potentiality with respect to the diagram containing it, or possesses a third power […]” (89).
idea of confinement actualized in various institutions (the school, the hospital, the army, the factory, the prison, etc.) and the molding of individuals into more or less given roles. In the later era these institutions are in decline and a new logic of control has gradually taken over. Controls, writes Deleuze, “are a modulation, like a self-transmuting molding continually changing from one moment to the next” (178f). It no longer deals with masses and individuals: “Individuals become ‘dividuals,’ and masses become samples, data, markets, or ‘banks’” (180). How does this relate to the “the power of the false” and the breaking with identity? As formulated by Hardt and Negri, the “passage towards the society of control involves a production of subjectivity that is not fixed in identity but hybrid and modulating”.179 An imperative conclusion to be drawn here is that there is no longer necessarily any inherent value in the familiar ideal of “non-fixed identity” (a staple of political cinema in the last decades). We will come back to this problem in Chapter 5.

So what can art do in this situation? The question for the later Deleuze becomes, as Rajchman writes: “in our contemporary global tele-informational culture that tends to blur all distinctions between the artificial and the natural, what new expressive materials and becoming-art (what new ‘regime’ of signs and images) might we yet invent?” (Rajchman, 2000: 120). But there is another important aspect here: there are different kinds of powers of the false. Or rather, there are very different kinds of forces that take hold of them, using them as means for different kinds of ends (similarly one of Deleuze and Guattari’s basic points from Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia and onwards, is that capital and revolutionary resistance share a certain “schizophrenic” logic). In the cinema books, the powers of the false are not merely in the service of the “noblest” forces capable of creating new forms of life. When it comes to a Nietzschean problematic of noble and base forces, there are, as Deleuze writes, “two states of life which are in opposition at the heart of immanent becoming”. There is becoming also in the sense of an “exhausted and degenerating life, all the more terrible, and apt to multiply itself” (C2, 142, 141). Is this not like a struggle between – on the one hand – the negative aspects of an increasingly deterritorialized contemporary capitalist power, very “apt to multiply itself” and – on the other hand – forces interested in creating new forms of life irreducible to such a frame? Deleuze: “The power of the false is delicate, allowing itself to be recaptured by frogs and scorpions. But it is the only chance for art or life […]” (C2, 147).

But is this really “the only chance”? How far should we follow Deleuze here? Regarding the form of art, Deleuze seems a bit too invested in an opposition between form and transformation, that is, between the powers of the false (deterritorialization) utilized for the consolidation of static forms (re-

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pressive reterritorialization) vs. the will to metamorphosis (artistic creativity that “takes the power of the false to a degree which is realized, not in form, but in transformation”, C2, 146). Perhaps there is a certain limitation to Deleuze’s thought on political art here? There is at least a difficult tension between his hopes in art and his own conceptualization of contemporary capitalist power. Granted, capitalist power deterritorializes with one hand only to perform new repressive reterritorialization with the other. But the whole system is clearly increasingly deterritorialized – not to mention obscure. The Neorealists, Deleuze says, “retained a form of the true”. Perhaps this is precisely what is needed in order for it to be possible to extract from a much-deterritorialized sociopolitical situation a certain kind of untimely-image?

2.8. The Wire & the Two Sides of Stretched-Out Representation

The notions of representation tied to identity and already given forms, critiqued by Deleuze as a dogmatic image of thought (described above), may be a notion that is not altogether useful to conceptualize what contemporary political art tends to be up against. To recap and expand somewhat on some of its basic outlines, “representation” has several intertwined meanings in Deleuze as pertaining to thought in philosophy and in art. This kind of thought, generally, tends to revolve around the notion of stabilizing relations of “meaning” or signification – either in relation to the world or to other propositions – seen through the recognizing filter of identity. Such filter is therefore unable to think the more primarily and determining movements of difference or becoming other than through negation, opposition or mediation, and therefore fails to think the more primary semi-autonomy of difference in itself (and the intricate ways that this “pure” and generative difference reciprocally intertwines with the level of representation). Generative force therefore tends to elude representational thought too focused on identity (and difference thought only as negative mediation between identities) within what is already there. But is there not also a representational thought focused on the already there, not in its identity, but in its more fluid and open forms? As pure categories, Deleuze’s notions like “representational” or “dogmatic” images are critical crystallizations of specific dominant tendencies in the history of Western philosophy (but also in society at large). But it seems to me that Deleuze’s own notions of representational knowledge, as thought together with how it functions with power (contemporary capitalism), must be continued to be re-envisioned and updated, to avoid clinging to an adversary that has morphed into a straw man.
And reversely, new forms of representation as knowledge may also be used as a strategy without conceding to a “dogmatic image of thought”. With The Wire, and especially with Fredric Jameson’s notion of cognitive mapping, we are certainly not dealing with representational knowledge in any simple sense of identity, opposition, etc. The Wire, as we will see, stretches, or deterritorializes representation to the point of implying a limit or even breaking point. And what is mapped, what is primarily to be represented, is itself partially fluid – a problem that Jameson’s speculative idea of cognitive mapping confronts. This regards the issue of mapping capitalism that is discussed in Chapter 6. But in Chapter 5 we will also investigate The Wire’s second explicit political problem: blackness.

In studies of “media representations” within more cultural-studies-leaning scholarship, an ideal or preference has been representational forms that express subjectivity as process and not static identity. As Stuart Hall himself sums up what he and other original culture studies scholars by the 90s had been abiding by for a long time: “[I]dentities are never completed, never finished […] they are always as subjectivity itself is, in process.”\(^{180}\) We could also mention Paul Gilroy’s concern with the “instability and mutability of identities which are always unfinished, always being unmade”.\(^{181}\) This is a “conception of identity”, then, that is “thought through difference” (Hall, 51). But these are not merely theories that propagate for the value of representing identities in these ways. These are rather statements based on historical and social analyses that acknowledge that these conceptions of identity have become the dominant in modernity. Identities have of course always been processual, but the point is that this is now more obvious and open and the instability of the parameters that produce identity is increasing. The increasing instability is an effect of many causes raging from “the great de-centerings of modern thought” (Marx, Freud, Saussure, etc.) to the complexity of globalization. The traditional “logic of identity”, as Hall writes, is, for good or ill, finished” (43), while the problem of how to conceive of identity, politically, in new ways continues.\(^{182}\) To think identity as process, then, is to think identity other than a “sealed or closed totality” (49). In other words, identities are no longer thought of as static essences. But so what?


\(^{182}\) The continued relevance of the question of identity concerns according Hall how to conceive of a politics of blackness without resorting to (strategic) essentialism: “What is it like to live, by attempting to valorise and defeat the marginalization of the variety of Black subjects and to really begin to recover the lost histories of a variety of Black experiences, while at the same time recognizing the end of any essential Black subject? That is the politics of living identity through difference”, 1996: 57.
Hall and Gilroy are sophisticated thinkers of these matters (in contrast to much in what became the field of culture studies, a field Hall inadvertently helped to found but that he became quite critical of). But in many contemporary discourses of identity as “process” or “becoming” there is a lack of precision, differentiation, and evaluation. Subjectivity and identity “as about process” – and who would disagree with this notion? – can certainly belong to new forms of controlling structures. Perhaps even to new forms of representational images of thought (as “recaptured by frogs and scorpions”).

As stated, political control today does not primarily function through a discipline that concerns molding more or less self-identical forms and subjects. It is more supple and flexible than that. And “queering identities”, to once again quote Braidotti, “is a dominant ideology under advanced capitalism” (2006: 49) – and “queer”, we should add, was from the beginning a political-theoretical strategy that challenged identity politics and its demands for representation and recognition, with a preference instead for expressions beyond specific groups already defined. Analyzing repressive representations in culture should therefore reconfigure its parameters from being overly focused on critiques of essentialism and identity. It should also question how the processual, fluid, hybrid, affective, etc. relates to contemporary power structures.

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The reverse side of this is that new forms of representation as knowledge may be used as a strategy for political art – not as dogmatic representation, but as “retaining a form of the true”. *The Wire* will be investigated not as mere representation of identities and given forms but as a limit case that stretches representation on a larger scale. In the next chapter we will be informed by the description of (social) science in *What is Philosophy?* In this book, science, at least certain science, is seen to include the study of dynamic processes of individuation. Not merely the effects of individuation on a representational plane of actuality, but also the processes of individuation themselves as they include a venturing into a “virtual” realm of reality. *The Wire* is not representation in any simple sense of the term. It aims to reveal the intensive processes behind the “actual state of affairs” it depicts. And it does so as a critique that aims at change. But this in itself does not make it sub-representational art – *The Wire* is quite complex and we will have to grapple with how to evaluate it from the perspective of the untimely-image from now on all the way up until the end. On the one hand some of the processes revealed ventures into a kind of generative “virtual”, but on the other hand this is about glimpses into generative processes from the point of view of a science that aims to uncover how something has come to be in its actual form, its processes of individuation. In this way it can be seen as an inclusive resemblance – less of identity than the verisimilitude to states of affairs in a
more dynamic sense. There is an inclusion, of dynamic social processes of individuation (beyond mere character change) as part of its investigation of what, nonetheless, already exists, which however processual or fluid can be recognized and (truthfully) depicted.

Besides processes of individuation (as revealed in “circular” relations, as we will see below, between Seasons 4 and 5) there are other sides to the stretching of representation in The Wire. These can be said to be about more spatial or quantitative aspects. The Wire is ambitious in scope. It seems driven by a will to swallow as much as possible under its representational gaze. It approaches a spatial stretching of representation first of all by relating in the final instance to the realm of global neoliberal finance capital—in many ways the absent-present antagonist for the whole serial. But The Wire is also an inclusion of more and more social strata to the point of approaching a limit of what is possible to represent by any one narrative without losing focus. These two aspects combine in the following sense: The Wire expands the limits of representation by including more and more in it and by touching upon the issue of representing even the perhaps “unrepresentable”: the abstract flows of global finance capital. That is, the spatial inclusiveness, its drive towards including more and more strata, approaches as an outside limit the abstract realm of global finance capital (a realm that is simultaneously the implicit ever-present antagonist force of its inside). These three factors—(“circular”) processes of individuation, quantitative excess of segments and the bordering outside/inside realm of finance capital—add up to The Wire as an intriguing stretching of a representational framework that warrants extensive investigation in order to be evaluated from the perspective of the untimely-image.

2.9. Sub-representation – On “Structure” Taking on a New Sense

In Deleuze it is certainly not so that the more “chaotic” a work of art (or philosophy) the better. He conceives of art (and philosophy) as harnessing, framing and articulation of “chaos”, a setting up of a consistency. Evident not least in his book on Francis Bacon, Deleuze’s preferences in art—as well as philosophy—oppose empty abstraction or pure form, any all-out free play

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of general “becoming”, or a work that is too “chaotic”.

“A work of chaos, writes Deleuze and Guattari, “is certainly no better than a work of opinion; art is no more made of chaos than it is of opinion.” “Art,” they continue, “constitutes […] a Chaosmos, a composed chaos” (WPh, 204). Deleuze describe Bacon’s “diagrammatic” paintings as “indeed a chaos […] but it is also a germ of order […] the chaos-germ” (FB, 102). John Rajchman writes: “Outside established identities, divisions, and logical and syntactical as well as pragmatic, it has often been assumed that there is only chaos, anarchy, undifferentiation, or ‘absurdity.’ Deleuze tries to expose this illusion, and to advance a conception that allows for a layer of sense prior to code, even a structuralist one […] His own logic of converging and diverging series tries to work with such a sense” (2000: 8).

This kind of sense must not be confused with a lack of structure. Deleuze’s logic primarily concerns sub-representational structure. What does “structure” mean here? If it is not representational in what sense is it a structure? Firstly, as the quote from Rajchman indicated, the following is a false dichotomy: either representational structure, or undifferentiated abyss, absurdity, chaos. Secondly, what lies “in-between” those two poles are not merely some general becoming, or generative strife between being and beings that is otherwise more or less devoid of structure. Deleuze’s philosophy is concerned with how to think determination, distribution, structure and organization, irreducible not only to a representational image of thought, but also to conceptions such as Being as withdrawal or any of the mysticisms of the “unrepresentable”. Deleuze’s philosophy can be seen as an attempt to systematically develop a notion of sub-representational structure. This is what is behind (often over-looked) claims in Difference and Repetition –

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184 Deleuze argues that abstraction is “an asceticism, a spiritual salvation” that reduces chaos “to a minimum”. While it “raises itself above the figurative givens […] it also turns chaos into a simple stream we must cross in order to discover the abstract and signifying Forms.”, FB, 103. One may say, then, that abstraction does not break with representation so much as trades one kind of representation of the given (figurative givens) for another (conceptual givens) – see also 2.1 above.

185 On the second side in this dichotomy one could also place the term “affect”. The problem with the claim that beyond representation there is only affect – a claim commonly made or abided by within film- and media studies – is that it implicitly assumes a dichotomy in which thought is reduced to representation. Not only are there different kinds of thought and different kinds of affect that are all in some sense intertwined, there is more concretely the right side of the brain and the nervous system. See Deleuze’s discussion of “analogical language” as belonging to “the right hemisphere of the brain or, better to the nervous system”, FB, 113.

186 As John Rajchman writes: “Deleuze would try to relieve the philosophy of his French contemporaries of the temptation to reinstall transcendence – in particular, in the form of a peculiar mysticism of the Invisible or the Unrepresentable and its supposed Law […]”, 2000: 18-19. Correspondingly, he “was never drawn to attempts to turn the voids or silences in modern work[s of art] into a mystical metaphysic of the Unsayable or the Invisible”, 125.

187 Two explicit examples: all that is included in the philosophical-mathematical concept of “differenciation” in the fourth and fifth chapters of DR, and the concepts of “numbering number”, “nomadic organization”, and “minor” geography in ATP, 389-395, 481, 483-485.
which includes the “virtual” side of art – like “The reality of the virtual is structure”, and “the virtual is completely determined”188 – similarly, the problem of the time-image is how to conceive of new organizations of thought-images beyond representation. This concerns a specific logic of multiplicities, and in Deleuze, as John Rajcham writes, “‘logic’ takes on a new sense” (2000: 50ff). Deleuze’s complex notion of “differential multiplicities” first of all does not “designate a combination of the many and the one, but rather an organisation belonging to the many as such, which has no need whatsoever of unity in order to form a system” (DR, 230). How are these “systems” constituted if they do not form a unity? As with many of Deleuze’s concepts, “determination”, “structure”, “problem”, and even “essence” have unorthodox definitions, extracted from experimental strands of mathematics rather than traditional logic. The traditional meanings of such terms are given a different sense. This means on the most basic level that their constituent parts no longer have identity as their core.

Let us now look into the more technical aspects of how these systems are structured. What Deleuze call “Problematic Ideas” are precisely “defined multiplicities”. They consist of “differential relations between genetic elements” or “complexes of relations and corresponding singularities” (DR, 203). These singularities are not tiny self-same identities, but repetitions of pre-individual points – self-differing differences – that form converging and diverging series. Problems, writes Deleuze, “[are] emissions of [pre-individual] singularities” that “possess a mobile, immanent principle of auto-unification through nomadic distribution, radically distinct from fixed and sedimentary distributions [...]”, (LS, 118). The differential relations, then, are not made up of “negative” differences between identities in relations of contradiction and opposition. The differences are primarily “positive”, that is, mobile, self-differencing.189 While fully real, a non-actual structure does not “exist” so much as it “insists or subsists, possessing a quasi-being” (DR, 194). It subsists ontologically “prior” to identities or representations (although they are completely immersed in them and reciprocally determined by them). Series of singularities-differences converge as Problematic ideas on a virtual “plane of composition” (and not within a localizable space-time). Their “solutions” are – more or less temporary – effects of semi-stable identities (actual multiplicities). That is, problematic Ideas possess the capacity

188 DR, 260. Some commentators have understood this terminology merely as an expression of a “structuralist” phase that Deleuze later abandons. This seems to me to risk downplaying that “structure” in Difference and Repetition (and including the article on structuralism he wrote before) “takes on a new sense”, which furthermore implies conceptions of determination and organization that continued to be completely central for Deleuze although often described with varying concepts.

189 This is a concept of difference (virtual) that clearly cannot therefore be confused with “diversity” (actual). Deleuze: “Difference is not diversity. Diversity is given, but difference is that by which the given is given, that by which the given is given as diverse”, DR, 280.
to be actualized – they seek “solutions” – through processes of individuation. But these problems are never exhausted by their “solutions”. They subsist or inhere in them as inexhaustible potential.\footnote{While these structures are complexities that exceed the given, they are still something that can (and must) be unfolded and explicated as such by philosophy. This is therefore far from the traditional notions of, as Rajchman writes, “some great silence or void”, 2000: 61, 141.}

These sub-representational structures, while distinct from actual structures, do not make up a separate realm. While made up of relations of differential forces, they are certainly also – reciprocally – determined in relations with representational forms or “solutions”. There is no autonomous realm of generative potential (with its sub-representational logic) separate from actual facts and objects. This goes for any of Deleuze’s “dual” concepts not only actual/virtual, but also all of his other “oppositions”, not least in his writings on aesthetic matters. There is a (non-negative and non-synthetic) dialectics between such “dualisms” in his philosophy. They “in fact exist only in mixture” and “in a “perpetual field of interaction”,\footnote{ATP, 474-475 & 360, see also 359-361. Deleuze & Guattari constantly stress how the relation the molar/molecular, smooth/striated, tree/rhizome, state/war machine, etc. is not a dualist opposition outside the analytics of these concepts. As de facto never existing outside a certain mixture with the other pole, they relate as “variables of coexistence”, ATP, 435. On the interaction between so-called “minor” and “royal” sciences, as well as between the classic image of thought and the “outside”, see 374-375, 486; the immanence of nonmetric and metric multiplicities, 506; the necessary mixes between the nomad and the sedentary, 384, on the “nomad” as abstract Idea/concept that is “de facto” always mixed, 420, “from the beginning” entered “into composition with the other pole”, 422 (432); the “perpetual interaction” and (non-successive/evolutionary) coexistence between the type of social formations of the “primitive” and of the “State”, and how “the nomads do not precede the sedentaries; rather, nomadism is a movement, a becoming that affects sedentaries, just as sedentarization is a stoppage that settles the nomads”, 430; etc.} In each case or in each movement one side may appear more dominant than the other (this certainly also goes for the time-image and the movement-image). The one only exists as at least slightly mixed with the other. Extremes on both sides tend to be unproductive or even dangerous. The extreme “absolute” deterriorializations, wild drunken experimentation, drugs, etc. easily become destructive, suicidal, or empty (ATP, 503, 506, 510, 229, 284-285, 163-166). Not only is destratification/absolute deterriorialization/BwO/etc, not in itself the answer, but have to be conducted with caution: they may lead to destruction or unproductive stasis if not carefully calibrated in relation to a molar territory (already existing facts, objects etc.) and to lesser extent even their reterritorializations (actualizations of new facts, objects etc.).\footnote{It is, furthermore, only from the perspective of the new reterritorializations that we can fully evaluate the deterriorializing movements: “[T]he force and the obstinacy of a deterriorialization can only be evaluated through the types of reterritorialization that represent it; the one is the reverse side of the other”, AO, 347.} Generative force is always intertwined with representation – it is irreducible to mere non-representation. “How could lines of deterriorialization”, write Deleuze and Guattari, “be assignable outside of circuits of terri-

\footnotetext[100]{While these structures are complexities that exceed the given, they are still something that can (and must) be unfolded and explicated as such by philosophy. This is therefore far from the traditional notions of, as Rajchman writes, “some great silence or void”, 2000: 61, 141.}

\footnotetext[101]{ATP, 474-475 & 360, see also 359-361. Deleuze & Guattari constantly stress how the relation the molar/molecular, smooth/striated, tree/rhizome, state/war machine, etc. is not a dualist opposition outside the analytics of these concepts. As de facto never existing outside a certain mixture with the other pole, they relate as “variables of coexistence”, ATP, 435. On the interaction between so-called “minor” and “royal” sciences, as well as between the classic image of thought and the “outside”, see 374-375, 486; the immanence of nonmetric and metric multiplicities, 506; the necessary mixes between the nomad and the sedentary, 384, on the “nomad” as abstract Idea/concept that is “de facto” always mixed, 420, “from the beginning” entered “into composition with the other pole”, 422 (432); the “perpetual interaction” and (non-successive/evolutionary) coexistence between the type of social formations of the “primitive” and of the “State”, and how “the nomads do not precede the sedentaries; rather, nomadism is a movement, a becoming that affects sedentaries, just as sedentarization is a stoppage that settles the nomads”, 430; etc.}
toriality? Where else but in wide expanses, and in major upheavals in those expanses, could a tiny rivulet of new intensity suddenly start to flow?"193

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193 ATP, 34; see also 349-350. “Sobriety, sobriety: that is the common prerequisite for the deterritorialization of matters […]”, 344.
Chapter 3. Further Complications of the Untimely-Image: *The Wire*

In this chapter we will begin the gradual unraveling of the complex weave that is *The Wire*. Chapter 4 will go into the details of its audiovisual as well as argumentative configurations. Part 3.1 of the present chapter looks at its “literary” aspects. As explained above, the path across *The Wire* serves the primary point of complicating and further nuancing the development of the untimely-image. But this also means that we will go far into the specificities of *The Wire* without simultaneously discussing the untimely-image directly at all times – just like we went far into the specificities of Deleuze’s thought above without simultaneously discussing the untimely-image directly at all times. And as explained in the preface, this path also has the “minor” aim of contributing to *The Wire* studies. But the untimely-image is always present in the subsequent chapters as the culprit, as that which the discussions always connect back to and advance upon. In Chapters 5 and 6 the untimely-image will play a more explicit role.

In 3.2 we will go into a longer discussion of the “methodology” of how *The Wire* is treated in this study. This is mainly done by looking at *The Wire* as a mix of art and social science and by discussing how it will be treated as such through the lens of Deleuze and Guattari’s conception of the relations between science, art, and philosophy. To this discussion we can add that *The Wire* is an event of conscious political art that also contains and gives rise to aesthetic-political problems that exceed its own grasp. The point here is not to lift up given nuggets of signification that are “latent”, hidden within the work. The point, instead, is to perform a complication – to take a problem in its given articulation and subject it to a reproblematization. The concept of the untimely-image will be developed across *The Wire*. This means that the latter will be subjected to something more than an explication (which is not say that it will not also be subjected to close analysis from many perspectives).

But before we start, a short introductory note for readers unfamiliar with *The Wire*. *The Wire* is a narrative whole that stretches over five seasons and contains 60 episodes (with each season containing 10-13, ca. hour-long episodes). It was created by David Simon through HBO, and it is the culmination of his and the other producers and writers’ decades-long studies, of var-
ious sorts, of the milieus and themes depicted. Each season adds a new segment to its investigation of the social tapestry of an American city. *The Wire* is something like the dramatized presentation of a wide-ranging sociological study.

3.1. Greek Circles – The “Literary” Aspects of *The Wire*

David Simon has famously described *The Wire* as a “visual novel”. Conceiving of a work of moving images as “novelistic” – and this adjective is better than the noun “visual novel” – does not necessarily imply a lack of understanding of the differences between text and moving images with sound. As we saw above, Deleuze systematically undermines theories that reduce the cinema to language, utterances, signification, etc. as he develops his theories on specifically cinematic ways of making sense. But even Deleuze can claim, exactly from this perspective, that “it is with Godard that [cinema] becomes the most ‘novelesque’. As *Pierrot le fou* puts it, ‘Next chapter. Despair. Next chapter. Freedom. Bitterness’.” Simon does not conflate text and moving images, and uses the term “visual novel” quite self-consciously. The point of the terms novelistic/visual novel is to specify aspects in *The Wire’s* narrative form. Famously, the creators regarded and conceived of the serial’s sixty episodes as a narrative whole with seasons and episodes as chapters and sub-chapters. As moving images with sound, they refer to this whole as “a 66-hour movie”. But since there are few 66-hour movies, this is less descriptive than their more frequent literary comparisons. “It isn’t really structured as episodic television” states Simon, “and it instead pursues the form of the modern, multi-POV novel.”

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195 See also Rancière, 2009b: 6.


The Wire does not rely on (television) genre codes of narration. It uses some superficial marks, but is instead explicitly inspired by novels in the slow pacing, in holding its pay-offs. It is a narration that requires patience in the viewer, who has to “learn to absorb every detail” without either getting exhausted or emotionally led. “That’s the beauty”, he says, “of being able to tell a story in detail over a length of time.” The usage of the terms novelistic/visual novel also had a more instrumental function in initially presenting the work to critics that needed to understand the slow narrative development and why they were recommended to watch several episodes before judging it. Simon used Melville’s Moby Dick as a point of comparison where “in the first couple of chapters, you don’t meet the whale, you don’t meet Ahab, you don’t even go aboard the Pequod. All that happens is that you go with Ishmael to the inn and find out he has to share a room with some tattooed character.”

But “novelistic” as a descriptive term also refers to more specific literary influences and parallels. Simon as well as many commentators has often compared The Wire to the realist and/or naturalist and socially conscious 19th century novel. For instance Balzac, Zola, and somewhat more superficially, Dickens (a comparison that is mocked in Season 5). Comparisons to novels can be relevant for understanding some of the nature of its ambitious aesthetic and narrative structures. The Wire corresponds with part of the 19th century realist/naturalist novel regarding things like devotion to detail, the composition of character galleries, and an emphasis on urban depravation. And perhaps more relevantly, as pointed out by C.W. Marshall and Tiffany Potter, we have the “sweeping narrative” that “produces a coherent whole”. But to more fully understand the structuring of The Wire’s “coherent whole”, we have to start in a different literary era.

What is perhaps the most defining structuring device of The Wire’s narratives, constantly mentioned by Simon as their main source, is Greek tragedy.
(although, as we will see, this must also include the literary movement of naturalism – Zola as well as American naturalism). The “literary antecedents of The Wire,” Simon explains, “is [...] the Greek tragedies. That’s what we’re stealing from. And we’re stealing big.”204 The elements that are stolen cannot be confused with mainstream reformulations of classic Aristotelian dramatic structure in the sense of a tight – short and self-contained – plot following a dramatic arc of exposition, complication, rising action, climax, narrative closure, catharsis etc., led by a defined hero-protagonist. While such elements are not absent from The Wire, they certainly do not provide its fundamental organization – even on the most superficial level, it is clear that its narratives are too widely scattered, non-climactic, and complex. On the level of story, certain story-arcs and character relations are taken from the Greek dramas. But the most important structuring device borrowed concerns more abstract parts of (what can arguably be defined as) the general (or generalized) logic of most Greek drama. This logic regards determination and circularity, that is, characters doomed primarily because of forces outside of their grasp or inner psychological states, forces that bend the narrative into an overall circular motion. All efforts for substantial change, either stemming from hubris or tragic necessity, are fated to somehow return to a pre-established order, to repeat a seemingly perpetual state of equilibrium. In The Wire the established order is the status quo of certain residual effects of neoliberal capitalism – especially the structural effects of neoliberal policies on social institutions. What creator David Simon refers to as “postindustrial, postmodern institutions”, which takes the place of the Gods, make up a playing field where “the game is rigged” in a way that is preserved formally by an overall temporality of circularity and stasis. It is the portrayal of a milieu in which larger forces re-channel all changes into the reproduction of the same.

David Simon describes the aim of the serial to be a “Greek tragedy for the new millennium”, where “the postmodern institutions are the Olympian forces”.205 In this way he regards The Wire to be a contrast to most modern drama:

Much of our modern theater seems rooted in the Shakespearean discovery of the modern mind. We’re stealing instead from an earlier, less-traveled construct – the Greeks – lifting our thematic stance wholesale from Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides to create doomed and fated protagonists who confront a rigged game and their own mortality. The modern mind – particularly those of us in the West – finds such fatalism ancient and discomfiting, I think. [...] instead of the old gods, The Wire is a Greek tragedy in which the postmodern institutions are the Olympian forces. [...] In this drama, the institutions always prove larger [than individuals], and those characters with hubris enough to challenge the postmodern con-

204 DVD commentary, s3:12.
struct of American empire are invariably mocked, marginalized, or crushed (ibid.).

Does the sidestepping of Shakespeare in the particular way that The Wire picks up on Greek tragedy also sidestep the possibility for the drama itself to throw its circular “time out of joint”? The model of Greek tragedy – which can otherwise be interpreted, and/or used, in many other ways – is part of a structure that seals the “fate” of the majority of its characters also on the level of the drama as a whole: the over-arching cyclic temporality. “And because its tragedy,” interprets David Simon, “everything’s gotta be cyclical. That is the nature of tragedy that it just keeps going on.”

In Greek drama, at least in more classically leaning interpretations (we will treat other interpretations below), everyone and everything is determined and set in their place. The determinations are on one level the wills of the “Gods” and on a more absolute or abstract level a higher order of cosmic laws. Greek drama begins when such an order is upset – that is, when a decent but somehow flawed character exceeds the order either as an effect of “hubris”, a grave error of judgment and action, or an unfortunate event/set of events, or more generally, “collisions of circumstances, passions, and characters”, that sets the main character on a path of tragic “necessity” leading to “actions and then to the reactions which in turn necessitate a resolution of the conflict and discord”. The resolution entails that the character unwittingly falls prey to the very forces s/he aimed to escape. The character is set straight by a “fate” that leads to misfortune or demise, which in the end serves, in some sense or another, to restore – although the play might be a critical challenge of the more finite laws of the polis – a higher determining order. Hegel on what he conceives as the tragic resolution of conflict: “[E]ternal justice is exercised on individuals and their aims in the sense that it restores the substance and unity of ethical life with the downfall of the individual who has disturbed its peace”. S.H. Butcher similarly argues that “tragedy, in its pure idea, shows us a mortal will engaged in an unequal struggle with destiny, whether that destiny be represented by the forces with-

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206 Interesting is also to compare the brevity of Greek tragedy with the Shakespearian tragedies that, while still intense and concentrated, allowed for slower and more intricate character development through the mere fact of being longer. See Augustus Taber Murray, “Plot and Character in Greek Tragedy”, Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association (47, 1916), pp. 55-56. The point is that The Wire is much longer than any Shakespearean drama, and still chooses a more “Greek” structuring of characters. It should be stated, however, that the possibility of intricate character treatment through the length of its narrative is partly swallowed not only by its sociological focus but also by the vast number of characters.

207 DVD commentary, s5:10.


in or without the mind. The conflict reaches its tragic issue when the individual perishes, but through his ruin the disturbed order of the world is restored […] Interesting here is not the misfortunes of individuals so much as the state of equilibrium, conditioned by a set of external forces governing the world outside the scope of the characters (or particular institutions). We can swiftly compare this with Nietzsche’s very different interpretation of Aeschylus’ Prometheus – we will return to Nietzsche at more length in a moment – in which these forces are expressing an overall becoming of life more than a pre-given order to return to. Whereas Nietzsche conceived of Sophocles’ dramas, such as Oedipus, to have a tendency to restore too much – but without tilting over to the purely rational or “Socratic” – of a safe Apollonian ordering at the end, he regards Aeschylus’ Prometheus to contain a “flood-tide of the Dionysiac” that “destroy periodically all the small circles in which the one-sidedly Apolline will attempt to confine Hellenic life. That sudden swell of the Dionysiac tide then lifts the separate little waves of individuals on to its back […] This Titanic urge to become […] is the common feature shared by the Promethean and the Dionysiac”.

The question of how to position The Wire within this kind of discussion – as too confined to a sociological rendering and a return to an equilibrium, or sufficiently enough also something more – will still have to remain open. But there is no way around first acknowledging that The Wire’s larger circles and repetitions, which scoop up individual characters, are uncompromisingly tight. The governing external laws controlling the equilibrium of The Wire’s quasi-documentary universe is not about cosmic laws or a “state of nature” per se, but rather a specific socio-economic state of history: the force field of contemporary neoliberal capitalism. But some of the effects of this force field as depicted in The Wire fill a function of seemingly unredeemable stasis that corresponds with Greek tragedy conceived of in the more classical sense described above. Indeed, The Wire’s static universe does, in more respects than one, function as a quasi-state of nature.

Elaboration: The Entropic and Circular Time of Naturalism According to Deleuze

Deleuze’s conception of “naturalism” in film and literature cannot be fully explicated here (just as this is also not the place to give an overview of the many accounts naturalism by other authors). But it is relevant to note how Deleuze conceives of the temporality of naturalism in the cinema (Stroheim, Buñuel, Losey, late Ray). This temporality is conceived of as a “cruelty of Chronos”, a time of “degradation”, that can be of largely two different kinds that take two

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different forms: the downhill slope and the circle. The slope expresses “time as degradation” proceeding like “entropy”: a process gradually moving one-way between “a beginning of the world, but also an end of the world, and the irresistible slope from one to the other”. With the circle “degradation is conceived [more] as a precipitating repetition, eternal return […] a curvature or cycle”. But both kinds confer

upon [the portrayed milieu and the naturalistic “originary world” it invents within it] the role of a destiny which cannot be expiated. Curled up in the originary world which is like the beginning and the end of time, time unravels in derived milieux.

What is particularly interesting here is that Deleuze recognizes that in both these cases, despite or even because of its determined temporal structure, naturalism comes close to a kind of (neo-Platonic) time-image. Indeed, with naturalism, Deleuze writes, “time makes a very prominent appearance in the cinematographic image”. But on the other hand,

what prevented [it] from reaching time as pure form was its obligation to keep time subordinate to naturalistic co-ordinates […] Consequently, naturalism could only grasp the negative effects of time; attrition, degradation, wastage, destruction, loss, or simply oblivion.

But precisely here lies also an interesting difference between the slope and the circle. Compared to the “slope” of entropic time (e.g. Stroheim’s *Greed*), the circle is somewhat less “catastrophic” and degrading. This is because the repetition that the circle involves may alternate with or open up towards types of repetition that breaks “out of its own cycle”. Although, to the extent that the latter happens – Deleuze talks here specifically about Buñuel (e.g. *The Exterminating Angel*) – it “leaves us in a state of the greatest uncertainty”, where “an opening-up of the world” in the end tends to be revealed as an “enclosure instead of a horizon”. But a circular film has still gained something by introducing repetition instead of entropy – it “injects the power of repetition into the cinematographic image”. It thereby indicates or points towards a type of repetition that can more truly “undo the cycles of time”. But to truly do so one has to drag naturalism outside of itself (which Buñuel, according to Deleuze, does in his last period).212

The end of *The Wire* certainly injects the power of repetition into the image, but arguably does not go far enough in dragging naturalism outside itself. But *The Wire* also connects with naturalism in ways that are not revealed by Deleuze’s discussion of the latter. Most importantly, *The Wire* has a mythico-sociological quality rather than the mythical-mystical quality that I argue is explicit in the films Deleuze labels naturalist. And the sociological aspect of naturalism – a concern with the social conditions that determine the faith

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212 C1, 124-128, 131-136, emphases mine. On Buñuel’s last period, see C2, 102-103. For more on the full complexities of Deleuze’s own theory of repetition see the second chapter of *DR*.
of the characters – is not something that Deleuze discusses. Deleuze describes the famous “instincts” of naturalism’s characters as gestures stuck between affect and action. But if naturalism is more sociological than what can be grasped in Deleuze’s discussion, it is still more focused on the faith of the characters more than the larger system itself. In *The Wire* it is more clearly the social system itself that is stuck between affect and action, or rather, stuck regardless of any affects or actions.

Do these differences place *The Wire*’s social analysis closer to realism than naturalism? We will return to this question in a discussion of Lukács in Chapter 4, but at this point we can say that the stuckness opposes this. This can be explained if looked at from the perspective of Deleuze’s concept of the *action-image* (bracketing that the “realism” he attributes to such images is very inclusive). The action-image concerns the notion of an all-encompassing organic situation as a totality of rational linkages that is already in place. This aspect of the action-image is clearly applicable to *The Wire*. But of the two basic forms of the action-image according to Deleuze, the so-called Large SAS‘-form (from large encompassing Situation to decisive Action to altered Situation) or the small ASA form (Action creates a Situation which creates new Action), neither applies, not even in some creative combination.\(^{213}\) The situation will basically remain as it is regardless of any actions. In *The Wire*, in contrast to what Deleuze attributes to the action-image, the whole/situation is unaltered by the actions of characters. Perhaps one can describe *The Wire* as a naturalist mix of the action-image and what Deleuze called the *crisis* of the action-image: The crisis means that, as Deleuze writes, “We hardly believe any longer that a global situation can give rise to an action which is capable of modifying it […]”. In this sense, *The Wire* clearly corresponds with a post-action-image logic. But the classical action-image is also intact since there is no compromising of “the linkages of situation-action, action-reaction, excitation-response” (*C1*, 206). Actions are organically determined by the situation but without effecting the overall situation. *The Wire* corresponds with the Large SAS‘-form regarding the organic whole. But practically all actions lead back to an origin through a circular structure that is the very form of the whole. The circle postulates a state from which there seems to be no escape.

In *The Wire*, the tragic and the mythic are to a very high degree cogs in a naturalist-sociological presentation – the beloved renegade character Omar is no exception.\(^{214}\) How does this fit with the circular and repetitious time? In

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\(^{213}\) On the two forms, see *C1*, 141-177; on how they can be structured as passing between each other or taken to their limits, see 178-196.

\(^{214}\) Deleuze discusses sociology in the cinema books very briefly and from the quite different perspective of the function of speech and conversation in early American sound comedy. But he says something here that corresponds well with my point about Omar as wholly part of the sociological tapestry: “American comedy mobilizes nations (confrontation […] but also regions […] classes and also those outside classes (the drifter, the tramp, the adventurer, all
one sense *The Wire* bends time into circles that are mechanical. As Deleuze wrote in his book on Nietzsche:

\[ I \]n order to be made circular [Plato] needs the act of a demiurge who forcibly bends [unlimited becoming], who imposes the model of the idea on it. This is how becoming […] [is] transferred to the side of an obscure mechanical causality and the cycle is referred to a kind of finality which is imposed from the outside. \[ T \]he cycle expresses the forced submission of becoming to an external law (*Nietzsche and Philosophy*, 28).

But in *The Wire*, as well as the circles in some naturalist films, there is another side to this. The circularity is not merely a *cancelling* of time. It is not merely mechanical. Rather, the circularity also introduces time, non-linear time, as an idea into the image: something happens with these circles, especially in the very last montage, that go beyond their matter-of-factness. While to a large extent subordinating this aspect to sociological coordinates, there is, to reference Deleuze’s description above of Buñuel’s circles, still something of an injection of “the power of repetition into the cinematographic image”.

Let us now go from the abstract to the concrete. Which are *The Wire’s* actual circular structures? Seasons 1 to 3 map social segments horizontally. This means that *The Wire* elucidates the interplay between various institutions primarily as they stretch out and link socially, not socio-historically. Seasons 4 and 5 continue and extend the horizontal mapping. But these seasons also include a vertical aspect: sociological explanations of how things get to be as they are, and how they keep staying that way. At center stage in the fourth season we find a group of young boys – Dukie, Michael, Namond, and Randy. We follow their systematic and gradual corruption through their intermingling with various social forces and institutions. This gradual corruption mirrors how some of the more grown-up characters in the earlier seasons came to be in the first place: As the boys grow older – underscored by the young actors’¹, at least in two cases quite significant, real-time physical growth between the fourth and the fifth seasons²¹⁵ – each of the four boys come to fill the shoes of an earlier character, or a known cog in the social machinery (Namond gets out of the ghetto but only to fill a more privileged place in this system – at the end it is implied that he will become a politician). Michael becomes a new Omar, Dukie a new Bubbles. The very end also implies the arrival of a set of new youngsters.

characters dear to interactionist sociology), so as to make visible interactions, discontents in interaction, reversals in interaction”, *C2*, 232.

¹ I refer here not least to the actor playing Randy, who is perhaps the kid that is corrupted the most. In s5:06 we meet him again and find that the innocence and mischievous sparkle of his eyes gone. But the change of appearance is about more than acting: his body and face are significantly grown. There is a poetic effect here in which his jawbone seems thickened by the heaviness of his increasingly realized fate.
These loops span several laps covering the serial as a whole. If we start from the end and work our way backwards we can observe the following levels: There is a new batch of kids quickly shown at the end montage of the last season→ the kids of Season 4 referred to above→ the corner kids of Season 1 (Bodie, Poot, etc.)→ all three levels of kids evoking the implied former lives of Barksdale, Stringer Bell, Omar, etc. The circles start from Season 1 and forward. At the very end of the first season, the character Poot is explicitly shown to repeat the role and place and actions that had previously been DeAngelo’s (who has to be replaced after being incarcerated). The end montage of Season 1 also goes on to confirm how everything goes back to status quo, how the organizations and institutions go on as usual without having been changed by the fact that new individuals substitute for old ones.

The final end montage of Season 5 as well as the episodes leading up to it includes a lot of the main characters in the small circular loops, in the sense that an younger adult character takes over the role of an older one. For example: Carver “becomes” Daniels; Daniels is probably on his way to become a new Burrell; it is Sydnor (instead of, as previously indicated, Kima) that “becomes” McNulty; before fired, McNulty at the end starts behaving like a boss, perhaps Rawls; Carcetti becomes another one in the long line of slowly ground-down and half-corrupted politicians. The Tom Waits song “Down in a Hole” that serves as the intro music for each episode comes in a new version, interpreted by a new artist for each season. But in the very last end montage, the version from the first season is played. This points back to the very beginning, implying that the whole is a circle. But it also implies a new beginning – it is intro music – of future rounds in the circle, where everything stays the same.

*The Wire*’s dramatic point and the crux of its sociopolitical ideas (explained in Chapter 4 below) are wholly tied in with its circular structure as a whole of five seasons. But the circular heart, the center of the largest circle, lies in how the previous seasons with emphasis on Season 4 is scooped up in tragic loops by the last half of Season 5. But the relation between the fourth and the fifth seasons is not only circular. Key is also the “scientific” (more on this in 3.2 below) investigation of individuation and the construction of the pre-established roles – with the four school kids at center stage.

How does the form of tragic fiction in *The Wire* fit in with its – as we will see below – empirically based sociological realism? Is there an opposition here? On one level, the fictional form is about making its sociologically induced politics attractive to an audience. As Angela Anderson writes, the fiction of *The Wire* “allows for […] the structuring of these reals into a story
that will draw the reader/viewer in and keep their attention.” But more importantly, the “structuring” of these “reals” is never really in conflict with what we will soon explicate as the presentational side of an empirically based social-scientific conduct. Or as Simon himself says: “[O]ur content, if gently massaged to create drama, is nonetheless rooted in accurate reporting and experience.” The Wire represents the present and some of its sociopolitical conditions and communicates this in aesthetic and narrative propositions forming a discursive whole. The arguments it wants to present concern a particular circular stasis. The circular temporality of its narrative form does not therefore, as will be clearer below, counter its sociological and empirically based arguments. Both are complicit in presenting a rendition of social states of affairs – both being part of both form and content for the arguments about those states of affairs.

But Greek tragedy can clearly be conceived of in a plethora of other ways. The tragic form can be discussed from numerous philosophical perspectives. The relationship between tragedy and philosophy has a long tradition, with key points of reference in Plato’s banishment of the tragedians in the Republic, the virtue of tragic mimesis in Aristotle’s logical formalism in Poetics (to which we will return in chapter 4), and post-Kantian German philosophy (and its various discussions of ethical, historical, or even ontological concerns opened up by the tragic in its different forms).

218 A full engagement with this aspect of post-Kantian German philosophy is outside both the grasp and what is of relevance for this study. But some general points can be made. Central was the question of how to think the “sublime”. The concept of the sublime was suggested almost in passing by Kant a couple of times, referring to a certain shocking experiences of vastness in “brute nature”. More specifically, an experience that is overwhelming in the sense that it spawns a shock of tension and struggle between the faculties of reason and imagination, which pushes imagination towards and beyond its limit as it grasps to find forms for presenting the unpresentable, or the “supra-sensible”. This is an extraordinary use of the imagination’s einbildungskraft (which is furthermore ultimately envisioned as a mediator between theoretical reason and the more metaphysical realm of practical reason in Kant’s system). The post-Kantians picked up this thread as not merely pertaining to nature but to art. Their conceptions of “presenting the unpresentable” were furthermore less focused on human faculties per se and more on the tragic in the work itself. On how this Kantian problem, in very different ways, is prolonged, re-envisioned or exceeded in Hegel, Hölderlin, Nietzsche, Heidegger, and Benjamin’s respective philosophical treatments or usages of (Greek) tragedy, see Philosophy and Tragedy, eds. by Miguel de Beistegui and Simon Sparks (London: Routledge, 2000). An important problem with at least parts of this Post-Kantian tradition, however, is according to Karl Heinz Bohrer that “Hegel and Schelling as well as […] their nineteenth- and twentieth century counterparts [to a certain extent up to and including Benjamin]” – in contrast to Nietzsche – arguably “pays no attention to the aesthetics of tragedy”, had “no real interest in the work of art” and, preoccupied with a philosophy of history, dissolved “poetry into concepts”, see Karl Heinz Bohrer, “The Tragic: A Question of Art, not Philosophy”, New Literary History, trans. Sean Nye & Rita Felski (41:1, Winter 2010), pp. 35-51.
latter discourses, it can be stated that the tragic itself can certainly also mean crisis of the given, excess, the presentation of the unrepresentable, the containing of a utopian element, or the affirmation of unlimited becoming.

[The Wire’s] unrelentingly bleak portrayal missed what’s hopeful in Baltimore [...]  
– John Atlas & Peter Dreier  

We would be wary [...] of overly optimistic portrayals that present the active involvement of community groups as sufficient counterweights to entrenched structural forces.  
– Chaddha, Wilson & Venkatesh  

These two insights catapulted me high above any pathetic, idiot gossip about optimism contra pessimism!  
– I was the first to see the real opposition [...]  
– Nietzsche  

Nietzsche and Alternative Parameters of Evaluation of the Tragic  

In The Birth of Tragedy, Nietzsche describes Greek tragedy as a dynamic co-presence of two forces or “artistic drives”: the Dionysian and the Apollonian, which can be simplified as raw becoming and artistic figuration. The Dionysian is the key force but it requires an Apollonian contour or image. This requirement comes with the risk for the Apollonian to turn the Dionysian too far into a safe representation, which must be avoided. But the Dionysian needs an Apollonian aspect in order to gain a perceivable consistency and not to recede into mere chaos. The understanding of the famous – but only superficially investigated – notion of The Wire as a Greek tragedy for postmodern times can, I argue, gain from an engagement with this aspect of Nietzsche’s thought. Let us begin with an investigation of what it consists of and what its stakes are. Nietzsche’s discussions of Greek tragedy may be said to put up a spectrum between the following two poles: the earliest peri-  

222 This section partly has the character of an elaboration, but it is a bit too extensive to be marked as such in the layout.
od before Aeschylus (from which there remain no actual plays) as purely Dionysian, and Euripides whose plays are purely non-Dionysian. The value of this spectrum lies in the aesthetic typology it provides not in its historical accuracy or lack thereof. The spectrum is Pre-Aeschylus; Aeschylus; Sophocles; Euripides. In Aeschylus Nietzsche finds the ideal Dionysian-Apollonian combination. The endings of Sophocles’ plays risk creating too much of an ordered Apollonian image of the Dionysian. In Euripides, Greek tragedy dies. Here only the Dionysian masks are left in what is a complete exhaustion of the tragic arrangement in favor of the Socratic. What is the Socratic and how does it differ from the ideal Dionysian-Apollonian tragic arrangement?

Nietzsche conceived of the ideal Dionysian-Apollonian arrangement in the following way: as an artistic affirmation of nature in its creative and destructive aspects: the full “tragic” power of the becomings of life. There is a required Apollonian aspect, but not in the sense of a representation of becoming. It concerns a kind of artistic “transfiguration” that can express becoming without turning it into a mere image of becoming. This is tragedy as a “repetition” of nature itself as artistic creation. But nature seen as “careless” and “full of oppositions and contradictions”; “eternally changing” and “eternally new” at “every moment” without ground or goal (The Birth of Tragedy, 8, 25). Euripides, in Nietzsche’s view, drained this metaphysical aspect and turned tragedy into the representation of present social reality. Detached from the Dionysian, the Apollonian is debased into the purely Socratic. This results in a rationalized tragedy, in which all thoughts and affects must be naturalist and generally all things subsumed within the ideal of the exclusively reasonable, causal, and understandable.

In what sense is the above discussion of Nietzsche relevant for conceptualizing the Greek-tragedy aspect of The Wire within the larger context of exploring the untimely-image? After the careful set-up in the previous two chapters, it is important that we do not now collapse the untimely-image into some notion of life-affirming novelty becoming in general. But the untimely-image is clearly in conflict with the too organic and representational, for

223 It is the specific arguments and tools for evaluation that Nietzsche provides that are of interest here, not the evaluation of Euripides per se. But aside from this we can acknowledge that between Aristotle and the two brothers Schlegel others had attributed the decline of Greek tragedy to Euripides’s dramas with other kinds of arguments. Aristotle, for instance, was critical of Euripides’ “irrational” use of deus ex machina and for his loose use of the chorus, Poetics, trans. Malcolm Heath (London: Penguin Books, 1996), pp. 25, 30.

224 It is easy to see how this is the underlying problem also in Deleuze’s conception of art as both “capturing forces” that are “nongiven” “forces of the future” and providing a kind of consistency to these invisible and/or insonorous forces by rendering them visible and/or sonorous. The problem is: “How can they be rendered?”, FB, 56-57, 61.

225 The Birth of Tragedy, 54-75. This is, implicitly, a blatant countering of Aristotle who had claimed that approximately these very traits are what make up tragedy in its ideal form. See Poetics, 16, 18, 25.
reasons described in detail above. Nietzsche’s distinctions in *The Birth of Tragedy* allow us to approach *The Wire*’s tragic aspects with a certain general optic. Provided that the following is parenthesized or even put aside: 1., a strict adherence to the actual works that Nietzsche himself analyses, 2., this book’s categorial conception of science and its limits, and 3., its quasi-romantic notion of becoming (compared to Nietzsche’s later thought more attuned to the subtle specificities of generative differences, *The Birth of Tragedy* still conceived of forces of becoming mostly with Schopenhauerian eyes as some undifferentiated whole that gains differentiation only by becoming actual individuated form). Nietzsche’s distinctions can then provide useful parameters for the evaluation and conceptualization of what kind of tragedy *The Wire* is and what kind of forces it entails. What is usable is the sliding scale, described above, spanning Greek tragedy and a “Socratic” death of tragedy in which forces of the dynamic becoming of life is emptied out in favor of a strict representation of social states of affairs. The point is the kinds of evaluation this allows us to perform, and not to apply Nietzsche’s parameters statically. *The Wire*’s famous bleakness can now be evaluated in ways that are more complex than a simple scale of pessimism-optimism at play in certain debates within *The Wire* criticism.226

The important distinction, I argue, is not between pessimism and optimism (in the sense of reflecting also actual political events that could provide “hope” as some commentators have reproached *The Wire* for failing to do). Clearly, *The Wire* is very pessimistic. But the point is to evaluate what kind of pessimism or at least what kinds of tragic bleakness it expresses. Or perhaps even evaluate whether there is a seeming restriction to the pessimistic, in the sense that this term is usually understood, that actually contains other kinds of forces. If the tragic in Nietzsche is the affirmation of life in all its aspects how does this go together with a tragic pessimism? Without losing ourselves in something that can here only be a superficial exegesis of this aspect of Nietzsche’s philosophy, we can answer this by acknowledging that he was later to be quite critical of *The Birth of Tragedy* (1872), which in its first edition was his first published book. In his “An Attempt at Self-Criticism” that was added as a new foreword to the 1886 re-edition, he described this early work as too colored by Schopenhauer’s idealist vocabulary. But concerning the basic points described in the paragraphs above, Nietzsche did not alter his views so much as he became critical of the vocabulary in which they were implicated. As he writes in the new critical foreword: “I now regret very much that I did not yet have the courage (or

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immodesty?) at that time to permit myself a language of my very own for such personal views and acts of daring, labouring instead to express strange and new evaluations in Schopenhauerian and Kantian formulations” (“An Attempt at Self-Criticism”, 6). So, Nietzsche leaves the Schopenhauerian formulations and continues to develop his “strange and new evaluations” through his own language. This creates a situation in which terms can have different meanings in different texts. The term “pessimism” is left behind, deemed too associated with Schopenhauer’s life-denying “philosophy of resignation”. Later, Schopenhauer will more clearly serve as a contrast to Nietzsche’s life-affirming philosophy. The early use of a term like “pessimism” in The Birth of Tragedy for conceptualizing a specifically life-affirming tragic stance Nietzsche latter describes as having “obscured and ruined Dionysiac intimations with Schopenhauerian formulations”.

Here is the point with all this: “pessimism” can, depending on what is meant by the term in a given context, refer to very different or even opposing values and expressions. Nietzsche had meant with pessimism an affirmation of the world’s dynamic play of creative forces (beyond good and evil). The idea remains although the word “pessimism” is exchanged (since too attached to the more literally pessimistic and life-denying in Schopenhauer). Nietzsche’s Ecce Homo (1888) contains a chapter in which he looks back and reevaluates The Birth of Tragedy, which is now described as “the first lesson in how the Greeks put pessimism behind them, – how they overcame it . . . Tragedy in particular proves that the Greeks were not pessimists: Schopenhauer was wrong about this as he was wrong about everything” (Ecce Homo, 108). But in the 1886 foreword, written only two years earlier, he describes a different kind of pessimism: a “pessimism of strength” that is associated with “tragedy, born from the Dionysiac”. This notion of pessimism is contrasted with “those things which gave rise to the death of tragedy – Socratism in ethics, the dialectics, smugness and cheerfulness of theoretical man – might not this very Socratism be a sign of decline, of exhaustion, of sickness, of the anarchic dissolution of the instincts?” (“An Attempt at Self-Criticism”, 4).

Now, this may all seem abstract and in need of a further exegesis of Nietzsche’s philosophy, which would lead us astray. But what is most important to gather from all this is that terms like “pessimism” or “tragedy” do not explain very much but must rather themselves be explained. The point is not to lose ourselves in Nietzsche per se, or to merely “apply” his analysis of old Greek drama to The Wire, but to gather from his thought a certain evaluative logic for a more nuanced scrutiny of the nature of the political tragedy that is

227 Françoise Dastur also points out that while Nietzsche in this added 1886 foreword is critical of the book as too marked by Schopenhauer’s idealism, Nietzsche “will never reconsider […] the Dionysian, which allowed him to see in tragedy the very process of life and becoming in both its creative and destructive aspects”, “Tragedy and Speculation”, Philosophy and Tragedy, eds. Miguel de Beistegui & Simon Sparks (London: Routledge, 2000), p. 78.
The Wire. In the following I will continue to work through The Wire, on many levels and from several perspectives, as a mostly sociological work but also as a work that contain many aspects that exceed this description. Chapter 6, for instance, will investigate in what sense it is exceeded especially as immersed in the problem of mapping global capitalist forces and flows.

Are The Wire’s sociological and possibly “Socratic” aspects merely in opposition to the untimely-image or is the relation more complex? Can the organic mirroring of states of affairs ever be untimely, and if so in what sense? At the end of Chapter 2 above I argued that the untimely-image can, under the condition that it brings out a “problem which is more profound than the situation”, be conceived of also as a partly representational movement-image (and not necessarily only as a specialized extension of a time-image). Similarly, the untimely-image also cannot in any easy way be determined to belong fully to one of the Nietzschean sides of the spectrum described above (tragic–Socratic). We will continue to work our way towards an answer to the questions of in which senses The Wire is an untimely-site, contains untimely-images, aspects of untimely-images, or no untimely-images. The Wire will be seen to drive a wedge into this concept. The two different political problems that I claim are at the center of The Wire – blackness and contemporary neoliberal capitalism – will be separated as two distinct (but intertwined) problems and they will lead to two different evaluations from the perspective of the untimely-image (and the untimely-site). This is not a contradiction. The untimely-image is not a universal concept in the sense of a given definition to be applied in unchanged form to all problems. Instead this concept must be more or less altered or conceived of slightly differently – as long as it fulfills the fundamental criteria introduced in Chapters 1 and 2 – in order to correspond to differentiated and singular issues and “problems that necessarily change” (WPh, 28).

But before we continue this intricate difficulty in Part II of how to evaluate The Wire as political art and as an untimely-site and as possibly containing untimely-images, we will look into the relation between The Wire as art and as sociology, and how to conceptualize and critique this relation; this will conclude Part I.
3.2. “Method”: On the Relation between Social Science, Art and Philosophy in Dealing with The Wire

*The Wire* is a work of sociology and ethnology in dramatized form. It is basically an organic unity where “all the pieces matter”. But the sociology, as explained further in Chapter 4 below, is in the service of a set of political arguments. Simon has famously described *The Wire* as “a political tract masquerading as a cop-show”.

If *The Wire* is a political tract, what is its aim? The aim seems to be fairly straightforward: to raise consciousness by showing in what unchangingly bad conditions the objects of the sociological study are, and how, as Simon says, “our political and economic and social constructs are no longer viable, that our leadership has failed us relentlessly, and that no, we are not going to be all right.” He wants “the show’s anger to influence the audience”, to provoke people to think (in their own ways) about what they see. Blake D. Etheridge argues that the political aim of *The Wire* lies in the “hope that enough people are sympathetic to the moral appeal of [Simon’s] tragic argument. Such viewers would then become so wary of, and angry at, American myths and institutions that they would enact or demand some sort of change” (2008: 157). Regarding the place of the social realism in this, we can reference André Bazin’s conception of Italian neorealist films and its political effects: “They never forget that the world is, quite simply, before it is something to be condemned [...] But does one not, when coming out of an Italian film, feel better, an urge to change the order of things, preferably by persuading people [...]”. Simon himself, however,

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228 ATP, 376. Deleuze & Guattari: “Closer to our own time, philosophy has encountered many new rivals. To start with, the human sciences, and especially sociology wanted to replace it”;

229 WPh, 10.


232 André Bazin, “An Aesthetics of Reality”, 21. We can also reference Mike Wayne’s discussion of the conception of the spectator in the political theory and practice of Third Cinema: “Some spectacles will encourage an internalisation that is critical and questioning, so that the subject acts back upon the world in a way to change it for the better. This of course is the type of spectacle and spectatorship that Third Cinema seeks to foster. [...] When people leave the
seems pessimistic at best regarding whether raising consciousness about these things could amount to anything, or what kind of actions it could spawn, if any, in today’s social and political landscape. But a main political aim of *The Wire* is still to raise consciousness and awaken anger, pathos, etc., which in the long run may affect things. And the means to do this is basically through dramatized sociology.

How can this be assessed in view of Deleuze’s conceptions of political art? Deleuze and Guattari conceive of philosophy, art and science as three primary modes of human thought that are distinct ways, beyond the habitual spheres of opinion, to deal with “chaos” head on. But these modes or realms can also intersect, especially when working on similar problems, and even take on some of the properties of another. But most schematically, the division looks like this: art sets up a plane of composition and constructs (blocks of) sensations, philosophy sets up a plane of immanence and constructs concepts, and science establishes a plane of reference and creates, instead of concepts, what Deleuze and Guattari calls “functives” [*fonctifs*]. When art takes on the properties of concepts, it turns them into sensations. But Deleuze describes films, which are *moving* “blocks of space-time”, as having their own implicit cinematic concepts. Cinema’s concepts “are not given in cinema. And yet they are cinema’s concepts” (*C1*, 280). If there is a certain ambiguity to this, it is because it is clear that films *are thought* beyond mere “sensation”. Film in this sense seems to transgress the limits implicitly given to mostly non-moving art in *What Is Philosophy?* This is clearest with certain films honing in on philosophical thought. But from some of Deleuze’s arguments in the cinema books, it seems that films can also hone in on scientific thought in various ways. Perhaps one can say that certain films establish a “plane of reference” of sociological relations and thinks with a kind of cinematic functives.

*The Wire* is a sociological study and a political tract. But these two registers blend harmoniously: the ethnographically based character portraits are subordinated to the story and the story is subordinated to the explication of a whole of sociological relations, which in turn is subordinated to an over-all political argument (how this is structured will be made clearer in Chapter 4). The static state of affairs that it maps is understood – although this is not always obvious on the narrative surface (which is pedagogically unfortunate) – as the result of larger historical and economical forces, most importantly

cinema and encounter once again their social and individual lives, what contribution has the film made to encourage the viewer to participate in that social life, to change themselves and their circumstances?” (*C1*, 2001: 148).

Ronald Bogue: “In *What Is Philosophy?* Deleuze and Guattari’s treatment of the arts focuses almost exclusively on painting, music, and literature, with virtually no references to film, an absence explained perhaps by Deleuze’s having already written at length on cinema, but perhaps also by the fact that cinema blurs the line between philosophy and the arts, a line Deleuze and Guattari are intent on sharpening in *What Is Philosophy?*”, 2010b: 128.
global neoliberal structures and processes. What is particularly interesting here is that *The Wire* is a kind of sociological thinking in the form of moving-images. It presents sociological functions as propositions forming a discursive whole. Such presentation of propositions forming a discursive whole is a nutshell description of a general conduct of science according to Deleuze and Guattari.\(^{234}\) If only a shorthand of their discussion – which includes *social* science – it can be used to describe the overall organizing principle for *The Wire*’s aesthetic components as a whole. This is not to say that *The Wire* *is* science *instead* of art, or that its propositions are always clearly perceptible on the narrative surface. But to a large extent *The Wire* has a certain scientific image of thought as its organizing principle. Simon used to be an investigative reporter working with ethnographical means,\(^{235}\) which crosses over to his particular brand of journalism. This allows for statements like the following by Kent Jones’s to comply with the scientific aspect: ”Simon’s truth is essentially a journalist’s truth, and I think it’s journalistic dedication and devotion that drive him. Which is to say that he seems to think in terms of topics and arguments first, spiritual destruction and regeneration second. But who cares? What difference does it make that the power of *The Wire* is more a matter of concentration, intensity of focus and momentum than *mise en scène* and poetic precision?” \(^{236}\) Jones’ question at the end can be transformed from its merely rhetorical function, and allow us to introduce a more critical perspective through answering it. “Who cares?” The present treatment cares. If we are to investigate the further implications of the untimely-image by crossing through *The Wire*, it becomes completely central to investigate the implications of how this work is configured. We must evaluate its particular kind of political and aesthetic “dedication and devotion”. Despite its sociological/ethnographical basis, *The Wire* is, of course, fiction and not a documentary. But how do the sociological and fictional combine? It has already been asserted that there is no conflict between them. *The Wire*’s fictional narrative can be seen as abstracted presentations of sociological theses built on empirical studies. The sociological basis is not mere fodder for interesting dramatic entertainment; the dramatic entertainment is rather a way to make more intriguing the presentation of sociologically

\(^{234}\) For a more precise and nuanced definition of what science does according to Deleuze and Guattari, see *WPh*, 117-133, 155-157. This description of the practice of thought in science is clearly distinguished from the strict adherence to propositions in logic within analytical philosophy. Deleuze and Guattari conceive of science to also deal with what they call “problems” and problems “are never propositional” *WPh*, 139.

\(^{235}\) For a good rendition of the detailed, in-depth and “multisited” ethnographic field work done by David Simon and Ed Burns during the 80s and 90s – first resulting in the novels *Homicide* (Simon) and *The Corner* (Burns & Simon) – and on how this work, while less harmonizing with Simon’s work as a journalistic reporter, relates to what became *The Wire*, see Linda Williams, “Ethnographic Imaginary” “Ethnographic Imaginary: The Genesis and Genius of *The Wire*”, *Critical Inquiry* (38:1, 2011), pp. 208-226.

based political arguments. Where a TV-series like CSI is a stylized representation of a certain type of natural science procedure in the form of fiction, *The Wire* comparably aims to be a kind of moving-image social science in the sense of expressing empirically based theses and arguments, although presented, or even “disguised”, in the form of fiction. But fiction is not necessarily other than social science. Most sociology is certainly narrative, but it can even be “lyrical”. Sociologists Ruth Penfold-Mounce, David Beer, and Roger Burrows write about *The Wire* as “an intriguing popular cultural example” of what has within sociology been called “lyrical sociology”.237

As social science, *The Wire*’s propositions etc. can be the results of, as well as include, quite dynamic and creative acts and events. But this is also the general case with science as conceptualized by Deleuze and Guattari – to claim otherwise would be to hone in on the kind of caricature of science that the two philosophers oppose. While they conceive of the practice of thought in science and philosophy to generally differ in kind, this is not a hierarchy. They aim for a nuanced image of the practice of science instead of a disciplinary critique of it. This means a radically distinct conception of science from what has been dominant within the continental tradition of philosophy. Deleuze and Guattari:

> When philosophy compares itself to science, it puts forward a simplistic image of the latter, which makes scientists laugh. However, even if philosophy has the right to offer an image of science (through concepts) that has no scientific value, it has nothing to gain by attributing limits to science that scientists continually go beyond in their most elementary procedures. Thus when philosophy relegates science to the ‘already made’ and reserves for itself the ‘being-made,’ like Bergson or phenomenology […] we not only run the risk of assimilating philosophy to a simple lived but give a bad caricature of science” (*WPh*, 154-155).

Still, there is a certain confinement to states of affairs, functions and the “already-made” in the main conductance of science. But here there are differences – in some cases big differences – between different kinds of sciences and scientific practices. Distinctions must be drawn regarding the levels of commitment to a mechanical or determinist notion of the future. On the one hand there is a more deterministic, or classical science that “install[s] relationships whose future can be determined on the basis of the present” which is also part of the problem of its “properly scientific opinion as *Urdoxa*, which consists sometimes in determinist prediction”. On the other hand, there is a kind of science that follows through on its “attraction for the chaos with which it battles” that deals with “semichaotic states” (*WPh*, 205, 206). Deleuze and Guattari claim that certain scientific conducts can often be

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“shadowed” by a realm of virtual potentials. Virtual potential is, in their conception, precisely what art and philosophy pick up on and make consistent. Like art and philosophy, science has a direct relation to this “virtual”. But this relation is very different: science tends to conceive of the virtual as chaos instead of consistency (WPh, 156). Science puts up a “plane of reference” over chaos, which is a “renunciation of infinite speeds” in favor of “assigning variables in such a way as to establish between them or their limits necessary relations on which distinct functions depend”. The plane of reference is “a coordination in actuality; determining mixtures or states of affairs that are related to the coordinates and to which functions refer” (WPh, 215). In short: science generally tends to adhere to the actual, to what has been actualized from virtual potentials. But how then does science ever have a direct relation with the virtual realms of potential? Science generally ventures into such realms with the aim of following through on what is actualized from it. But it seems that this can be a quite different venture depending on whether this is a determinist leaning science or a “minor” science that in a different sense follows through on its “attraction for the chaos with which it battles”. Science, for Deleuze and Guattari, is in any respect often a complex study of individuations or “bodies in the process of being constituted” (WPh, 215). To what extent are the strange circles of repetition – which furthermore exceed mere science – connecting the fourth and the fifth seasons of The Wire, a venture into a realm of potential in this sense?

The states of affairs that are the main referents of science cannot “be separated from the potential through which it takes effect and without which it would have no activity or development […]”(WPh, 153). But at the same time most science, strictly speaking, “retains only potentials already in the course of being actualized, forming part of the functions” (WPh, 160). Science moves with the virtual as actualized in states of affairs. But it often has the tendency to keep traces of the virtual potential that, never cancelled by being actualized, inheres or subsists in its actualizations. Philosophy moves in the opposite direction. It moves from the actual to the realm of potential in order to create a certain kind of consistency from the latter – this consistency is what Deleuze and Guattari call a philosophical concept. Philosophy – as they conceive of it – counter-actualizes a given state of affairs and goes “back up the path that science descends”. In a similar sense it runs counter to “History, where we would have to arrive at the unhistorical vapor that goes beyond actual factors to the advantage of a creation of something new” (WPh, 139). It is precisely in these senses that “art”, which they at times seem close to blending with philosophy, approaches a counter-actualization of given state of affairs. An Idea in art, it seems to me, corresponds well – and as stated this is central for the untimely-image – with their notion of a philosophical concept as “the contour, the configuration, the constellation of an event to come” (WPh, 32-33). In what sense does The Wire correspond to such an idea of art? Does it merely lack such an aspect or is the situation
slightly more complex? We will continue to unravel the implications of this question across Part II.

Let us at this point go back to the sociology of The Wire. “Sociology” can obviously refer to a plethora of different kinds of conducts, methodologies and theoretical approaches. The term could certainly also refer to, say, Foucault-inspired empirical archaeologies of various sorts bordering the philosophical. But it could also refer to more explicitly sub-representational conducts. The tradition of mainstream – or “major” – sociology had from its start with Durkheim (1858-1917) and continued with Giddens et al. its “preferred objects of study”, as Deleuze and Guattari writes, “the great collective representations” and the socio-historical interplays between society and individuals. But this tradition was paralleled in the margins by a “minor” sociology spanning from Gabriel Tarde (1843-1904) to American “microsociology” to Deleuze and Guattari themselves to thinkers like Bruno Latour.238 There seems to be an increasing amount of contemporary sociologists that connect with this “minor” tradition. Sociologist Mariam Fraser suggests revitalizing the discipline’s relevance by picking up on “how the sociological problem might be transformed – and perhaps, more importantly, might be transformative – if the basic commitments of a research project were not to historical social structures but to [Deleuze’s notion of] virtual structures”.239

To what extent and in which senses The Wire can be said to contain aspects of minor sociology will have to remain an open question for now. But if we look at The Wire from the perspectives of how most scholars seem to understand it, it appears as part of a “major” sociological tradition.240 While it is true that The Wire has attracted “academics from very diverse fields of study”,241 what is written is still dominated by “major” sociological perspectives. There have by now been many classes on The Wire in American universities and not only in film and media departments but also in sociology and social anthropology. Harvard sociologist William Julius Wilson (who conducted a seminar called “Urban Inequality and The Wire”) says that the serial makes “the concerns of sociologists immediate in a way no work of

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238 Deleuze and Guattari on Gabriel Tarde, American microsociology and Durkheim, see ATP, 218-219.
240 There are important exceptions. Patrick Jagoda argues that The Wire explores the messier and less easily categorized network of disorganized capitalism. In this sense, the series operates as an aesthetically rich counterpart to actor-network-theory, which was formulated as an alternative to traditional social network analysis by Bruno Latour, Michel Callon, and John Law in the 1980s”, “Wired”, Critical Inquiry (38:1, 2011), p. 193. We will return to these kinds of issues in Part II.
sociology [I know] of ever has". What are these “concerns of sociologists”? “A fundamental objective of social scientists”, writes Wilson together with Anmol Chaddha, “is to generate explanations of social conditions”. On the one hand, The Wire is regarded to “illustrate theories and processes that social scientists have been writing about for years”, and as “a work of fiction, [it] does not replace rigorous academic scholarship on these issues”. But on the other hand, they conceive of The Wire to do more than merely illustrate sociological theories. On his seminar Wilson described “The Wire’s exploration of sociological themes” as “truly exceptional”, and added that he does not “hesitate to say that it has done more to enhance our understandings of the challenges of urban life and urban inequality than any other media event or scholarly publication, including studies by social scientists [...]” Why is this? Firstly, because it nuances and complexifies previous research: “Social scientists may not be quite sure how to deal with [The Wire] because it fundamentally challenges some previously accepted, yet overly simplistic, ideas.” And secondly, it is a sociological study. This is most explicit regarding the characters: In light of how sociology’s “preferred method of inquiry is the field study or the survey”, Wilson describes The Wire’s “characters almost as a set of case studies”. Indeed, they are the presentation of real ethnographic case studies done by the writers, as Linda Williams shows in her article (2011). But the main sociological value of The Wire Wilson finds at its macro level: its illumination of vast interconnected social patterns. In this sense it even exceeds what is possible in most academic studies. Due “to the structure of academic research”, write Wilson and Chaddha, “scholarly works tend to focus on many of these issues in relative isolation” (2011: 3).

From diverse fields academics have had much of interest to say about The Wire’s sociological aspects. But The Wire’s sociology is first of all seldom conceived of beyond the “major”, and second of all never critiqued or contextualized as being precisely a sociological perspective. In the last episode of Season 4, the former police officer Bunny Colvin and a sociologist named Dr. David Parenti are at the end of the line of an experimental project aimed to improve the pedagogic environment for inner-city schools. After learning that the funding for their project will be cancelled, Parenti is still content

242 Wilson, William Julius, quoted in Drake Bennett, “This Will Be on the Midterm. You Feel Me? Why so many colleges are teaching The Wire”, Slate Magazine (March 24, 2010). We can also note that Wilson’s book When Work Disappears inspired The Wire’s second season.
244 Wilson & Chaddha, 2011: 3
247 Wilson, quoted in Bennett, 2010.
with publishing the results of their experiment, since he expects it will get a lot of attention from other academics. The more upset Colvin responds: “Academics? What, they gonna study your study?” He chuckles and adds: “When do this shit change?” This piece of dialogue may contain an aspect of self-irony regarding the very venture that is The Wire (in the sense of “why bother when it most likely will have no effects on actual politics?”). But it more clearly reads as a light jab at academics addressing these kinds of real world problems without really impacting them. Or rather, it points to the abyss between sociopolitical praxis and the massive amount of scientific knowledge of these things. But I suggest a more creative utilization of this piece of dialogue. If it is lifted on to a meta-level, it works as a light jab at sociologically inclined academics studying the study that is The Wire itself. The jab would then imply that there is a certain tautological aspect to such studies. But what if, instead, the political study that is The Wire was to be investigated and evaluated from a more distinctly non-sociological perspective? This could mean that the tautology – i.e. a study as the mere mirror of unfortunate states of affairs (and a mise-en-abyme of sociological studies of sociological studies) – is more clearly reflected back on The Wire itself. That is, the tautology as precisely exemplified by The Wire’s own sociology. In short: is The Wire, as political art, just as unable as any academic sociological study to create a counter-actualizing rift in the actuality of the “shit” that needs change?

A Deleuzian way of reading something, regardless of whether it is another philosopher or a work of art, or whether it is critical or affirmative, is anything but a reproduction or a doubling of the object’s own terminology, analytic approach, or expression. It is precisely not a mere study of a study. But that is not to say that such critique proceeds by means of foreign concepts applied from the outside to what is critiqued. It is, rather, a reconstruction and a reproblematization of both the object of the critique and the critical philosophical concepts. It therefore regards creation as much as illumination: “Criticism implies new concepts (of the thing criticized) just as much as the most positive creation” (WPh, 83). Concepts, in contrast to the “functives” of science, are not part of discursive wholes in the same way and they do not have a reference in the same sense (WPh, 140). To the extent that The Wire is major/minor social science, and in order for what in it goes beyond social science to be conceivable, a philosophical conceptualization of this work would have to imply certain transformations of the tautologically sociological understanding of it from the start.

It is along these lines that we are in the midst of a cross-reading of the untimely-image and The Wire. They will continue to reconstruct and reproblematize each other as we go along. But at the same time, even when the critical aspect is included, this kind of treatment of The Wire must entail a firm grasp of the work on its own terms, that this, to grasp the specific image of thought that organizes the work, and to understand its internal
composition – this is the main objective of Chapter 4 below. If this is entailed in the larger critical treatment, we can add more philosophically conceived “problematizing” components, which might open up other things in it. The thought structure of The Wire can then be subjected also to a certain counter-actualization of its own ways of positing an understanding of the problems it expresses, connects with and gives rise to. But while reconfigured and made anew in this sense, we will gradually come to see how the different problems it contains must be evaluated differently. Its main political problems – treated in Chapter 5 as blackness and in Chapter 6 as the mapping of contemporary capitalism – will divide as precisely different problems requiring different solutions.

248 The Wire can then be the subject of a certain type of critique from a philosophical perspective without it being about “pitting empty generalizations against each other” in a debate where “one never discusses the same thing”, WPh, 28-29.
Part II.
Two Political Problems: Blackness and Mapping Advanced Capitalism

The first chapter of Part II further explicates and conceptualizes what *The Wire* “is”. This will be interwoven with – augmented in Chapters 5 and 6 – more critical treatments, in which the analyses are in the service of *reproblematizations*. This means that *The Wire* will be partly re-articulated from perspectives that exceed its own (including most discourses around it) logic of understanding them. As stated several times above, *The Wire*’s two most explicit political problems are its expression of blackness (through its unusually large black cast) and its mappings of neoliberal structures and policies. Chapter 5 investigates how to assess its expression of blackness from the perspective of the untimely-image and a problem that I call the “blackness patterns”. Chapter 6 investigates *The Wire’s* mappings of neoliberal capitalism – how do differing conceptions of mapping in political art relate, and what do they mean in view of the untimely-image and expressing contours of the new?
Chapter 4. The Wire’s Noological and Aesthetic Organization

This chapter looks at The Wire as a system of ideas, theses and arguments, as well as the aesthetic parameters with which they are formulated. The Wire is at its core a sociological study and a set of political arguments stemming from many years of research done by the writers in various fields. Wherever the line is to be drawn between fiction and some documentary practice, The Wire is a set of arguments, or as David Simon says, even a “political tract”. As a narrative, dramatic structure, and audiovisual composition, The Wire is of course also “art” (or at least a specific aesthetic compound). But The Wire has generally been assessed, implicitly and explicitly, on the basis of its representational abilities – its elucidation of a complex tapestry of social and socio-economic problems.

250 Simon is trained as a journalist and worked for many years as a crime reporter at the Baltimore Sun. Prior to The Wire he had also written “a couple long, multi-POV nonfiction narratives, Homicide and The Corner […] the first recounting a year [he] spent with the Baltimore Police Department’s Homicide Unit, and the second book detailing a year spent in a drug-saturated West Baltimore neighborhood, following an extended, drug-involved family.” Vietnam veteran Ed Burns, co-creator of The Wire, “was a homicide detective who served in the BPD for twenty years and, following that for seven years, a seventh-grade teacher at a Baltimore public school.” Novelists Richard Price spent a year with the police in Baltimore researching his novel Freedomland. Dennis Lehane and George Pelecanos seem to have done similar kinds of extensive empirical on-location research in similar east-coast “rustbelt” milieus. William F. Zorzi, who joined the staff of writers in the third season as an expert on the political system of Baltimore, used to be assistant city editor on The Baltimore Sun, were he “covered state and municipal politics for […] twenty years”. Rafael Alvarez, a short-story writer, had quit the same newspaper to work as “a merchant seaman and comes from two generations of port workers”, David Simon”, The Believer, 2007.
The Wire is a vast thought-image-map of sociological relations that finally spells out a set of political arguments. Eventually this will lead us to questions such as: Is The Wire as a set of thought-images formative of potential for new thought or only a vast organic map-whole of the given? What is a map in the form of political moving images? Can moving-image cartography be thought in other ways? Are there many kinds of maps at play in The Wire that are overlaid in ways that makes it contain certain “diagrammatic” cartographic aspects? These kinds of questions will be central in Chapter 6. In this chapter, we will be more restricted to a more concrete explication of The Wire’s structures.

4.1. The Wire’s Political and Argumentative Structure

As we already saw in 3.2 there is a sociological perspective that structures The Wire’s narratives and political arguments. In contrast to the conventional “cop-series” with narrative closure of a case of the week at the end of an episode, it lays out a large, complex, organic picture of intersecting social realms. The serial narrative stretches out, branches, pauses and returns, across not only seasons but in its larger themes across all its five seasons. It takes full advantage of the length of its serial form, which is not open-ended but conceived of as a whole (a circular hole, however, that will continue its static repetitions, which means that the whole is an ongoing state and neither open-ended nor providing closure). In referring to The Wire as a portrait of what works and what does not in the Baltimore that the writers “know and love”, David Simon describes the serial as “homegrown and organic and hence […] very much about place”. (Baltimore certainly “plays itself” here.) This investigation of a place, however, extends to provide a frame or a case in point for a “meditation on the state of postindustrial America as depicted through the microcosm of an American rust-belt city” – there is in this sense an intricate dialectics at work between The Wire’s larger themes and an ethnographic realism that is a local realism (we will come back to this dialectics in Chapter 6). One commentator, Ash Sharma, describes The

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251 “What distinguishes The Wire […] setting it apart even from other high quality HBO productions”, argues Helena Sheehan & Sheamus Sweeney, “is that it is driven by a coherent worldview, by a social and historical analysis. The series signals the return of the grand narrative to the TV screen, but at a level of complexity and nuance never before seen in a television drama.”, “The Wire and the World: Narrative and Metanarrative”, Jump Cut: A Review of Contemporary Media (51, Spring 2009).


253 Ibid. Simon: “Baltimore is a postindustrial city, wedged between D.C. and Philadelphia and struggling to find its future and reconcile its past. In that sense it’s like St. Louis and Cleveland and Philly and a lot of other rust-belt American places, and so stories from here have a chance of being about more than Baltimore per se. The storytelling here might be quite
*The Wire* as “an incredibly detailed topology of the city in terms of space and power”. Another commentator, Eric Beck, goes so far as to claim that *The Wire* “attempts something approaching an exhaustive portrayal of society”. This latter, slightly more extreme, claim risks obscuring how *The Wire* has a certain perspective on a selection of (a certain) society. But we have to agree that this selection is covered, if not exhaustively, at least spanning across a vast number of interconnected areas of a contemporary neoliberal society as bearing down on one city, and, as we will discuss in Chapter 6, manages to a great extent to cover much of the whole of the logic of contemporary neoliberal society. But in doing this, *The Wire* has not only a specific perspective it also provides a unified set of political arguments about what it depicts (although containing the complex and the contradictory).

*The Wire* is “about untethered capitalism run amok,” states Simon, “about how power and money actually route themselves in a postmodern American city, and, ultimately, about why we as an urban people are no longer able to solve our problems or heal our wounds.” He also explains how one “of the arguments of *The Wire*, season after season out, is that pure capitalism is not a social policy. It can't substitute for a social policy. And the idea of pursuing it as what’s best for the most is a fool’s error.” In this sense it is, according to Simon, “in its larger themes […] about politics and sociology and, detailed in referencing local geography and culture, but it translates easily to elsewhere and therefore acquires additional relevance easily”, Simon, *The Believer*.

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255 Simon is himself quite clear on his point: “It’s [about] a part of Baltimore that has not been […] offered a future” (A conversation at Eugene Lang College). In an article in *The Guardian*, Simon emphasizes that *The Wire* portrays one side of “two Americas” and that it does not deal with “the healthy sectors of the American economy”, and that “one gets a sense, reading the distant reaction (sic) to *The Wire*, that Europeans are far more ready to be convinced by one vision than the other”. And although the side that actually is illuminated gets a rigorous and “exhaustive” treatment, it cannot of course cover all socio-political aspects of it: “We largely ignored sex-based discrimination, feminism and gender issues. We spoke not a word about the pyramid scheme that is the mortgage crisis, or the diminishing consumer class, or the time bomb that all of our China-bought debt might prove to be. […] It was a story rooted in truth, but it wasn’t the only story or the only truth.” David Simon, “The Escalating Breakdown of Urban Society Across the US”, *The Guardian Weekend*, September 6, 2008.

257 One commentator, uniquely perhaps, argues that there “is no complete picture, no ultimate truth, no tidy conclusion in *The Wire*. And it is precisely this lack of a unified vision and its refusal to grant closure, or even to suggest what form such closure might take, which […] differentiates *The Wire* […]”, Sophie Fuggle, “Short Circuiting the Power Grid: *The Wire* as Critique of Institutional Power”, *Dark Matter* (“The Wire Files”, 4, 2009). But this comment confuses “a refusal to grant [narrative] closure” with a “lack of a unified vision”. The refusal to grant narrative closure (in the ordinary sense of a traditional dramatic arc) is an actual part of the serial’s quite unified and detailed political argument and vision.


259 DVD commentary, s3:12.
at the risk of boring the audience with the very notion, macroeconomics”. A central aspect of this macroeconomics is deregulation and the victory of finance capital over manufacturing capital, and how this effect things stretching from the larger to the smaller scale. Another important and interconnected concern, especially emphasized in the first season, is to show how the war on drugs is a sham amounting to nothing more than a war on the underclass. The Wire’s seasons are structured to systematically deal with these matters.

Each of the five seasons puts emphasis on a new institutional segment that is introduced onto the others. Ever-new segments of the city (and beyond) have to be folded out in order to explain the socio-economical complexity of what is shown. This does not mean that the whole comes out as a large machine of simple causes and effects. But a larger picture of socio-economic explanations is indeed formed. The many segments are like small maps that connect up to a bigger map, or that are superimposed over each other to add “topographical” depth. These are the segments that each season, most explicitly, adds:

1. The streets and the failed drug war, which has turned into a war on the underclass (the Fritz Lang-esque mirroring of the institutions of the police and drug gangs, and a start of the running theme of the both allegorical and directly intertwined relation between the drug trade and the larger world of capitalism);
2. The docks in relation to global flows of semi-criminal capital (the disappearance of unions and the American working class in a postindustrial era);
3. The city government (on the structures behind why any attempts of local reform are doomed to fail);
4. The inner-city public school system (an investigation of key social aspects of how previously introduced characters came to be who they are; and a critique of the notion of “equal opportunity”); and,
5. The print news media (the processes and effects of its dismantling under neoliberal forces – or: why is the public unaware of what is revealed in The Wire).

Penfold-Mounce, Beer & Burrows, however, go too far – although they do have a point – in in the other direction by describing the “lyrical” sociology of The Wire as providing “an account that is closer to that of complexity theory […] than positivism, with its strong emphasis on the unpredictability of patterns of emergence and the difficulties of understanding causality” 2011: 163f.

As season two goes on to add the segment of the vanishing working class of the port, this is included in the continuation of mirroring symmetries between institutions inside and outside the law. The community of dockworkers is in many respects reminiscent of the drug organization in season 1, in the sense that they abide by a similar set of codes – the severe stigma of being a snitch, for instance.
As implied by the parentheses above, each introduced segment is only a part of the defining characteristic of each season. Perhaps more important is that a new theme or two are investigated. As a new segment is introduced the older stays, and together with a new theme the old segments – a “whole” of the inner-city (that is, all the segments introduced so far) – will be seen from yet another angle. At the most important level, there is a blending of segments and strata, law and crime through the routing of money and the narrative trope of variations on the familiar “its just business” line – from the street trade to the more abstract flows of finance capital.

**Elaboration: Capitalism Coded & Decoded in The Wire**

Jason Read has delivered a Marxist account of The Wire’s both allegorical and intertwined relation between the drug trade and the larger world of capitalism and business. But perhaps even more importantly, another commentator, Stephen Lucasi, emphasizes the crucial differences between a still coded capitalism of the streets and a larger surrounding one that is more decoded and de-territorialized. But we must add to and qualify this point: one of The Wire’s more subsequent themes is that the street game itself is increasingly decoded and de-territorialized. This is more than implied by the contrast between two of its leaders: Prop Joe and Marlo. Marlo’s almost psychotic callousness seems to express the most de-territorialized form of a neoliberal capitalism on the level of the streets (but it is precisely Marlo that is welcomed into the world of finance capital at the end of Season 5). Marlo’s way contrasts with the older more coded forms of capitalism represented by not only the more old-fashioned Prop Joe and his “co-op” (and perhaps even more clearly in the explicit codes of conduct in Avon Barksdale and Omar). As the character Bunny Colvin comments on the development towards decoding in the streets: “The west side we knew it’s dead, man. You know, people in the game nowadays, I mean, it’s a whole different breed. No code, no family […] (s4:13, ca. 0:44)” But although the two realms (street/big business) are not only intertwined but increasingly similar, the two worlds remain separate: as the big league of investment capitalism opens its door for Marlo in the last episode he finally aborts the passage, since the world he knows and cares about doesn’t extend beyond the street and his reputation in it.

As stated, Simon refers to the institutions depicted in The Wire as “postmodern institutions”. These are institutions determined by neoliberal policies, which in Simon’s view has been detrimental for the social contract. Contemporary neoliberalism is in the simplest sense the minimization of what hin-

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ders the free flow of capital. This includes everything from the configurations of subjectivity, to the decreased power of governments, to international institutions configured to supply the stable conditions for the “free” flow of (exploitative) capital. The Wire’s “postmodern institutions” are fundamentally determined by neoliberal policies. Neoliberal policies dictate how the institutions functions. This does not mean that these intuitions are in the service of classic liberal biopolitics. And the institutions that The Wire depicts are even less the institution Foucault described as institutions of discipline. They are in some ways closer to – but somehow further beyond or to the side of – Deleuze’s society of “control” in which these kinds of institutions are crumbling, succumbed to a different logic. The institutions depicted in The Wire are determined by neoliberalism in the sense of, as David Simon calls it, “raw”, “pure” or “untethered capitalism” – that is, an almost deregulated and decoded capitalism (with a minimum of “axioms”). And as we saw in a quote above, one of the central arguments of The Wire is that pure capitalism cannot substitute for a social policy. The institutions of The Wire are not concerned with social policies as much as they play “stat-games”. Statistics are shuffles around and manipulated so that the record will look good in order to keep up a system dictated, in the end, by finance capital. Of course, the social side of any neoliberalism – concerned with creating a social body that guarantees precisely the “free” flow of (exploitative) capital and trade – entails some kind of biopolitics. The complications and the differing accounts of what biopolitics is and how it works in contemporary society – for instance, its increasingly immaterial nature – is outside the delimitations of this study. But The Wire’s “postmodern institutions” are in any event concerned with biopolitics only in ways vastly different from pre-postmodern liberal conducts – for instance, the (dead or alive) bodies of the populations are of no direct concern; the concern is how the bodies are represented – truly or falsely matters little – in the statistics. Among the central works on neoliberalism stands Foucault’s published lecture series The Birth of Biopolitics.265 But what Foucault actually discusses here is not a direct elucidation of our current situation, so much as a historical or genealogical account of the theoretical development of neoliberalism, most explicitly during the mid-20th century.266 While central for the understanding of the historical development of neoliberal theories and policies, his genealogy is not directly pertinent for understanding the socio-economic situation portrayed in The Wire. In a discussion of how to understand contemporary neoliberalism from the view-

266 Furthermore, even if Foucault had, at the time, addressed the present more directly (and not just genealogically), the present at the time of the lectures was just prior to or in the very beginning of the practical implementation of neoliberalism in the Reaganite and Thatcherite sense that we now primarily know it. For an analysis of the latter see David Harvey, A Brief History of Neoliberalism (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

164
points of Foucault’s lectures on liberalism, Maurizio Lazzarato states that there “are many limits to Foucault’s analysis”. And as he goes on to say,

Foucault says many things that are very imprecise, and we can never take them literally or accept what he says at face value. [...] I find much more interesting things in Deleuze and Guattari on the relation between liberalism and freedom and capitalism.\(^{267}\)

In Chapters 5 and 6 below we will reconnect precisely with Deleuze and Guattari’s conceptualizations of (advanced) capitalism.

Pure capitalism is not a social policy, states Simon. But The Wire itself can be seen as a kind of social policy on the level of fiction. The omnipresent Eye hovering over Baltimore – or the auditory surveillance of “the wire” – has a certain perspective that could be called socio-logical. The term “socio-logical” is not necessarily reductive – it does not imply that The Wire is necessarily reducible to “major” science and it certainly does not imply that it recognizes only identity unable to think processes behind them. The Wire is an in-depth sociological investigation of how things come to be as they are (most explicitly in the investigation of how the kids are gradually corrupted in between Seasons 4 and 5, as we saw above). It is concerned, however, with a state of things that has become static. There are several things that point beyond The Wire being the mere representation of this state – the intricate configuration of its political argumentation, its treatment of finance capital, its quasi-metaphysical circles (that introduces “the power of repetition”), its stretching of the representational and the ways it puts together and superimposes various “maps” (investigated in Chapter 6).

**Sociological Determinism**

But there are aspects in which The Wire is at its most sociologically or naturally strict and uncompromising. The Wire is often praised for not adhering to the notions of good and evil in contrast to the usual “cop-show” that (arguably) tends to rely on such distinctions. That is laudable, of course, but perhaps not necessarily a great intellectual contribution in itself. More interesting is the notion of social determinism – a clear but undeclared naturalist inspiration – that is substituted for good and evil. Simon:

I’m not particularly interested in [the idea of good and evil]. The Wire is really more interested in social determinism. […] Even Marlo. I look upon Marlo as the ultimate social-determinist outcome of gangster culture taken to its natural extreme. Eventually somebody decides, in a purely Machiavellian sense, ‘I’ll get to

\(^{267}\) Maurizio Lazzarato, “Round Table”, *Foucault, Biopolitics, and Governmentality*, eds. Sven-Olov Wallenstein & Jakob Nilsson (Södertörn Philosophical Studies, forthcoming).
the point of being Hitler. I’ll get to the point of being utterly draconian in my pursuit of power. ’ But I don’t even regard Marlo as being necessarily good or evil. He just is. And I think that way about all the characters.”

“The characters in *The Wire,*” writes Jason Mittell from his perspective, “while quite human and multi-dimensional, are as narrowly defined in their possibilities as typical videogame avatars. They each do what they do because that is the way the game is played […]” And as he also writes:

While all of these characters have depth and complexity, we rarely see much of their existence beyond how they fit into their institutional roles – even romantic relationships seem to foreground inter-institutional links […] This is not to suggest that characters in *The Wire* are flat or merely cardboard cutouts to enact a social simulation. […] But the way *The Wire* portrays its characters seems distinctly not novelistic – we get no internal monologues or speeches articulating characters’ deep thoughts, few senses of deep character goals or transformations motivating the dramatic actions (2009).

The point here is not to engage Mittell’s reductive conception of the “novelistic” or his idea of a lack of (really quite mainstream) elucidations of subjective interiority. What is important is the social determinism that *The Wire* focuses on instead – which is of course “distinctly novelistic” in the sense of literary naturalism/realism – in order to make points about a social weave in which “the game is rigged”. This chapter will now continue with an explanation of the audiovisual configuration of the thought system that is *The Wire.*

### 4.2. *The Wire*’s Audiovisual Configuration: An Aesthetic of the Large Organic Picture

Commentators often assume, implicitly or explicitly, that it is on the level of the writing that the serial’s production of meaning is primarily located – which may explain why there have been few analyses of its aesthetics. This is understandable. First of all, the aesthetics of *The Wire* does not draw much attention to itself. Second of all, novelist and former news reporter David Simon is the creator, “showrunner”, executive producer and spokesman of

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269 Which is not to contradict “the extraordinarily dense and minute interpersonal situations through which *The Wire* plays out its larger plot”, Fredric Jameson, “Realism and Utopia in *The Wire*”, *Criticism* (52:3-4, Summer-Fall 2010), pp. 359-372.
the *The Wire*. As such he is, partly together with his partner Ed Burns, involved in all aspects of the work – including the audiovisual aspects. But he is mainly the *head writer* and not the director. In 3.1 we dealt with the “literary” level of *The Wire*. In this subchapter we will look at parameters that belong strictly to the moving image with sound.

It is clear that *The Wire* from the start is systematic in its stylistic configuration, although this is more matured and fully developed from the second season and onwards. Robert F. Colesberry (producer for Martin Scorsese, Alan Parker and Ang Lee, etc.) was head developer of *The Wire*’s aesthetics and served as the directorial producer (as well as one of its executive producers) until his death in 2004 (in between the second and third season). To realize their visual ideas Colesberry and Simon brought in German director of photography Uta Briesewitz (2002-2004) who also became an important part of the development of the visual aesthetics. Colesberry’s and Briesewitz’s audiovisual ideas, compositions and use of camera were of course developed in conjunction with what was fitting forms of expression for the material. But an initial point of contrast for Colesberry was the standard “cop-show’s” – from *NYPD Blue* and onwards – “self-conscious flashiness” inspired by “handheld documentaries and even modern advertising”, which were to give way for an aesthetics that emphasized “clarity, spatial depth, and the relationship of characters to their environments”. Televisually traditional close-ups and talking heads were toned down in favor of more intricate usages of space. “We wanted more languid camera movements”, explains Simon on his part, “we wanted that background to show great detail [...] we didn’t want the camera to have any advance knowledge of the story, since we’re asking the viewers to follow the story very carefully and pick up facts as they go along and never pick up more facts than we’re allowing.”

The audiovisual language emphasizes how individuals are tied to larger social and institutional contexts. This is done not least by aiming to have the camera “staying in the wide” in its compositions of characters in

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270 *The Wire* also reaches a fuller and perhaps more mature expression on the level of writing with George Pelecanos joining the writing staff at the end of the first season, and Dennis Lehane and Richard Price from the third. See Simon, 2004: 29.

271 The crew also came to include, for instance, filmmaker Robert Altman’s editor Geraldine Peroni, and Polish political filmmaker Agnieszka Holland.

272 While there was strict set of aesthetic parameters developed from the start by Simon, Colesberry and Briesewitz, this did not mean that *The Wire* was aesthetically formulaic. There was room for interpretation for the directors and directors of photography, who were fairly free to experiment, within the given parameters, with types of lenses or cameras. See director and co-producer Joe Chappelle’s comments on this, including specifications of the actual usages of lenses, cameras, camera movements, lighting, editing practices, and how they relate to *The Wire*’s basic visual ideas, in Nick Griffin, “Inside HBOs *The Wire*”, *Creative COW Magazine: The Magazine for Media Professionals in Film, Broadcast & Production* (2007).


274 David Simon quoted by Rose from a radio interview, p. 88.
relation to environments. Let us give some further specifications to how this tends to work:

- Introducing a wide expository shot in scenes before the more explicit narrative starts;
- Having shots display a lot of background surrounding characters, not merely as more or less psychological metaphors, but more generally to put visual emphasis on the social environment’s determining relation to the characters (in contrast to most American drama’s general emphasis on characters’ individual psychologies);
- Having characters, or the camera itself look out towards or cross between other rooms or spaces as a way of creating or implying organic links;
- Connecting and linking spatial coordinates with images and scenes that focus on the general theme of systems of surveillance (“ever present but not always utilized”, as Simon says in a commentary).
- Sounds, and especially the sounds of the city, also serve a key function in connecting strata.

The background environments are literally a set of social institutions (including the “street” and its rigid gang structures). The large extent to which the environment is included into the frame grounds the overall theme of individuals being conditioned or even determined by what Simon refers to as “postindustrial or postmodern institutions”, themselves conditioned or determined by neoliberal capitalism.

As a sociological study and a set of political arguments, The Wire’s audiovisual configuration is composed to provide a reality effect in the sense of making the study and the arguments credible (is this not basically what the presentation of all studies is about even in the natural sciences?) This reality effect is of course not merely an “effect”. The Wire takes up real things in its aesthetics of realism, for instance, location shootings, sometimes including obscure bits of local culture, and a fair amount of amateur actors that are often taken directly from the milieu depicted. The reality effect acquired by these aspects is confirmed by how most groups depicted allegedly praised the serial for realistically portraying their environments (those higher up in the food chain have been more reluctant with their praise).

My objective in discussing things like “reality-effect” or claims of “authenticity” is not about kicking in the open door of revealing them as constructions – academically speaking, it is a truism that the moving image is no mere window on the world. The point is instead to elucidate the various pa-

275 David Simon: “One of the things Bob [Colesberry] always talked about was staying in the wide whenever you can; show the world – that’s something that TV does very poorly, when you’re shooting on sound stages rather than the real world then you tend to go for the close-up as often as not”, DVD commentary s1:01, ca 0:26. Sheehan & Sweeney also notes how “everything – from the writing to the shooting – is honed to the purpose of showing the world”, and that “[t]he series’ visual style highlights social structure”, 2009, op-cit.
rameters of what *The Wire consists of*, and the creation of a strong reality effect happens to be one of them. There are aspects of its visual configuration that are explicitly inspired by conventions of a style of “naturalism” in the documentary tradition as codes of authenticity. Of course, *The Wire* is fiction. But it clearly employs visual strategies that comply with it being an empirically based, well-researched, sociological and political argument. Classical conventions of a style of naturalism in the documentary are an important part of this. Examples are *The Wire’s* creator’s mantra of avoiding montage (“as if montage”, as Trinh T. Minh-ha points out in her critique of certain documentary discourses, “did not happen at the stages of conception and shooting”); avoiding close-ups (which naturalists “condem[n] for its partiality”); favoring shots that in different ways include as much as possible of the surrounding milieu in the frame; and to a slightly lesser extent, the long take, which is supposed to be “more ‘truthful’ than filmic time”. The ideal of wider framing Trinh T. Minh-ha describes as having the implied function of mirroring “more faithfully the event-in-context”. And then she adds: “[A]s if wider framing is less a framing than tighter shots”. But this last critique somewhat misses the mark if applied to *The Wire’s* aesthetics, since its point is not to be some transparent non-frame but to frame differently, aiming to point in the direction of the larger sociological tapestry. (*The Wire* as fiction with significant documentary aspects connects also with its most important audiovisual influence that we will come back to in the concluding part of this chapter: Italian Neorealism.)

As stated, a simple picking apart of audiovisual conventions of authenticity merely for the sake of revealing them as conventions are not the objective here. But for the sake of better understanding how *The Wire* is structured, there is much to say about how it has crafted a documentary aesthetics. The series’ utilization of music is a special case. A look at how this works reveals much about how characters are constructed. But more importantly, it reveals much about how *The Wire’s* parameters of realism are always subordinated to its arguments. According to David Simon, and everyone I’ve come across commenting on this (e.g. Toscano & Kinkle, Gibb & Sabin, Jason Mittell, etc.), *The Wire* never uses non-diegetic music except for the montage that ends every season. The reason, according to the creators, is that they do not want to lead the viewer’s emotions. But while this ambition may otherwise be upheld, it is a rule that is broken quite a few times when it comes to music – and in sneaky ways. Music often serves to swiftly underscore a character-type (the choice of music is often quite stereotypical). But one person’s diegetic music can also blend into other shots giving them there-

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277 “Diegetic” music means that it belongs to the narrative universe, it plays in the scene and is heard by the characters, in contrast to non-diegetic music that is added to it as a soundtrack.
fore actually non-diegetic, direction or coloring. In other words, in the cases
where music is actually used, it is a narrative device often disguised as being
diegetic. Some examples:
1. A montage that cuts between Daniels and Greggs where classical music,
which is probably diegetic in Daniels case blends over to color Greggs do-
ings (s2:4, ca 0:51-52).
2. The beginning of one episode has the white character Prez pressing play
on the Johnny Cash song I Walk the Line which then cuts to a montage that,
for a couple of minutes, spans various parts of their investigation on different
locations. Although it ends with Prez pressing the stop button, which re-
routes the music back to its diegetic starting point, during the course of the
montage the music is clearly used in the standard non-diegetic montage
sense (s2:10).
3. Starting out with a festive dinner that the “Greeks” are having, manifestly
Greek ethnic music starts to play. But after only a second or two, this music,
which likely wasn’t diegetic even in the shots of the “Greeks” eating, takes
on a distinctly non-diegetic function of holding together a montage of vari-
ous other characters (s2:11, 0:50-54). The montage is several minutes long,
punctuated by a dramatic conversation where the music pauses for a while
only to be taken up again to underscore its dramatic content, and then moves
on to new scenes in the montage that leads up to a climax.
4. Another montage with quasi-diegetic music starts when Herc puts on
Theme From Shaft in his car which then serves to flavor a chase sequence,
although, to be fair, the music is only audible when Herc’s car is in view
(s3:01, ca. 0:08-11).
5. Yet another example of “diegetic” music used as coloring, or to under-
score the traits of a character is Prez listening, again, to Johnny Cash, this
time Ring of Fire, while hacking away old chewing gums from the class-
room furniture, (s4:02, ca. 0:09).
6. There is also the boxer and ex-convict Cutty who is at one point tied to
Curtis Mayfield’s Move on Up. The song is used to score a montage where a
running Cutty is intercut with various locations around the mayor election
(s4:06, ca. 0:32).
7. Another stereotypical character leitmotif is white state attorney Rhonda
Pearlman who gets to be scored by Allison Krauss.

Regarding choices in casting, the creation of characters and the recount-
ing of real events, some more things can be added. In explaining why they
avoided well known-actors, Simon says something unusually explicit about
providing a documentary reality effect: it is about avoiding “moments in
which well-known actors appear onscreen and throw viewers right out of
their sense of The Wire as a documentarian exercise”. The meaning here of
the phrase “documentarian exercise” is to make, as Simon later says, a “sim-
ulation” of the real Baltimore. We must understand this as finding a form of
presentation that makes more convincing the sociological and ethnographic
research that *The Wire* has at its core. The mix of London stage actors and less known actors from New York together with local Baltimoreans in smaller roles, where “professional actors work off the real people”, according to Simon, “makes the world we are depicting that much more improbable and idiosyncratic and, therefore, more credible”. More importantly, at least the major characters themselves are “rooted in people that [the writers] know or knew in Baltimore”. While this included sometimes stealing “histories from one […] and apply them to another, or mix and match”, it is still “rooted in the real”.278 This logic also pertains to actual events. The verisimilitude aimed for with *The Wire* is therefore finally not determined by exact recounts, but rather by staying true to an analysis of states of affairs: “[S]ome of these events actually occurred,” writes Simon, “and a few others were rumored to have occurred. But many of the events did not occur, and perhaps the only distinction worth making is that all of them could have happened – not only in Baltimore, but in any major American city contending with the same problems.”279 *The Wire’s* verisimilitude is in this way in line with Aristotle’s concept of *tragic mimesis*. In contrast to historiography, the mimetic function of tragedy does not concern what has happened so much as “the kind of thing that would happen” (*Poetics*, 16). This is because tragedy is, according to Aristotle, “more philosophical and serious than history” (16). But he has strict criteria for what can be categorized as “would happen”, which binds it to the given of states of affairs (16). There “should be nothing irrational in the events themselves”, they must be “possible in accordance with probability or necessity” (25, 16, 18). It should be necessary or probable that this kind of person says or does this kind of thing, and it should be necessary or probable that this happens after that. But the “would happen” instead of the recounting of actual events means that tragedy may utilize myth and mythic figures, while still being perfectly mimetic – also mythic figures mirror social reality in the sense of being logical crystallizations of real or possible events and characters. There are of course a number of ways that *The Wire* departs from Aristotelian poetics, but regarding this particular aspect there is a correspondence. But also within this aspect there are differences. The “necessary or probable” of *The Wire* is not plot driven or character driven so much as it is *sociologically and politically driven*. Sociological analysis and political argumentation is what propels and structures the events that take place within its universe – with a somber necessity and probability.

278 David Simon, *The Believer*. In the DVD commentary for s3:01 Simon also states that “the characters contain elements of real people, but often real people mixed up 10 or 15 times over.” But he also adds: “We steal from real life whenever we can […] real cases, real people, real places”, s3:03.

These are the most important determining factors of *The Wire* as a practice of verisimilitude. And precisely here, the above-described Aristotelian aspects of *The Wire* connect even more with parts of the 1930s and 1940s aesthetic-political theory of Georg Lukács.

Preferring the former, Lukács made sharp distinctions between realism and naturalism. But *The Wire* is a kind of mix between Lukács’s conceptions of realism and naturalism. While “realism”, according to Lukács’ reading of the classic realist novel, is able to comprehend and display society as a process determined by an intricate play of social forces, naturalism can only comprehend and display a seemingly unchangeable society. Naturalism, he argued, therefore obscures that fact that history never stops being a process. As we saw in Chapter 3 there is much in *The Wire* that is target for such criticisms. But regarding most of Lukács’ other points of what separates realism and naturalism, *The Wire* falls on the side of realism, first of all, regarding his main request for realist art to reveal the social forces that generate the problems, to “uncover the deeper, hidden, mediated, not immediately perceptible network of relationships that go to make up society” (“Realism in the Balance”, 35). Naturalism is in Lukács’ conception unable to do this, and is concerned instead with accurately imitating empirical details (c.f. Aristotle’s distinction between tragedy and historiography). In this sense *The Wire*, in its own specific ways, connects with Lukács’ ideal of realism more than his conception of naturalism. This extends to his ideas about how the social forces are handled aesthetically through the “typical”. Lukács: “Through the creation of the type and the discovery of typical characters and typical situations, the most significant directions of social development obtain adequate artistic expression.” The typical is not the “universal” or “average”. It is instead characterized by “the convergence and intersection of all the dominant aspects of that dynamic unity through which genuine literature reflects life in a vital and contradictory unity – all the most important social, moral and spiritual contradictions of a time”. The “representation of the average”, in contrast, “inevitably results in diluting and deadening, these contradictions […] by being represented in the mind and experience of an average man, they lose their decisiveness”.

We have reason to return to another of the central ideas in Lukács’ conception of realism, the concept of “totality”, in Chapter 6.

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280 This distinction between realism and naturalism is a more specified distinction, then, than his more famous distinction between realism and modernism more generally. “The modern literary schools of the imperialist era”, Lukács describe as spanning “from Naturalism to Surrealism”, “Realism in the Balance” [1938], *Aesthetics and Politics* (London/New York: Verso, 2010), p. 33.


282 Lukács, “Writer and Critic”, 78; see also “Realism in the Balance”, 46.
Elaboration: *The Wire* and the mix of Technological Ages

*The Wire* contains aspects that are, if not nostalgic for previous eras, obviously critical of certain developments in recent neoliberal globalization. There are the larger themes such as the effects on American labor of gradually leaving Fordist production behind emphasized in Season 2, or the waning of journalism in Season 5. But more concretely, and simultaneously more mysteriously, there is the unexplained usage of “obsolete” media and technology within the narrative, in which characters use beepers, typewriters, payphones (for most of the serial the police, with a few ad-hoc exceptions, seem to lack mobile phones), tape-recorders, and mostly analogue maps. Few things are computerized. At one point Herc enlists Caraver in his idea to buy a high-tech wireless listening devise in order to solve a case. After buying it Herc says: “Isn’t technology the fucking bomb?” As it turns out, however, the devise is quickly destroyed in field, and obviously becomes useless (in contrast to the brains of Freamon and McNulty). But at the same time, *The Wire*’s position on technology is ambivalent: it is cutting edge technology, directly taken from what is used by the forefront of police investigations today, which in both Seasons 1 and 2 finally solves the cases (the “wire” in Season 1, and using a “glitch” in the dock worker’s computer system as well as the techniques for zooming in on license plates from surveillance tapes in Season 2). But this ambivalence regarding technology can be clarified. The usage of old technology is strictly a departure from a literal level of creating a reality effect, but it is not a departure from a Lukácsian realism of the “typical” in a given state of affairs, which concerns the revealing of a “contradictory unity”. First of all, the creator’s studying of the states of affairs to be depicted started in the 1980s long before the shooting of *The Wire*, which means that its mix of technologies reflects the evolution of technologies throughout the long period of study – during which much else of what is depicted has stayed the same or continued on a path of de-evolution. Second of all, it reveals the class-aspect of access to modern technology, as well the underfunding of inner-city public law-enforcement.

The more concrete stylistic strategies of realism in *The Wire* serve conceptual functions, for instance, as we saw above, how the wide shots underline the theme of individuals conditioned by and subjected to larger forces. Does this further underline that the sociological presentation is more fictional than “documentarian”? Conceptual structuring in the service of an overall argument is actually an integral part of the classic documentary conduct. Bill Nichols even defines the “organizational backbone of the documentary” as making an argument “in the sense of placing evidence before others in order to convey a particular viewpoint”. In *The Wire*, this does not, as it also

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283 Bill Nichols, *Representing Reality: Issues and Concepts in Documentary* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991), 125. We should also mention John Grierson’s classic notion of the documentary as the “creative treatment of actuality”.

173
does not in the naturalistic documentary, mean that everything is explained didactically in the narrative. In “asking the viewers to follow the story very carefully and pick up facts as they go”, the creators at the same time had in mind to “never explain everything to viewers. The show’s point of view was that of the insider, the proverbial fly on the wall – and we had no intention of impairing that point of view by pausing to catch up the audience”. But at the same time, as if to underline that there is still a unity of argument based on meticulous research, Simon adds: “Consequently, all of the visual cues and connections would need to be referenced fully and at careful intervals.”

But The Wire’s aesthetics is, as stated, also conceived of in contrast to certain “documentary”-styles found in a lot of current crime series – the handheld camera and what Colesberry describes as “self-conscious flashiness”. Instead a smoother or more “invisible” style was chosen. The putting together of shots in The Wire is largely based on classical continuity editing. “The theme of The Wire in conveying information”, describes Thom Zimny, one of the editors, “is to be invisible, both with camerawork, with editing, and [...] with the writing.” But this invisibility, together with other aspects of the audiovisual language, actually serves to flatten, avoid or subvert any pathetic emphasis on grand dramatic or melodramatic moments (at least this is the ambition). The Wire’s style is also inspired by the documentary movement of “direct cinema”, as evident in the “fly-on-the-wall” comment above. The camera therefore tends to act as if it did not have prior information, as if it did not know in advance what is going to happen. It often eases its way into a space as if sneaking into a drama playing itself out with or without it. In describing the template of the serial’s camera aesthetics and the work of Director of Photography, Uta Briesewitz, David Simon talks about the camera as being kind of like [a] slither, like a snake in the grass. It doesn’t make grandiose moves, it doesn’t fish for things that may or may not be there, it’s not the switch pan of

285 For a detailed account of how The Wire’s audiovisual language and narrative constantly avoids or subverts melodrama, catharsis, and narrative closures, although it often initially seems to set up a stage for it, see Amanda Ann Klein, “‘The Dickensian Aspect’: Melodrama, Viewer Engagement, and the Socially Conscious Text”, The Wire: Urban Decay and American Television, eds. C.W. Marshall & Tiffany Potter (New York/London: Continuum, 2009), pp. 177-189. Slavoj Žižek, on his part, argues that usual comparisons between The Wire and Dickens are directly wrong, since in Dickens there is a “series of melodramatic moments, like confrontation of good and evil or [...] the secret rescuer, benefactor who intervenes in the last minute. All this miserably fails in The Wire”, Slavoj Žižek, “The Wire or the Clash of Civilisations in one Country”, talk given at Birkbeck, University of London, 24 February 2012. C.f. Linda Williams who asserts that The Wire’s “operant mode is melodrama”, although separated from other contemporary serial melodrama by “the very detailed multisited [ethnographic] knowledge that goes into the construction of the tale as a whole”, “Ethnographic Imaginary”, 219, note 19, 220.
documentary-type feel. But it is moving; it’s a subtle suggestion of trying to find its way in and through a scene” (s3:01, ca. 0:41-42).

This “subtle suggestion of trying to find its way in and through a scene”, is not irrelevant for determining the kinds of thought-images to be found in The Wire – although these subtle movements are finally caught up in the naturalist/realist coordinates given by The Wire as a whole. Despite the organic linkages across a vast social cartography, the camera can sometimes be seen to linger on a scene. This lingering also merges with the previously described aspect of the wide shot. “I love it”, says David Simon, “when we can stay wide for a shot, for a long period of time”.

But as we saw above with the scoring, we should be careful with taking as full analysis the creator’s descriptions of the details of the audiovisual language. Substantial time lingering that really bends or exceeds the sociological coordinates is actually quite sparse (we will deal with its most rare scene of time lingering in a moment); and the so-called “switch pan of documentary” style of camera movements, for instance, is not completely absent. Does this mean that The Wire’s overall aesthetics is incoherent? In a video essay, one commentator, Erlend Lavik, presents one of the few in-depth examinations of The Wire’s audiovisual style. He makes the overall claim that The Wire is made up of “conflicting aesthetical sensibilities”. On the one hand, he registers the dominant restrained and unobtrusive camera aesthetics inspired by Frederic Wiseman and the “observational mode of documentary filmmaking”. On the other hand, he finds occasions in which the camera is more “self-conscious” such as in certain emotionally charged scenes “where the camera breaks away from the drama”. This commentator also finds “conflicting” statements made between Simon, Colesberry and Uta Briesewitz about how to describe The Wire’s aesthetics, and a “tension between the evident plainness of the show and a striving for something more elaborate and artful”. While making some good observations on stylistic traits, his overall claim on aesthetical sensibilities in “conflict” is nearsighted. There plainly is an overall aesthetic unity to The Wire’s stylistics. But to perceive this unity the ability is required to lift the view from their matter-of-fact level.

The Wire abides by what I call An Aesthetic of the Large Organic Picture. On this level of aesthetic principle, there is no conflict between the “observational” camera and a more conscious camera that “breaks away from the drama”. When the camera makes observations outside the scope of the characters and the direct dramatic exchange, it it’s not merely “to suggest to us what [a character is] thinking” or to narratively “foreshadow future events”

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286 DVD Commentary s3:01
or to “comment on the action”. Rather, when the camera in some way or another acts consciously it is in order to make socio-logical linkages between spaces: to indicate how the scene interrelates with one or more of the other characters, segments or strata. The visual theme of surveillance imagery, for instance, is not merely about a sense of “voyeurism”, but more importantly about making visible the linkages that make up a larger socio-organic weave. The larger socio-organic weave is always the main focus, stylistically, narratively and politically. Patrick Jagoda writes about The Wire as binding “together the story lines and lifeworlds of vastly different, though overlapping, Baltimores” through a “network aesthetic”. Drawing from and complicating “social network analysis, a major social scientific methodology used to map assemblages of actors represented as ‘nodes’ connected by ‘links’”, this is an aesthetic that forms a “cartography of social and financial relations, which grows in complexity throughout the seasons”.

The Wire’s Aesthetics of Time

We have already discussed The Wire’s temporal structures at some length in 3.1. This section adds some other perspectives on the issue. As we saw in Chapter 2, what Deleuze calls the “movement-image” was from the outset often “haunted” by a time-image, but without being able to give full body to direct time. At times, The Wire seems shadowed by a slightly different temporal order. A quote from Kent Jones can help exemplify the ways The Wire can allow certain kinds of time lingering – but without therefore releasing this time lingering from its representative sociological coordinates. Jones describes

an ingenious storytelling method that elbows its way in and out of narrative lines, picking up characters and threads at unexpected moments. Though it becomes too systematic at times, this is a fiendishly clever way to cover the life of a city. It echoes the sensation of overabundance that comes with actual city living and also reinforces an aura of inevitability, embodied perfectly in the becalmed visual style of DP Uta Briesewitz (her departure in the middle of the third season was a loss, but her template remains throughout: a patiently observant camera eye that tends to retreat to long and wide views, eager to nail character and environment). The net effect is to draw us away from the drama of a police investigation and to create a portrait of a city in crisis block by block, brick by brick. We’re allowed time to concentrate on little pockets of behaviour, light, movement, geography, to get the feel of an idle afternoon in the courtyard of a housing project, the un-

288 Jagoda, 2011: 189-199. It is important that The Wire complicates this “major sociological scientific methodology” for reasons having to do with the possibility of it containing aspects of “minor” sociology. Repeating a quote from 3.2 we should remember that Jagoda says that “the series operates as an aesthetically rich counterpart to actor-network-theory, which was formulated as an alternative to traditional social network analysis”, 193.
kempt vivacity around a basketball grudge match between rival neighbourhoods, or the quiet cleanliness of a murder scene months after the fact.\textsuperscript{289}

One of the creators’ ideals is to try to let things play out in “real time” when possible, or at least give an impression of real time through various cinematographic conventions. This can be seen in certain shots but seldom regards whole scenes. The “real time” of The Wire concerns something like a general sense of verisimilitude more than, of course, a literal formal investigation of real time as in, say, Chantal Akerman’s Jeanne Dielman, 23 Quai de Commerce, 1080 Bruxelle (1975), Hitchcock’s Rope (1948) or the more completely non-edited real time of Alexander Sokurov’s Russian Ark (2002). The “real time” of The Wire is, furthermore, mostly a measuring of movement. Many of the scenes that play like “real time” tend to be less about a Bazinian exploration of the temporarily of things than the wordless sketching out of a series of spatial coordinates. Director Joe Chappelle describes one such scene:

This sequence is a little unusual for the show, for there’s a few shots of Clark just walking through the space without any dialog; and normally we don’t do that. Because this was a new space, which was in the newsroom, we let some shots play out longer. You just don’t see that, we don’t do that that often. But we wanted to show off the newsroom so you get an idea where everybody is in relation to one another (s5:01. DVD commentary).

This scene, then, exemplifies how even a scene in real time that is devoid of explicit narrative action tends to be subordinated to movement and spatial coordinates. But also when there are expressions pointing in the direction of a more “pure time” unsubordinated to movement and spatial coordinates they tend to be framed by a causal before and after, which subordinates these scenes to an organic logic. In a moment we will look into the most pronounced scene of pure time in the whole of The Wire, which contains nothing but a silent Bubbles in his sisters basement.

Overall, moments of time lingering that are extracted from the sensory-motor and the striated determinations of the environment are extremely rare in The Wire. Its thought-images therefore are based on a different logic than explicit “pure” optical and sound images/signs. What we in one sense get instead of a more “pure” time lingering is something that David Simon calls “humanism” – a term he often invokes to defend his work from accusations of cynicism (and this seems to me to be mainly irreducible to merely pledging an allegiance to an empty universal).\textsuperscript{290} His conception of Bubbles is the

\textsuperscript{289}Kent Jones, “Down in the Hole”, Sight and Sound, (May 2008), emphasis mine.

\textsuperscript{290}See Simon, 2004: 34; Jesse Walker, “David Simon Says”, Reason, (October, 2004); Simon in the documentary The Game is Real; Simon interviewed in Vice, op-cit.
What Simon has in mind with the term “humanism”, I believe, can be described in a different way: it can be compared to the “ethics” of Italian Neorealism (see 2.3 above). It was precisely such an ethics that according to Deleuze was missing from time-images that merely negatively critiqued, “catalogued” or “parodied” clichés. That is, the ability to exceed cynicism by instead extracting an image from the clichés that, politically and aesthetically, can stand on its own. But as we can also remember, Italian Neorealism did not fully manage to set up a new thought-image, not least since it did not manage to fully extent its “pure” optical and sound images into new kinds of relations – but also, of course, since it never quite broke with representation and “still retained a reference to a form of the true”, “although it profoundly renewed” this form (C2, 135). The Wire is further within the regime of “the form of the true” than Italian Neorealism. But as such it as also “profoundly renewed” this type of sociopolitical audiovisual narrative as well as the scope and parameters of a thought-image that retains a form of the true.

Let us end this section on The Wire’s aesthetics of time with a look into its only really extended, explicitly still moment. In Season 5, Episode 1 (ca. 0:32), there is a scene in which the character Bubbles, halfway on the path to redeem himself from years of destructive drug abuse, sits alone lost in thought in his sister’s basement, without anything happening but the camera slowly zooming in on his face for about 20 seconds. This shot has a certain ambiguity to it: it is both explained by the story that has built up to this “humanistic” point and the overall narrative and argumentative framework implements the moment in a sociological structure. But at the same time it exceeds any simple lyricism. To the extent that it is a (very toned-down) affection-image – i.e. a moment of indetermination in the sensory-motor chains of perceptions-actions that expresses pure affect – it is unusually elongated, which is extra-pregnant for being exceptional to the general structure. In the DVD commentary director Joe Chappelle says, ambivalently, since it is a rare thing to implement even in The Wire, the following about this sequence:

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292 The point here is not that narrative would somehow be in full conflict with any kind of time-image. As Fredric Jameson argues in a discussion of scenes that display the Event or what Heidegger called the clearing (Lichtung) of Being: “What causes it to come into visibility […] can only be narrative itself”. More than a “pretext” for “lyric” moments” narrative “sharpens our attention to events and cause us to read spatial settings in ways that predispose us for this momentary vision”, Signature of the Visible [1992] (New York/London: Routlege, 2007), p. 266. But with Deleuze we must add that filmic “narrative” is on a basic level not a given added to the images but “only the consequence of the visible images themselves and their direct combinations”, C2, 26.
When we’re editing episodes you always have to lose moments ‘cause it’s just getting down the running time. This is one shot I’m glad that we were able to really let it play out. After what Bubbles went through last season, and just setting him in the world now, just in quiet, with the glint in his eye there – I’m glad that was able to survive. ‘Cause those were the kind of shots that invariably used to get just cut down or lost completely.

Chappelle qualifies this by saying that it is “only in a show like The Wire where you see shots like that”, and then adds: “As the seasons went on, though, and we kept adding worlds to the universe […] it was just so many characters and so many scenes it was hard to let moments breathe like that, ‘cause it was just so much story, so many characters and so many scenes or beats per episode” (ibid.).

If we bracket the organic before and after the shot, the moment with Bubbles perhaps indicates a certain movement in the direction of a contraction of the singular down to its own virtuality – an op-sign – instead of being directed to the larger and larger worlds outside the basement. But although this scene stands out this is not something that breaks with or necessarily even challenges the organic rationale that The Wire abides by as a whole. Also the regime of “organic representation”, as Deleuze writes, “includes spatial and temporal caesuras” and “moments of doubt”.293 Even if we were to go along and regard this as a “pure optical image” it is also doubtful that this image really extends, when it comes to new kinds of linkages of time and thought, beyond this – as we saw above, the “pure optical image” merely gives one of the preconditions for a “new” thought-image, and if it is not extended, it can just as well flow back into being a part of the sensory-motor (or even become a cliché). The scene with Bubbles cuts two ways. On the one hand it is a “humanistic” representation of a familiar but gripping narrative fate, and on the other hand an unusually elongated, toned-down, affection-image that borders on being a pure optical image. The scene is an exception within a work with few such scenes, which at least raises the question about whether it manages to extract something from the clichés of serial-drama renderings of blackness as belonging purely to the sociological (this latter point will be discussed as the “blackness patterns” below). That is, is this scene a sign of an untimely-site or even the seed or tendency of an untimely-image? While this image stands out in many ways, it is finally too much of a mere sensory-motor gap within an organic frame. It is not within its aesthetics of time lingering, then, that we will find relevant material for discussing The Wire from the perspective of the untimely-site and the untimely-image. The interesting untimely-image prospects of The Wire are found elsewhere – in the quasi-

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293 CI, 151. Classical action-image films tend to contain caesuras, “moments of doubt”, where the “the hero must pass through moments of impotence, internal or external”, 154; and even the “purest action films have always had value in episodes outside the action, or in temps morts between actions [...]”, 205. Translation modified.
metaphysical circles that we discussed in Chapter 3 above and in some of the larger implications of its mappings of contemporary capitalism, treated in Chapter 6 below.

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Although The Wire develops its own kind of political art and political thought-image, it has of course more or less explicit aesthetic influences in the history of political filmmaking. It is worth mentioning that The Wire, so to speak, skips over – of course it also has to, given its conditions of production – the discourses and practices of 1970s counter-cinema (“political modernism”) in order to connect rather with the “aesthetics of realism” found in Bazin, primarily in his writings on Italian Neorealism. The discourses of political modernism revolved around a critique of what was regarded as normative codes of representation and narration serving a dominant ideological “illusion of reality”: depth illusion, verisimilitude, narrative linearity and continuity. Although counter-cinema mainly reacted against Hollywood’s specific brand of realism, these traits overlap to a large extent with precisely what was cherished by Bazin for very different reasons – but for Bazin these traits are about the, comparably more, real real and not a dominant ideological illusion of it.294 Counter-cinema, in contrast, championed the negation and deconstruction of codes of realism – although some, such as Peter Wollen and Stephen Heath, stressed the importance of narrative and representation also for a counter-cinema.295 Subsequently, however, there has of course been a serious waning in the belief in counter-cinema as it was, generally, envisioned at that time.

Among the relevant aspects of Bazin’s theories regarding the influencing of The Wire’s aesthetics, we find his description of neorealist films as “first and foremost reconstituted reportage”. Their actions “could not unfold in just any social context, historically neutral”, they had instead “an exceptionally

294 Although this is not directly relevant for what The Wire picks up from Bazin, his theories of realism rest on his notion of an ontology of film that is worth a comment. Film, he argued, is more than the mere fooling of the eye of illusory mimesis such as the technique of perspective in painting. The photographic materiality of film directly inscribes a trace, or a “mold”, of reality. This trace or mold is ontologically linked to the real to the point that “[t]he photographic image is the object itself”. This is because they “share a common being, after the fashion of a fingerprint” – although with the object “freed from the conditions of time and space that govern it” in the sense of a mechanics of molding that nonetheless capture its duration as “change mummified”. Bazin, “The Ontology of the Photographic Image”, What Is Cinema?: Volume I, trans. Hugh Gray (Berkeley/Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2005), quotes from pp. 14-15.

documentary quality that could not be removed from the script without thereby eliminating the whole social setting into which its roots are so deeply sunk”. Along these lines, Bazin speaks of these fiction films as having an “adherence to actuality”, which “will always be specifically only slightly removed from the social document”. We should add that this documentary aspect – in some contrast to the social document – is not in opposition to aestheticization, since it is, writes Bazin, “demonstrated that every realism in art was first profoundly aesthetic” since the “flesh and blood of reality are no easier to capture in the net of literature or cinema than are gratuitous flights of the imagination” (25). More concretely, The Wire-producer Robert Colesberry’s ideas of avoiding relying on montage as well as “emphasizing clarity, spatial depth, and the relationship of characters to their environments” are directly influenced by Neorealism and Bazin’s notions of “an aesthetics of reality”. But despite these influences, Bazin’s ideas are only one piece of the puzzle. And there are aspects of Bazin’s thought that, it seems to me, fit poorly with The Wire’s own aesthetic of the large organic picture. Bazin favored certain styles and aesthetics that in various ways conserved spatio-temporal continuity and that brought out the inner temporality of things. It is along these lines that he championed long takes, staging in depth, deep focus, mobile camera, etc. But while The Wire utilizes such stylistic traits for its own ends, for Bazin they concern bringing out a phenomenological notion of temporality of things, which means images that were more true to a “real experience” of the world. While this included an experience of the world in its complexity and ambiguity, it means for Bazin that the images demand the spectator to freely search various parts of the image for its significance. This is a notion of images that he therefore pitted against montage, which he argued directed the spectators’ attention to selected bits of information, and therefore subtracted the ambiguity and complexity of the image. Bazin’s views are here famously in conflict with, for instance, the Soviet film theorists, who regarded the essence of cinema to lie in editing and montage. But his phenomenological, and perhaps slightly romantic, notion of a spectator that is freely navigating an open, time-lingering image in a personal experience is also in some contradistinction to a Deleuzian perspective as well as the untimely-image (see 1.2.1 above). But since substantial time-lingering, as we saw above, is very limited in the vast sociological mapping machine that is The Wire, Bazin’s notion of directly bringing out the phenomenological temporality of things is also the least used aspect of his theories in the aesthetic of the large organic picture.

But stylistically, The Wire’s camera compositions has for other reasons as their main preference to “stay wide” frequently in combination with the long shot. And The Wire certainly connects with Bazin’s analysis of Neorealism

in being “penetrating in its portraying of the social setting, so meticulous and perceptive in its choice of authentic and significant detail […]” (30). We can also mention, the specific dynamic of denouncing the star system through mixing amateurs with professional actors in non-expected roles (23) as well as what Bazin calls a “revolutionary humanism” (21).

But to what extent do these common traits fill the same function? In an article on *The Wire*, which we will return to below from a different perspective, Alberto Toscano and Jeff Kinkle discuss some of these commonalities, and at first I agree:

Its so-called ‘style-less’ style: lack of non-diegetic sound, unobtrusive camera, etc. Its utilisation of non-professionals for many roles and overall lack of recognizable actors, its use of conventional speech […]

But as they continue this sentence it starts to become more problematic, but in a way, I argue, that implicitly indicates some important further differences between *The Wire* and Italian Neorealism:

[…] the loose, episodic structure rather than a tight, neatly plotted narrative […] For American television, and detective series in particular, *The Wire* has an extraordinarily open narrative structure. Not only are many scenes superfluous to the main narrative, it is difficult to ascertain what the main narrative actually is. The various plot lines have only mild resolution and the fate of many characters is unascertainable.²⁹⁸

I do not agree with this claim that *The Wire* has an “extraordinarily open narrative structure”. It is not only exaggerated but it also misses how nearly every narrative thread, also those that may appear to be “superfluous”, are woven into a socio-logical tapestry and an overall set of political arguments that is in fact “extraordinarily neatly plotted” in its own way.²⁹⁹ It is not a tight causal classic dramatic structure, that I concede, but rather an uncompromisingly non-didactic narrative vastness. There is an “openness” to the narrative, but in the sense of how extensively inclusive it is of character and environment. Those aspects of *The Wire*, mentioned above, that suggest possible untimely-image tendencies (the quasi-metaphysical circles & the mappings of contemporary capitalism), concern narrative “openness” in the

sense suggested by Toscano and Kinkle even less than they concern phenomenological time lingering.

Bazin conceives of the documentary aspect in Italian Neorealism to finally lie in being nearer “to the sketch [...] than the painting” – although in a way that is precise and surgical and demanding a high degree of sensitivity and knowledge of the craft. It seems to me that The Wire is, reversely, much closer to the painting than the sketch. It achieves a documentary style through a more “sociological”, and not merely social, conduct. If we look instead at Deleuze’s conception of Italian Neorealism, which is both similar to and very different from Bazin’s, The Wire is in many ways not a Neorealist conception of a city, at least not in the sense of how the characters act. Baltimore is not a city that “has lost its reassuringly realist aspect, a city whose spaces have lost their recognizable function” (Marrati, 58), which would therefore have its characters become “seers” which in turn create the above-described pure optical and sound images. In many ways it is the opposite: characters are organically linked to a realist conception of spaces and environments to the extent that they become two facets of an organic Whole. Instead of “no longer recognizing” it, Baltimore, subdivided in its various sections, is what the characters know and recognize – and they know it intimately (underlined by how it is the only world some of them know). The Wire is not a cinema of the “seer”, but a cinema of agents. But their actions will not be able to produce any change in the whole. It is a whole that is governed by circular time. And the quasi-metaphysical circles at the heart of the relation between the fourth and the fifth seasons may constitute a kind of time-image, but a very different kind of time-image than what is found in Italian Neorealism.

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There have been other attempts to film the black American Ghetto with Neorealist inspirations. This is not the place to make a full comparison, but we should make a note here of the partly neorealist-inspired aesthetics of the 1970s Los Angeles School of Black Filmmakers (also called The LA Rebellion). With exceptions such as the DVD release of Charles Burnett’s Killer of Sheep (1977), the vast majority of their 70s and early 80s films are available for viewing basically only when there is a retrospective in a museum or a film theater somewhere in the US. The movement consisted of independent black filmmakers like Burnett, Haile Gerima, Jamaa Fanaka, and Billy Woodberry who had enrolled at the film school at UCLA in the early 70s. At UCLA they were given the material means of production needed and complete control, while it also supplied a critical and intellectual milieu centered around a film club organized by the “third cinema” scholar Teshome Gabriel. Deleuze briefly discusses these filmmakers and describes how they return to the ghetto in the sense that “the people are missing” (C2, 220f). This is a
cinema concerned, if compared to *The Wire*, with the small, private and subtle. Scenes such as the one with Bubbles in the basement are not exceptions but central. This is a cinema that is built around op-images and son-images. The point is not to simply pit this against *The Wire*, since the latter is a different kind of thought-image, a different kind of composition of aesthetic-political forces. But some interesting comparisons can still be made. *The Wire* is equally part of “modern” political cinema, in Deleuze’s sense, to the extent that it does not present us with a classical unity of a people that is represented, and there is an erasing of the difference between the private and the public when it comes to the political. But the people depicted are comparatively more determined by large molar sociological coordinates that in a particular way add up to a unified frame for the people depicted. And as we have seen, *The Wire* more or less lacks characters that are “seers” in the neorealist sense.

In the last segment of his extensive film essay *Los Angeles Plays Itself* (2003), Thom Andersen describes the Los Angeles School as the first Neorealist movement in Los Angeles. Echoing Deleuze, he speaks at one point over clips from Heile Gerima’s *Bush Mama* (1975): “Neorealism describes another reality. And it creates a new kind of protagonist. Dorothy, the ‘bush mama’ is a ‘seer’ not an ‘actor’. There is a crack in the world of appearances. And she is defenseless before her visions of everyday reality that is unbearable.” And later on: “Neorealism also posits another kind of time. Spatialized non-chronological time of meditation and memory. In *Bush Mama* everything is filtered through Dorothy’s consciousness. And the film follows it as it slides freely from perception to memory. Charles Burnett’s *Killer of Sheep* seems suspended outside of time.” But this is of course also a very political cinema. As Andersen later says: “White America had declared a crisis of the black family, as a cover for its campaign of incremental genocide against its expendable ex-slave population rendered superfluous by immigrant labor power. So black filmmakers responded by emphasizing families and children. [I]ndependent black filmmakers showed that the real crisis of the black family is simply the crisis of the working class family, white or black”. Although this last point risks obscuring the main concern in many of these films of the specificities of the history and present of racism (and its psychological effects), class is undoubtedly central. Andersen continues with describing a scene in Billy Woodberry’s *Blessed their Little Hearts* (1984) which “takes a drive through a reverse landmark: one of the closed industrial plants that had once provided jobs for the black working class of Los Angeles.”

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300 Neorealism was, however, only one inspiration for the often formally innovative Los Angeles School, which was at least in the beginning more directly inspired by the more radical third world films of the times (third cinema). Its most famous film *Killer of Sheep* (1977), however, is closer to neorealism than many of the other films. For more on these points and also for a fuller presentation and a rich analysis of the films of the Los Angeles School, see
Chapter 5: Blackness

After having analyzed *The Wire’s* argumentative and aesthetic configurations in chapter 4, we will now extract and directly deal with what I have announced several times above as its two most explicit political problems. Chapter 6 below will deal with the problem of aesthetically mapping contemporary capitalism. The present chapter deals with the problem of moving-image expressions of blackness. The first out of its three sub-chapter concerns what I call “blackness patterns” that I argue dominate contemporary American moving-image drama. The presentation of these patterns serves the point of articulating what exactly is to be “counter-actualized” – that is, what is at stake regarding the interrogation of *The Wire’s* expression of blackness from the perspective of the untimely-image. These patterns, and the possibility of their countering, will also be situated within a larger capitalist context of commodifications of difference and otherness. The second sub-chapter assesses *The Wire’s* expression of blackness from the double perspectives of the blackness patterns and the untimely-image. The third subchapter presents, and this is quite overdue, a specific case of an untimely-image: the character Valérie in Jean-Pierre Melville’s *Le Samuraï* (1967).

5.1. The Blackness Patterns

Before and after the final montage of *The Wire*, the character Jimmy McNulty stands out on a barren highway. Dana Polan describes this scene:

> [D]riving a mentally handicapped man back to the streets of […] Baltimore […] McNulty slows down the car for a reflective moment. After a lyric montage pops in to show the surviving characters […] going about their lives in the big city, McNulty says to his passenger, ‘Let’s go home.’


301 Dana Polan, “Invisible City”, op-cit.
Polan goes on to write that this “apparent sense of clarity at the end of *The Wire*”, which “might seem” as a “definite end-point to the journey […] is belied by the fact that neither the handicapped man nor McNulty really has a home to go to”. This reading by Polan regards the most literal level of the narrative. But “home” does not need to be abstracted very far from this literal reading to appear as the state of equilibrium described in 3.1. “Home” simply means the order that these characters know and belong to. McNulty, and even the homeless handicapped man he is driving, certainly has a home to go to in this sense. David Schwartz offers a slightly different reading of the end. He describes, as many others, *The Wire* to be “a big [chess] game controlled by the forces of capitalism” where “the pieces don’t control their own moves”. But he also seems to conclude that someone actually slips out at the end: “The greatest victory may very well be the one that McNulty achieves. By getting himself thrown off the police force, he is forced out of the game. He is finally able to get into the car, as his own man, and say – as a pawn who has escaped the chess board – ‘Let’s go home.’” 302 Of course, this argument does not hold up: McNulty does not have a home to go to that would somehow be outside the system described (he will only be unemployed in it instead of working). But let us pause the debunking of the argument, and lend some hypothetical truth to him “getting out”, since it has some interesting resonances. What is interesting about this supposed escape is that McNulty belongs to the minority of characters that are white. 303 If he indeed “escapes” (whatever that means) on some level (to a certain extent it is enough, in this temporarily upheld hypothesis, that he is understood to escape by this commentator), the racial factor strikes me as important. Why? His whiteness is perhaps the only quality left in him as that which escapes: the fact that the narrative holds up, or plays with McNulty as a sort of leading man (especially in Seasons 1, 3 and 5) can be deceiving. To some extent, it is not a hero, anti-hero or protagonist that slips out at the end. “Although it might seem in certain episodes that McNulty is being groomed for the role of protagonist”, Dana Polan writes, “he is a strikingly failed and empty figure within the narrative, less hero than zero”. Put differently, it is not as a narrative cog that McNulty, hypothetically, “slips out”. On the one hand, what therefore slips out is a sort of nothingness, positively unimportant for the maintenance of the equilibrium of *The Wire*’s universe. But on the other hand, being a serial where the majority of the characters are black, if

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303 While certainly working-class, the fact that McNulty is Irish-American does not complicate his whiteness. While the Irish in Europe used to have a very different “racial” status (non-white, despised), and while in America the Irish and the African Americans in the beginning “developed a common culture of the lowly”, Irish-Americans are today nothing but a subsection of whiteness. Noel Ignatiev, *How the Irish Became White* (New York/London: Routledge, 1995).
there is a sort of white “nothingness” that indeed slips out to some extent (even if that is not really the case, but only perceived by someone as such) it holds a very important something. The twist here is that whiteness leaking out of this order is part of the maintenance of the racial equilibrium at hand, where the sociological territory explored and expressed by The Wire is really – therefore not merely in “reality” but within The Wire’s own aesthetic-political imagination – a territory of blackness.

As we discussed at length in Part I, the first order of business for (political) art in Deleuze’s conception is to challenge and extract something from the clichés that are always already there before a work is started. If we take the clichés around blackness, what is more clichéd than blackness equated with the timeless? Actually, there is a more modern contender. There is a vast tendency of contemporary expression of blackness, which is a much less crude, but by now nonetheless more clichéd, blackness than the timeless per se: the one tied to the sociological and the institutional (the law, the hospital, the prison, the sport organization, the military, the gang, various administrative and governmental structures, etc.). This is the basic terrain of what I call the blackness patterns.

Developed over the course of the last two decades, I argue that there has been a gradual but substantial shift in the dominant expressions of blackness in well-distributed American serial drama. There is a new dominant state of affairs, which is not merely the result of quantitative changes, that is, the visible inclusion of more black characters. There is also a qualitative change. The old paradigm of analysis – known by heart even by non-academics – where blackness was generally found to function as the “other” or as denied subjectivity and rationality – while perhaps still hegemonic in comedy (or drama-comedy) – has approached the obsolete in American serial drama. Blackness in American serial drama, and to a large extent in American moving-image drama in general, now tends to function more as a stable, superficially rational subject. This is not about a new set of self-identical “stereotypes”. It concerns rather an abstract logic that serves as an organizing rationale for how the blackness is dominantly made visible and audible in “serious” parts of well-spread drama. In the following I will present a concise schema of these patterns.

But first: the term “hegemonic” is mentioned in the above paragraph, and together with the more frequently used term “dominant” and the notion of an “abstract logic that serves as an organizing rationale”, is there a connection to “ideology” or “discourse” in the sense of all this implying a binary structure, that is, ideology or discourse in the sense that they are understood to work through binary parameters (which is often the understanding not least within media studies)? To the extent that the concept of ideology is neces-

sarily tied to a binary logic, it is relevant to note Deleuze and Guattari’s markdown of this concept together with its adjacent concept of “interests”. According to the two thinkers, these concepts, while pointing to something undeniably operative in society, are unable to penetrate into more de facto determining social structures: those more supple and affective structures of power that shape people’s interests. Interests always come “after”, and the main question is not only how people can come to desire against their interests, but how they can even come to desire their own repression. Desire – and Deleuze and Guattari’s highly complex notions of desire, and the ontological conception of desiring production, is here only hinted at – is therefore a more fundamental and decisive political factor than interest or ideology: it is that which predetermines and articulates the distribution of interests. It is only on the representational level of given groups and their interests that there are phenomena like binary structures. The point here is not to go into the difficult terrain of desire. What I want to suggest is rather that the cultural imagination, although it – always and forever? – certainly continues to contain binary structures (the nauseatingly familiar “we and them”), this is also a level that hides more subtle, fluid and complex structures – and increasingly so as dominant power has shifted its logic. In a period before the full emergence of the blackness patterns, Toni Morrison, for instance, investigates how whiteness has been constructed in relation to an absent-present blackness that is that which whiteness is not (in a dialectical, and not necessarily statically binary, sense, though). It is important that we put aside the analytical framework of the “binary” before we approach the blackness patterns. The blackness patterns do not concern the ideological/discursive “other”, and they cannot even be perceived if looking for a binary relation to whiteness.

What do the patterns consist of then? In a text commenting on the televisial representation in general at the time of The Wire’s appearance, Lisa W. Kelly writes: “[C]ompared to other ethnic minority groups, blacks are over-represented on television, as are whites […] Moreover by the 2002 fall season (the year in which The Wire premiered on HBO), black actors tended not to be stereotyped in lower-status or criminal roles, appearing instead, alongside white actors, in high-status occupations such as doctors, lawyers, and

305 See AO, 378, 380, 260, 71, 31; Deleuze, “On Anti-Oedipus”, Negotiations, 19; Deleuze, “On Capitalism and Desire” [1973], Desert Islands and Other Texts: 1953-1974 (New York: Semiotext(e), 2004), 262-264, 278f. The Spinozian question of how people can come to desire their own repression is a fundamental political question in Anti-Oedipus, see, for instance, 283, 267, 281, 279. See also ATP, 456-457.

306 This does not mean that ideology is without any importance. As Deleuze writes about Foucault: “Foucault does not in any way ignore repression and ideology; but as Nietzsche had already seen, they do not constitute the struggle between forces but are only the dust thrown up by such a contest”, Foucault, 29.

police officers. This is certainly true. But is there not something else going on here? Is there not a common denominator between the criminals, police officers, lawyers, and doctors? Toni Morrison argued that blackness in American cultural representations has been present in its absence (ibid.). This is both antiquated and continuously relevant: today, blacks are over-represented – but only in certain milieus. There is a common denominator, not only for criminals, police officers, lawyers, and doctors, but also for judges, prison inmates, school pupils, well-fare mother, and community organizers: the sociological. This is not a point about stereotypes but a more abstract form of cliché that I claim serves as the dominant organizing principle for the expression of blackness in (serial) American moving-image drama. In a dominant realm of the contemporary cultural imagination, blackness – beyond the most dim-witted racist essentialist views – expresses sociological problems. Black characters are “over-represented” if the narrative is predominantly played out in milieus of social institutions: the law (on either side of it), the hospital, the prison, the sport organization, the military, the gang, the school, various administrative and governmental structures, the church, the court (what is more clichéd than the proverbial black judge reduced to a purely sociological function?), etc. The blackness patterns are specific articulations of blackness as reduced to the sociological (in the “major” sense of the sociological – see 3.2). This is not about silenced, repressed or absent voices, or about groups that cannot in any meaningful way be seen or heard within the dominant forms of representations/distributions of the sensible (the concern of a Spivak or a Rancière). Instead, the patterns express numerous black voices that come at you loud and clear. They also cut across class and gender. Since the blackness patterns do not consist of the dumbest old racist stereotypes, they are not obvious to everyone. Someone like Fredric Jameson can therefore write about the predominantly black cast of The Wire in terms of their being

308 Lisa W. Kelly, “Casting The Wire: Complicating Notions of Performance, Authenticity, and ‘Otherness’”, Dark Matter, (“The Wire Files”, 4, 2009), p. 47. The claim of “over-representation” in this quote is not based on a subjective assessment made by the author, but on an empirical study on minority representation in network television entertainment programming conducted by Darnell Hunt and released in 2003, which found that whites accounted “for about 74 percent of all characters, compared to only about 69 percent of the U.S. population”; and blacks “accounted for about 16 percent of all characters compared to about 12 percent of the population”; www.c3.ucla.edu/newsstand/art/prime-time-television-black-and-white-world/

so many different types of black people (social, professional, even physical) as to utterly dissolve the category. Here there is no longer any such thing as “black” people […] and by the same token no such thing as black political or social solidarity. These former “black people” are now in the police; they can be criminals or prison inmates, educators, mayors and politicians; *The Wire* is in that sense what is now called *post-racial.*

Jameson simply fails to see the larger racialized patterns. Established during the 90s and continuing in subsequent decades, I argue, the blackness patterns are now ubiquitous – and therefore, it seems, invisible – in American moving-image drama, almost to the point of being an unwritten rule.

**Elaboration: Keith & *Six Feet Under***

The patterns can actually be contrasted, *although not in binary terms,* with whiteness as an opening up *also* to existential or “virtual” problems. When included in such milieus, which is rarely done, blacks tend to serve as sociological anchors. A case in point – although this in parts also border on stereotype – is the black character Keith in the HBO serial *Six Feet Under.* *Six Feet Under* is a milieu characterized by emotional realism mixed with “dreams, fantasies, time dislocations” often in a “luminal territory between or among [a plurality of worlds] where transformation, metamorphosis, dissolution are common”.

The (white) character David’s strained relationship with his own homosexuality is one aspect that allows the series to dwell on him, like the other members of his family, as a complex existential or even virtual problem. This can be contrasted with David’s lover Keith who is an openly gay black policeman (and subsequently security guard) for whom being gay is not a problem but something to be straightforwardly proud about. Some caveats: Keith’s homosexuality as well as his relative simplicity in many ways exceeds the blackness patterns in the direction of stereotype – he seems to be the product of some gay white fantasy image of blackness. But he is also an example of a set of blackness patterns – a self-assured fairly reasonable subject working as a policeman/security guard – which functions as sociological anchor within a contrasting milieu.

Keith, then, is a kind of mix of (well-intended) stereotype and the blackness patterns. What is instructive about Keith is not the stereotypical part, but the aspect of him that exemplifies the blackness patterns and how they contrast with the overall milieu. Without really reflecting on its racial implications, Dana Heller notes that “Keith is enlisted in the service of providing David’s mor-

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312 This non-problematic existential nature of Keith’s homosexuality can be contrasted with what is portrayed in Marlon Riggs’ *Tongues United* (1989), which deals with various existential problems of gay black men.
al/historical conscience, as David battles against his internalised homophobia and his closeted existence [...] As an African-American gay man, and, moreover, as a man whose work as a police officer/security guard carries associations with masculine authority, Keith carries the cultural and social capital necessary to lift David [...] Brian Singleton notes that “David reads Keith as the only person in his life with moral authority. [Keith] attends church regularly and becomes angry at injustice”. Much here, as implied, is border-stereotype. But the blackness patterns are clearly at play here.

The blackness patterns are the expression of blackness as weaved in with sociological milieus according to a certain logic. Characters and the milieus are traversed by a kind of sociological subjectivity. This subjectivity can partly be understood as remnants of pre-postmodern eras of capitalist society. There is some correspondence here with the kind of social space that Foucault called disciplinarian. Foucault described similar social institutions (prisons, schools, army barracks, churches, hospitals, etc.) as points in larger networks of dispersed power held together by a logic of discipline. A disciplinary society produces a certain kind of subjectivity. But as we have already established, the dominant configuration of society is no longer “modern” discipline. The blackness patterns – although they can sometimes be played out in institutional milieus that are crumbling and “postmodern” as in The Wire in which the rest of logic of the blackness patterns remains strangely intact – do not reflect this shift.

The blackness patterns are irreducible to the professions or environments themselves. The professions and environments are parts in a more abstract structure. And this structure – spanning the abstract principle(s) of the moving-image work, its dramatic configuration, its character traits, its environments, and its audiovisual organization – produces and upholds a certain cultural subjectivity that is (superficially) rational and reductively sociological. This subjectivity lacks existential undecidability, which is to say, in this case, that it lacks existential and virtual potency. Along these lines, the blackness patterns are a curbing of any contours of the new.

One might object that the blackness patterns are merely a reflection of existing social structures: African Americans are somehow predominantly

314 Brian Singleton “Queering the Church: Sexual and Spiritual Neo-Orthodoxies in Six Feet Under”, Reading Six Feet Under, p. 72.
316 To say that it is “a certain correspondence” is not to say that the blackness patterns somehow equal Foucault’s disciplinary society. These are two different kinds of concepts. The blackness patterns are far more specialized. Foucault’s discussions of these things are complex and turns on many factors – such as the structural nature of power in “modern” societies – that the blackness patterns do not directly concern.
found in these milieus in real life and have developed a certain real-life subjectivity for that reason, or more plausibly, for reasons of the strictures of a certain self-restricting notion of a black “community” and ideas of what it mean to be black. One can then object to this objection with reference to the millions that – at least before the financial crisis of 2008 – constituted the African American middle class. One can then extend the line of objections and argue that the exceeding of the blackness patterns in African American subjectivities is irreducible to milieus or class, and also point to the many present discourses of “post-blackness”. However, my concern here is not accurate social representation of actual black subjectivities of whatever kind. I am concerned with these parameters except only to the extent that they help to analyze the blackness patterns, which any untimely-image of blackness must counter-actualize.

But where do these patterns come from then? Why are they structured like this? And if we take one step further we can ask: how can they remain in postmodern society? The origins of the blackness patterns are a huge question that I can here only briefly sketch the beginning of an answer to. It seems that one important historical explanation can be found in a certain image that remains from the civil rights era. The civil rights brought along a strong and righteous representational voice for blackness that was utilized as a necessary strategic devise to be able to at all take place in civil society on “equal terms”, battling a long history of hard-to-imagine brutalization and institutionalized notions of inferiority. Civil rights meant creating a strategically “strong” black subjectivity on the grounds of civil society. But civil society (along with those older institutions of discipline) is crumbling in postmodernity. Hardt and Negri: “The withering of civil society might also be recognized as concomitant with the passage from disciplinary society to the society of control […] Today the social institutions that constitute disciplinary society (the school, the family, the hospital, the factory), which are in large part the same as or closely related to those understood as civil society, are everywhere in crisis. As the walls for these institutions break down, the logics of subjectification that previously operated within their limited spaces now spread out, generalized across the social field. The breakdown of the

317 Before these more recent discourses, many black theorists have for a long time been pointing out the problem of a narrow group-think within African American blackness. bell hooks: “We have too long had imposed upon us, both from the outside and the inside, a narrow constraining notion of blackness”, “Postmodern Blackness”, Postmodern Culture (1:1, September, 1990). While simultaneously providing a subtle run-through of the history of racism against African Americans and its remnants in the present, Debra J. Dickerson writes about a reactive “one-size-fits-all blackness” and a “strangling groupthink” that has survived in postmovement black America (although challenged by a new generation of blacks and steadily “collapsing under the weight of its own contradictions”), The End of Blackness: Returning the Souls of Black Folk to Their Rightful Owners (New York: Anchor Books, 2004). See also Touré, Who’s Afraid of Post-Blackness: What It Means to Be Black Now (New York: Free Press, 2011).
institutions, the withering of civil society, and the decline of disciplinary society all involve a smoothing out of the striation of modern social space."

From an 1990 article by bell hooks, we can infer the obvious fact that American blacks were at that time part of postmodernity, to the point that an “overall impact of the postmodern condition”, reversely, “is that many other groups now share with black folks a sense of deep alienation, despair, uncertainty, loss of a sense of grounding, even if it is not informed by shared circumstance” (1990). But at the time the relation between blacks and postmodernity was quite complicated. hooks is worth quoting at length on this point:

Despite the fact that black power ideology reflected a modernist sensibility, these elements were soon rendered irrelevant as militant protest was stifled by a powerful repressive postmodern state. The period directly after the black power movement was a time when major news magazines carried articles with cocky headlines like ‘what ever happened to Black America?’ This was an ironic reply to the aggressive unmet demand by decentered, marginalized black subjects who had at least for the moment successfully demanded a hearing, who had made it possible for black liberation to be a national political agenda. In the wake of the black power movement, after so many rebels were slaughtered and lost, many of these voices were silenced by a repressive state and others became inarticulate; it has become necessary to find new avenues for transmitting the messages of black liberation struggle, new ways to talk about racism and other politics of domination.

But it was a while after this period that the blackness patterns solidified in American serial drama. And these patterns cannot be properly understood from this postmodern sense of defeat in the post-Reagan years that hooks describes (and which is also after the plummeting of the need for black labor in the preceding decades, and the start of the so-called “war on drugs” that has convincingly been revealed as an updated continuation with other means of the repressive Jim Crow laws, which also upholds a vastly expanded prison-industrial complex319). Rather, they seem to emanate from another register, which does not necessarily so much concern the actual state of black people. It seems plausible to argue that at least one of their key origins is the cultural and political tradition of liberal inclusion (in some connection with

318 Hardt and Negri, Empire, 329. For more on the differences but also continuities (discipline continues through a different logic) between the two forms see 328-331. For more on the passage towards a society of control, see 183-204, and 255-256. For more on how the new form of power works, see 341-348. On how this new logic connects with how capitalist power has turned into a “plane of immanence” and its globalized markets turned into a “smooth space for uncoded and deterritorialized flows”, see 325-327, 332-333.

its perception of the legacy of the civil rights movement).\textsuperscript{320} If this is one of the origins, the blackness patterns can be seen as a more sophisticated development of a kind of liberal compromise in a post-civil-rights America. But regarding the basic idea of a reduction to the sociological, there is finally also a more direct historical thread. In a 1961 interview with African American scholar and novelist Ralph Ellison, he says: “[The Negro experience is a] relatively unexplored area of American experience simply because our knowledge of it has been distorted through the overemphasis of the sociological approach. Unfortunately many Negroes have been trying to define their own predicament in exclusively sociological terms, a situation I consider quite short-sighted.”\textsuperscript{321}

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The underlying question here, of course, is in what sense an untimely-image could challenge the blackness patterns. It is important that the patterns are directly dragged along instead of merely subjected to a deconstruction or have added to them a counter-meaning. So how should the blackness patterns be counter-actualized? This cannot be answered with a given. That would be to counter one image with another in the representational sense. That is, to suggest that blackness should not be represented as x but rather as y.

**Elaboration: Rancière & Dis-Identification as Condition in Political Art**

There are many levels to conceiving of conditions for what allow the challenge of something like the blackness patterns. Some are socio-historical, having to do with a continuation of emancipatory processes – in this particular case ranging from early African American emancipatory writers from the 19\textsuperscript{th} century onwards to anti-colonial struggles in the 20\textsuperscript{th} century to the civil rights movements. Another is found in the deterritorializing movements of advanced capitalism that tend to decode social stratifications (although it also recodes with the other hand). Rancière adds a slightly different set of factors. According to Rancière, everything in the socio-political and everything in art is determined by a more fundamental aesthetic configuration that provides a general condition of possibility for what can be experienced. Since the last 200 years or so, he argues, the West lives under an “aesthetic regime”. In contrast to the earlier


representational era, this regime allows identities to be comparably more unhinged from the most striated and uniform. It provides a new “aesthetic experience” that provides possibilities for “dis-identification” of, for instance, the worker’s previous assignment to the role of a worker in the most strict sense of a given function and direction. Dis-identification, however, is possibility within a larger dominant distribution of the sensible that Rancière calls the police. The police are a kind of management of populations through an order of what can be seen, said, and heard, in which every social group is assigned its proper identity and place and everything that exceeds the ordering is made invisible and inaudible.

The blackness patterns, however, are not about the distribution of stereotypically self-same identities – its characters can be quite multifaceted (in contrast to the racist stupidity with which much popular culture, especially comedy, is otherwise still invested). The blackness patterns are rather a disciplining distribution of identities through a slightly more supple and abstract logic. Since the blackness patterns are not about some static essentialism, “dis-identification” at first appears as a strategy with arguable relevance. But the basic idea of it can still be useful in pointing to the condition for, or most basic level of, a solution to the problem of the blackness patterns. Since they indeed assign place in the sense of institutions and implying a certain form of subjectivity, they are clearly in need of a dis-identification that, as Rancière writes, “disrupts the way in which bodies fit their functions and destinations” in favor of a “multiplication of connections and disconnections that reframe the relation between bodies […] that change the cartography of the perceptible, the thinkable and the feasible” (2009a, 72). But we have to be somewhat creative with, and further cherry picking from, Rancière’s discussion. This is because it primarily concerns, at least in this book, three nodes that the untimely-image is only secondarily concerned with: firstly, a fundamental focus on the relation between art-work and spectator; secondly, a focus on the sensible configuration of the whole of society as an “aesthetic regime” in which art is only one aesthetic actor of many; and thirdly, a concern with the production of new aesthetic configurations in the sense of un-pre-calculable but still “majestic” forms of “community” and “belonging” that spells “radical equality”. Rancière also puts dis-identification against various notions of art as a moral or political lesson in the sense of the work as given meaning-message that is decoded and received by the spectator in a given way in a relation of cause-effect (this is discussed also in 1.2.1 above). So for Rancière, dis-identification as it applies to art occurs primarily (although not exclusively) between the work and the unforeseeable political effects it can have on audiences with the ultimate goal of what I in this study have referred to as the “majestically new” (a kind of community of radical equality). But this is all under the more general condition of living in an aesthetic regime that in a certain sense – in spite of dominating powers that tend to work in the opposite direction – systematically allows dis-identification much more so than it did 200 years ago. On the one hand,
Rancière’s notion of dis-identification does not give any specific privilege to art per se – although he discusses art quite extensively – so much as the new conditions themselves, that is the larger socio-sensorial configuration or “aesthetic regime”, in which, as he writes, “[s]uch breaks can happen anywhere and at any time” (2009a: 75). On the other hand, he writes: “Film, video art, photography, installation and all forms of art can rework the frame of our perceptions and the dynamism of our affects. As such, they can open up new passages towards new forms of political subjectivation” (82). But as valid as it is, this last point is somewhat general. It does not give us very much to further specify a concept like the untimely-image, even if cut out from Rancière’s “majestic” concerns with a community and radical equality. But its basic point on political art as concerning dis-identification is easy to agree with – it is, quite simply, a given aspect of the untimely-image as concerned with counter-actualization, more than something that can allow us to further specify it.

The Blackness Patterns in Light of the Commodification of Difference and Otherness in Advanced Capitalism

No larger socio-historical condition is more important than global capitalism when it comes to understanding the blackness patterns and how to conceive of their counter-actualization. As a result of larger forces, the both loose and regulated blackness patterns correspond with a general double movement in capitalism: deterritorialization and reterritorialization. Blacks as “overrepresented” and strictly patterned in this new way is a de- and reterritorialization simultaneously. As is well known, postmodernity or advanced capitalism comes with changes in the logic of culture and society. Chapter 6 below entails a detailed treatment of this general problematic as conceptualized by Fredric Jameson. At this point we will with Rosi Braidotti look into how these changes within the logic of capitalism has affected areas such as sexuality, gender, and race (the point here is not to include sexuality and gender into the mix for the sake of “intersectionality”, the point is that in Braidotti’s discussion they share a similar fate which means that for our concerns they can to some extent stand in for each other). Advanced capitalism comes with an “electronic and digital machinery”, Braidotti reminds us, that “are figures of complexity, mixture, hybridity and interconnectivity” (2006: 49). When it comes to sexuality and gender they mark a space of “indeterminacy, undecidability or transsexuality” and a “blurring of boundaries of sexual difference” – and this is what she refers to with her above quoted notion queering identities as a dominant ideology today. These are deterritorializations. But as such they are only one side of a double movement in advanced capitalism of deterritorialization and reterritorialization. In Braidotti’s words, an area such as this is in “contemporary political culture” subjected to a “schizoid
double-pull of simultaneous displacement and refixing of binary gender oppositions” (49).

As explained above, we are presently not concerned with the “binary” side of things. But it is clear that the “queerness” that Braidotti describes as dominant is wrapped up in balancing movements of reterritorialization. Its “logic of multiplying differences”, Braidotti writes,

triggers consumerist or vampiric consumption of ‘others’, meaning new forms of micro-, infra- and counter subjectivities. The unity of the subject of humanism is exploded into a web of diverse discourses and practices. The phenomenon, however, seems to leave miraculously unscathed the centuries-old forms of sexism, racism and anthropocentric arrogance that have marked our culture. 322

Allowed by many levels of deterritorialization on a global level, there arises in the contemporary world many “spaces of fluctuation” that are “racialized and sexualized to a very high degree” and “exploited accordingly” (52). Advanced global capitalism has discovered the marketability of difference and diversity and has become “a machine that spins off and multiplies differences for the sake of their commodification and profit” (91, 52, 54f). 323 But in certain contrast with her own statement on old forms of racism as left “miraculously unscathed”, it is important that she also recognizes that in postmodernity “the classical [binary] others are no longer the necessary point of reference for the organization of a symbolic division of labor between the sexes, the races […]” (269) However, as she goes on, “[t]his is not to say that the function which difference was called to perform is over”. It is a “collapse of the former system of marking difference” (269) in which “the classical figures of otherness […] have undergone major transpositions” (263f). I will retain quotation marks around the term “difference” in the con-

322 Braidotti, 44. The term “unscathed” seems, however, somewhat excessive. It needs some nuancing: addressing new “subjectivities in the contemporary era”, Deborah A. Thomas and Kamari Maxine Clarke, from a different theoretical perspective, notes how “older parameters through which difference has been measured have sometimes become reactivated and reenergized, ultimately resulting in a resurgence of racial and ethnic hierarchies”. But they also write that these “hierarchies change over time” even if they are “always influenced by the legacies of earlier periods”. They also write that “intensified globalization has both reproduced [older] racialized structures […] and provided new technologies through which these structures are potentially transcended and/or subverted”, “Introduction: Globalization and the Transformation of Race”, Globalization and Race: Transformations in the Cultural Production of Blackness, eds. Kamari Maxine Clarke & Deborah A. Thomas (Durham/London, Duke University Press, 2006), pp. 8, 9.

323 Maurizio Lazzarato writes about “the enormous difficulties which societies are confronted with when power is configured as the administration of differences”, and argues that the “question remains of how one can elude this differential governmentality and how one can reconstruct these singular and heterogeneous conflicts differently”. “The Aesthetic Paradigm”, Deleuze, Guattari and the Production of the New, eds. Simon O’Sullivan & Stephen Zepke (London/New York, Continuum, 2008), p. 179. Translation modified.
temporary proliferation of such images (since the term there has a reductive meaning). Still it is clear that advanced capitalism no longer merely functions along with the well-known parameters of the creation of “Other”. This is an important point for the understanding of the non-binary logic of the blackness patterns. But how, given, the larger state of postmodernity, can they be challenged?

To merely bring out some groups of people that are in the margins clearly will not do. It is important to point out that the very concept of “difference” can mean many different things, and that we must distinguish between them. One sense of the term is applicable for the “production of profit-oriented ‘differences’” (153). It tends to revolve around what is popularly known as “diversity”, and in its most reified form, to quote Ella Shohat and Robert Stam, “it easily degenerates into the diversity of college catalogues or the state- or corporate-managed United-Colors-of-Benetton pluralism whereby established power promotes ethnic ‘flavors of the month’ for commercial or ideological purposes”.324 This is a concept of difference based on identity in its most reified form. But difference based on identity is often more complex – from the mere pointing out that each group or individual is internally diverse to more sophisticated dialectical processes. But the untimely-image is primarily concerned with something else: sub-representational difference – that is, difference in the sense of a logic of multiplicity (see 2.9 above). Going back to Braidotti’s discussion we can see how she pits against commercial diversity another order of differences that “pertains to an altogether different logic” – “qualitative multiplicities […] that express changes not of scale, but of intensity, force, or potentia […] which trace patterns of becoming” (94). Such expressions follow “the same patterns of minority formations [as the commodifying logic described above], but disrupts them and qualitatively shifts their aims and goals” (134). They entail a “qualitative shift of coordinates” that “plunges us into the impossible, the unheard-of” (260). Imperative for such events not to be subsequently commodified is that their movement does not stop, which means that they cannot “stop at the mere assertion of counter-identities” (134).

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Much in the discourses and practices of “counter-cinema” in the 60s and 70s is therefore of little direct help. David Rodowick describes how the most important final general objective of counter-cinema, which he calls “political modernism”, were the imagining of “new forms of subjectivity, of desire, and looking, that are otherwise suppressed or occluded in the current socie-

ty”. Rodowick sees (in 1994) the discourses of political modernism extended into contemporary developments in film theory and culture studies “concerned with addressing the aspirations of subjects and kinds of identification – postcolonial, queer, racial and/or ethnic – that are marginalized”, and where “one of the strongest connections between the discourses of political modernism and cultural studies”, then, “is the desire to give representation to marginalized groups or collectives and to understand how they identify themselves in relation to the image” (1994: xx, xxv). On the level of practices, 60s and 70s counter-cinema has in this sense inspired a certain “alternative cinema” dealing with the question of how to “give representation to these identities and subjectivities”.

The untimely-image has a different point of view altogether. It is not concerned with providing representation to what is in the margins. In his later book on Deleuze’s cinema books published in 1997, Roderick interestingly makes these two comments in the preface: “While Deleuze describes a theory of cinematic modernism, he is without question hostile to what I have called elsewhere ‘the discourse of political modernism’. He also says: “Deleuze’s philosophy of difference may provide one of the most interesting and progressive challenges to the kind of identity politics that has dominated contemporary cultural studies (Rodowick, 1997: xi, xiv). But this is a bit imprecise since “identity politics” in the crude sense is hardly championed by anyone. At least, the kind of sub-representational difference of interest for the untimely-image is more interestingly juxtaposed with strategies like counter-cinematic negation aiming to deconstruct processes of signification in “dominant representations of reality” in favor of either an invisible margin or even some notion of complete “non-representation”.

Still, an untimely-image could certainly concern what is in the margin. It depends on how more than what. And it could certainly find reusable potentials in the strategies of counter-cinema – even when it comes to problems of “identities”. However, the well-perpetuated belief that the conception of “identity” in counter-cinemas or especially culture-studies is to be equated with the crudest form of “identity politics” in the sense of self-same identities comparable to shallow liberal diversity is basically a straw man. Most of those that are theoretically concerned with the “margins” and with “identity” within culture studies or various “race studies” already dealt theoretically with the pitfalls of unreflected notions of identity a long time ago. Stuart Hall writes about their early 60s-70s concerns with identity politics as “an enormous act of what I want to call imaginary political re-identification, re-territorialization and re-identification, without which a counter-politics could

not have been constructed” at the time. But even at that time, the “identity” in this identity politics (a “strategic essentialism”) was irreducible to how “identity politics” is pejoratively conceived by some even today: that is, as something that can be easily fitted into the dreaded “liberal multiculturalism” with its exoticism of others as flavoring essences. Even these early ideas of identity politics in 60s and 70s (inspired by earlier anti-colonial struggles), were directed precisely against exotic multiculturalism. As Stuart Hall writes: “Antiracism in the seventies was only fought […] behind the slogan of a Black politics and the Black experience. In that moment, the enemy was ethnicity. The enemy had to be what we called ‘multi-culturalism’. Because multi-culturalism was precisely what I called previously ‘the exotic’.” (Hall, 1996: 55f).

The “enemy” at stake for us in this chapter, however, is not exoticism. It is the blackness patterns. The next subchapter looks at how *The Wire* fares on this account from the perspective of the untimely-image.

5.2. Blackness & *The Wire*

*The Wire* is an explicit sociological analysis with a largely black cast. It is hardly about blackness explicitly, but this clearly sticks out: as an internationally wide-spread, “serious” drama it is highly unusual to the point of being an exception to have a largely black cast. *The Wire’s* subsequent and still growing success with audiences does not reflect its ratings from back when it was a television series (that is, a “preview” for its main life as DVD and file sharing). Simon explains the lack of ratings with how “sixty-five percent of our cast was black” in combination with how this “wasn’t *The Cosby Show* […] You can laugh at black people but there’s never been a sustained drama [that has gained mainstream success]”. All this certainly adds to what is politically – and aesthetically – interesting about this overtly and aggressively political serial. What kind of blackness does it express? How does it relate to the blackness patterns? And how can this expression be evaluated from the perspective of the untimely-image?

*The Wire* is a comment on class, classism, institutions, and a certain cluster of effects of neoliberal capitalism in inner-city America. It is more of an indirect comment on race. As Simon himself says, it is “more interested in

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class than race”. Or rather, race is always present but tends to be subsumed in larger social structures and problems. But it is important that we acknowledge the complexity of *The Wire* as an expression of blackness. It may be an indirect comment on race and blackness, but as such it is nuanced and aware, at least if compared to the history of socially conscious television crime dramas with aims of being racially “progressive” in some sense. Jane Gibb and Roger Sabin do such a historical comparison. In for instance *Hill Street Blues* (1981-1987), they argue, “race was always intended to be at its centre, and the intertwined storylines and psychological complexity were groundbreaking” (Gibb & Sabin, 10), but nonetheless part of, along with programs like *NYPD Blue* (1993-2005) after it, “a tradition centring on white attitudes to racism, with ‘blackness’ as the other against which a flawed white liberalism is defined” (Gibb & Sabin, 12). In contrast, *Homicide: Life on the Streets* (1993-1999), actually based on a book by David Simon and with him scripting some of the episodes, was “arguably the show that finally made the breakthrough into a ‘de-centred’ view of race within the crime genre” providing “a platform for more complex discussions of race identity”. *Homicide* is followed – with the miniseries *The Corner* (2000) in-between – by Simon’s own much more politically ambitious and concentrated project with *The Wire* (2002-2008). Gibb and Sabin go on to describe *The Wire* as although retaining

an implied and sometimes muted dialogic relationship with other police dramas (particularly those we have focussed on) it can do things that these programmes were never able to achieve, such as breaking with the idea of episodic action and semi-serial formats. By fully embracing long-form serialization *The Wire* can adopt a novelistic approach to storytelling which favours a more subtle development of characters over time (Gibb & Sabin, 14).

*The Wire* in this manner, argues Gibb & Sabin, positions “African-American characters at the centre” in a way that places white audiences “in the position of eavesdroppers, their consciousness not central but marginal” (16). But shifting around of margin and center does not, of course, challenge the blackness patterns.

The quantity of black characters of a certain variety makes the not overly revolutionary point that black people are quite different from each other as

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well as each having various and varied identities under the surface. *The Wire’s* relatively broad and complex representational “realism” perhaps challenges the most antiquated notions of essentialized blackness in these senses. To the extent that breaking with such views can still be regarded as a necessary virtue, however, it is not of particular importance in view of what has been discussed in the preceding sections of this chapter. But these claims of *The Wire* as presenting a supposedly progressive variety of black characters can certainly be challenged. *The Wire* may have relatively round and complex characters, but as such they can on the one hand be argued to mostly adhere to well-intended light forms of ethnic stereotypes. Ash Sharma reasons that the unusual, numerically significant presence of African-American characters through the series, across institutional and class lines, arguably makes blackness the norm. 

If in the analysis of race we examine the representations of the black characters in the series we get very quickly get [sic] caught in an undecidable bind: arguably the series shows a diverse and complex range of African-American characters, yet the depictions are reducible racial stereotypes (positive or negative) (2009: 5).

But this is a somewhat categorical evaluation. In any respect, what are of interest with *The Wire’s* expression of blackness for our concerns are hardly its light stereotypes. Sociologists Wilson & Chaddha, on their part, defend *The Wire* from accusations of stereotypical portrayals of blackness and claims that the serial in fact undermines stereotypes. What is interesting is not so much this claim, as the fact that they postulate sociological illumination as the solution to stereotypes. Their lines of reasoning are worth quoting at length:

Some writers have maintained that the show promotes biased views of poor African Americans as dependent on welfare, lazy, criminal and immoral. A degree of caution about the broader implications of how the black poor is represented is certainly well founded. These negative perceptions have dominated popular discourse on urban inequality, and they too often influence decisions about who is deemed worthy of assistance through social policy. A careful assessment, however, reveals that *The Wire* actually powerfully undermines these dangerous stereotypes. By examining the institutions that shape their lives, it convincingly demonstrates that the outcomes of the black poor are not the results of individual predispositions for violence, group traits or cultural deficits. Through a scrupulous exploration of the inner workings of drug-dealing gangs, the police, politicians, unions, and public schools, it is clear that an individual’s decisions and be-

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This extends beyond the black characters (the black cop or criminal, as well as – although, as will be seen below, this can be interpreted differently – the intriguing cartoon-like figures of Omar or Brother Mouzone, etc.), and includes the chain-smoking Greeks/Russians, the alcoholic “Polacks”, the shameless Jewish lawyer, etc.
behavior are often shaped by – and indeed limited by – social, political, and economic forces beyond their control. According to Wilson and Chaddha, then, the antidote to these (most familiar of) black stereotypes is to implicate them in sociological explanations. This leads us out from the stereotype, which is good, right into the blackness patterns.

As a serial that prides itself on being politically conscious, *The Wire* is certainly rooted in a certain knowledge of racism and African-American history (perhaps more explicitly exposed in Simon and Burn’s docudrama miniseries *The Corner*, 2000, that covered the drug markets in the streets of West Baltimore, especially in the historical flashbacks to a pre-drug-war-corrupted and more affluent period of these black neighborhoods during and around the civil rights era). David Simon describes writing for a large cast of black characters in these terms:

I can’t begin to write one black character – much less 30 – and have them all be distinct and different and represent different things if I don’t have some core understanding of where they came from. Not just them and their parents, but culturally – what they’ve acquired and what they expect of the world and what the world expects of them as blacks, as Catholics, as Jews, as whoever [...] So I’m standing on a lot of literature that has come before and that is contemporaneous with me.”

Nelson George goes so far as to describes how in the “five seasons of storytelling that constitutes *The Wire*’s universe, there were so many scenes, bits of dialogue, and plot lines that rendered black characters, and the complexity of being black in America, in a light unparalleled in television history.” But perhaps being “unparalleled in television history”, and George actually agrees, is not an altogether revealing measure. In any respect, of interest here is not the degree of truthful representation of the complexity of actual (African-American) identities.

At stake in this chapter is the counter-actualization of the blackness patterns. As evaluated from the perspective of the untimely-image, *The Wire* is

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331 “Sociology Looks at *The Wire*”, op-cit.
332 Sheehan & Sweeney: “In this depiction of black Baltimore, echoes of the sixties are weak – considering the scale and dynamism of the upheavals that shook the U.S. and the world in the 1960s and 1970s, when masses marched against war, racism, sexism, imperialism, when there was a longing for liberation, when there was such striving to live in a new way. *The Wire* cannot make present, however, what is absent or attenuated in the wider culture that it represents. The script gives a strong sense that this movement has been both co-opted and defeated. The residue of the civil rights movement seems to have left in Baltimore a lack of confidence in collective action, a lack of faith in alternative possibilities”, 2009, op-cit.
333 David Simon interview by Jesse Pearson, *Vice* op-cit.
on this point a failure. This failure includes certain tendencies that at least actualize the question of whether there are untimely-images of blackness, such as the scene with Bubbles in the basement discussed in Chapter 4 above. But the discussion in the present chapter has led us to a point where it is clear that The Wire does little to nothing with the blackness patterns.

To some extent The Wire is, as everything else, part of a neoliberal order. It may be a great smuggling act of radical political art put out through the system of cable television, but it is still made within this system and not that radical, at least not on all levels. Given how it complies with the blackness patterns it must also be said to contain central aspects that harmonize pretty well with the order. The Wire therefore only helps to negatively define an untimely-image of blackness. Let us therefore end this chapter with a look at a very different work, which I argue expresses an untimely-image of blackness.

5.3. Valérie: An Untimely-Image

“Where are all the Africans in the French New Wave?” This may seem like a strange and unfair thing to ask, but in an article Wes Felton convincingly shows why the question has more relevance than one may instinctively assume.335 Felton:

As politically and socially progressive as many of the French New Wave films were at providing audiences with what, at the time, were present day representations of the lives of Parisians, they seem to gloss over the fact that not everyone living in Paris is white. All of the foreign people held under the grip of France are alluded to be in far-away countries. This could not have been farther from the truth (ibid.).

Felton also points out that there were black African filmmakers working in Paris in the 50s and 60s, creating films about African immigrants. A film like Paulin Soumanou Vieyra’s Africa on the Seine (1955), he writes, “investigates a generation of black immigrant students and artists living in Paris”. Similar to the films “that would emerge from the French New Wave”, it deals “with themes of existentialist alienation” while it “buzzes around the streets and monuments of Paris”. But the streets and monuments – seen “through the point of view of an African immigrant” – are “not so much romanticised as in other New Wave films, but are filmed as if they are for-

eign, awe-inspiring, and [...] overbearing, looming down on the viewer as if they are about to capsize and squash you” (ibid.). There was a presence, then, of presumptive black New Wave material in Paris at the time.

This is a context that can be interesting to point out, only to make the following discussion of blackness in the French New Wave seem less of a stretch. But let us now move over to a focus on the French New Wave itself – more specifically, two interesting exceptions to its ubiquitous whiteness: The black pianist Valérie in Jean-Pierre Melville’s *Le Samuraï* (1967) and the black student Omar in Godard’s *La Chinoise* (1967).336

In its full audiovisual and narrative configuration, the *Le Samouraï* character Valérie (Caty Rosier) constitutes an untimely-image of blackness. I will refer to this image as the Valérie-image. Untimely-images (and untimely-sites) do not merely disappear as history marches on. Similar to Deleuze and Guattari’s descriptions of virtual becomings, they are always intertwined with historical forces, without which they would “remain indeterminate and unconditioned”, while being themselves of a different order than the historical (*WPh*, 96). This aspect of untimely-images and untimely-sites are like any other “events” that are basically defined by non-actual parameters: In a text on the aftermath of May ‘68 Deleuze writes that an event like this may be “turned around, repressed, co-opted, betrayed, but there still is something there that cannot be outdated”.337 A work/film may not only have its stylistic and formal aspects coopted, but also, as history marches on adding new socio-historical factors, even have its virtual parameters slightly altered. The work/film – its themes, its formal traits – may “fall back into history” (see 2.5 above) more or less, but in a work that “stands on its own” (see 1.2.1) there is also “something” that subsists that remains an “outside”. This “something” is what opens up onto an “unstable condition”, to go back to Deleuze’s conception of post-May ‘68, in “which the slightest differences persist rather than cancel themselves out, and where independent phenomena inter-resonate”, and which “enters as much into the interior of individuals as into the depths of a society” (ibid.). Towards the end of the chapter we will return to the question of the relevance of the potential in the Valérie-image, made in 1967, for the contemporary blackness patterns.

*Le Samuraï* revolves around the main character Jef Costello, a hit man, and a nightclub pianist called Valérie.338 Jef is hired to kill a person at the

336 Melville is strictly speaking not a New-Wave director, but he was one of their key influences, colloquially often even referred to as “the father of the New Wave”, and a late film like *Le Samuraï*, while distinctly Melvillian, could also be argued to blend in with aspects of the New Wave.

337 Deleuze, “May ’68 Did Not Take Place”. 233.

338 To the extent that the untimely-site concerns distribution and accessibility, it is not unimportant to note that *Le Samuraï* did “extremely well at the box office, almost 2 million spectators in France”, Ginette Vincendeau, “Authors on Melville”, extra material in The Criterion Collection’s 2005 DVD edition of *Le Samuraï*. 
nightclub, to which Valérie becomes a witness and subsequently his unexpected alibi. The main narrative centers on the police trying to find new evidence against Jef for the murder, and around Jef’s ordeals with the at-first unknown people that hired him. It all ends with a confrontation between the main characters in which Jef is shot dead by the police at the same moment that he seems to just be about to kill Valérie.

The first shot of the film frames a fairly empty apartment with a smoking Jef lying on a bed. His body is reduced to a detail in the frame that displays a large room graphically resembling a face (two large windows as eyes, light reflections as eye-brows, a birdeye as a nose, the floor and the bed as a mouth with a smoking cigarette in its side). The camera lingers on this image for about two minutes. Towards the end of this long-take, a musical score starts simultaneously as the surface of the image starts to become wavy – the camera and its zooming function slowly wobbles for a few seconds. This emphasizes the (artificial) surface of the image, while also giving the room a kind of watery quality that wavers around its spatial coordinates somewhat. It is done in a way that is far from mere self-reflexive theatricality or stylistic gimmickry. It is not a big spectacular move, but rather quite understated and brief. The effect, however, is tangible in the sense of delicately marking out what kind of moving images that are about to unravel. The implication is that this is not a space that is reducible to its actual matters-of-fact levels. After this narratively unexplained waving of the image, there are a few seconds of the same room now more stabilized before a cut to a closer shot – over a quick intermediary close-up of what looks like burnt or cut-up money – that has more light and more depth in the image, with Jef sitting on the bed. A slightly more individuated or actual person has arisen from the first image. That is, if the first image was marked by a virtuality pushed to the surface, the image now has more balance between this virtuality and a more actual matter-of-fact level that provides depth and a certain stability. But the virtual level remains slightly more primary and foregrounded, although the relation between the virtual and the actual will subtly oscillate throughout the film. As the film progresses, the actual, the causally narrative, the spatio-temporally matter-of-fact, at times approaches a takeover of the surface of the image, but it never manages to fully do so. The actual functions in one sense so that the image does not recede into a mere dreamy haze of virtuality, which would certainly not be productive from the point of view of the untimely-image (see 2.9).

This slightly more balanced surface is further established in the first 9 minutes of the film in which Jef makes a series of preparations for the kill but without any character saying a word. The first words spoken in the film come when Jef establishes his first alibi. This alibi seems to be a semi-girlfriend. As he knocks on the door to her apartment, the first thing uttered is her asking: “Jef?”. He answers: “Yes”. She opens the door, he enters and sits down on her bed. He immediately gives her instructions: “This evening I
came round at 7:15 and stayed till 2 a.m.” This is an instruction that is part of the narrative gradually taking form. But on another register – which is equally on the surface while somewhat less apparent – he is establishing spatiotemporal coordinates for himself, that is, he sets up some actual parameters for his presence to hold on to so as not to disappear in the too exclusively virtual. The girl says that the times that he suggests are impossible since they conflict with her schedule. Jef then alters the temporal data somewhat to find a fit. She says: “I like it when you come around because you need me.” This woman is one of the film’s actual nodes. Valérie, as we will see, revolves more around its subrepresentational nodes.

Jef and Valérie are the two characters that are both inside and outside the narrative. They are powerfully, but non-romantically, connected. And their connection is expressed through non-verbal means, most importantly through their eye contact that is a central visual motif in the film. Jef and Valérie share the sub-representational surface. This connection can be contrasted to the role of Jef’s white quasi-girlfriend, who has a purely instrumental function within the “depths” of the narrative. She serves as his planed alibi, and is as such given exact data of what to say, what time he came to her place and what time he left.

The narrative has a certain complexity but it is in many ways secondary to the expressions on the level of the surface. The photography, the composition of each frame, the costumes, the lightning, the sounds, the colors, the placement and looking relations of the characters, is minutely composed – but in a restrained way. This is not style over substance, but a substance whose subtle nature can only be expressed on the level of style. It is the moving audiovisual styles and forms that are chiefly speaking. Large sections of the film lack or have a minimum of dialogue. To a large extent the mostly virtual surface of the image, underlined by the restrained theatricality of the plot, bars the actual matter-of-fact levels of the image and the narrative from taking over, a barring that provides room for a certain kind of untimely-image to breathe.

As stated, Valérie is a jazz pianist at the nightclub. She becomes a witness to the murder Jef is hired to do – she accidentally crosses paths with Jef as he leaves the murder scene at the back office of the nightclub. In the police hearings she unhesitatingly lies and says that Jef was not the man she saw. But let us back up and see what transpires here on another level. In the first image containing Valérie we see her playing piano at the nightclub. In this image, about 13 minutes into the film, she has a certain, and within this film almost out-of-place, joviality to her – she smiles widely and moves happily, smoothly but at times also a bit jerkily to the music she and the band is producing – this is not yet the Valérie-image. We see her as we follow Jef Costello into the nightclub. The central motif of eye contact between the two characters is first hinted at with him glancing from a hiding place intercut with shots of Valérie playing – he sees her but she does not yet see him. He
sneaks into a back office and kills the person he is hired to kill. As Valérie ends her set and goes backstage she accidentally witness Jef coming out of the office. This is a key scene in which everything stands still for a moment as the motif of eye contact between the two characters is established. Jef brings with him the surface, dominated by virtuality – although in his case a deadly virtuality. In this scene this surface hastily absorbs Valérie and counter-actualizes not only her slightly jovial scene persona but also everything that implied her being reducible to the actual and to the narrative. This scene functions as a catalyst for the Valérie-image. She instantly becomes a natural part of the by then established register of the surface – but her virtuality, in contrast to Jef’s, entails a path towards life and potential.

The police investigation that follows the murder functions as the effort of the narrative, or the actual level of the film, to capture Jef and Valérie and more completely seal them inside of it – in contrast, basically all the other characters, their actions and dialogues, are more or less reducible to being actual narrative cogs. Jef and Valérie and their connection exist primarily in a milieu “prior” to the narrative. They exist predominantly on the surface of the image – and the film focuses almost all its force, nuance and intelligence on the surface, and not on its narrative depths. “Surface” does not mean shallow or insignificant (or postmodern). It means here that virtuality, while implicated with the actual level of bodies and their interactions, is more foregrounded in the image. It is from within this counter-actualized surface that the Valérie-image forms its contours.

The murder investigation wants to drag the surface down into its narrative depth. That is, the investigation is not only about trying to find enough evidence, after his alibies has protected him, to get Jef convicted. It is also about trying to catch all the aspects of Jef that exceed the narrative and the actual. The concern of the police is to really establish that he is the right man, which they believe he is. But their actual work plays out as a detailed studying of his spatiotemporal coordinates – exactly where and with whom he is at all times. The police have minute knowledge about his whereabouts, but up until the end the primary aspects of the character Jef is still outside of their grasp. The police investigation is also concerned with collapsing the Valérie-image. The main police detective, from his perspective within the actual and the narrative, is convinced that she is playing false and says at one point: “[I]’m sure the girl’s lying. We’ll have to find a way to break her […]” They never do, they are not even able to try – the contours of her virtuality are outside of their grasp. But the narrative will finally catch up with Jef through a piercingly actual event – at the end of the film he is shot dead by the police. One may say that the shot penetrates the surface and collapses the virtuality of the Jef-image into a matter-of-fact dead body within the narrative – we will return to this statement in a moment.

I should stress that Valérie and Jef are of course not only virtual characters. In the middle of the film there are two scenes where they are alone with
each other. They contain a piece of dialog in which their actual and narrative sides comes more to the fore. Jef says: “The reason you didn’t identify me could be that you like playing games with the police. Or that you weren’t supposed to recognize me.” What he says is a mirroring of how there are two sides to Valérie – one virtual that exceeds the grasp of the police/the narrative and one actual side that really has a possible causal narrative function which explains all her actions.

Why does Valérie unexpectedly step forth as an alibi for Jef? The narrative after a while offers an explanation: Valérie seems to live with the boss that hired Jef for the murder, and providing Jef with an alibi could therefore be about saving the person that she seems to live with. But this explanation is not completely convincing – at least it far from punctuates the virtual surface of the film or the Valérie-image itself. The narrative reasons for her saving Jef is never fully clarified (in contrast, Jef’s other female alibi has a reason – romantic love – and her being an alibi was planned by Jef). Why Valérie does what she does remains somewhat unclear also from the perspective of the causal narrative. On the level of the surface, furthermore, everything about Valérie and the Jef-Valérie relation points in other directions. On this level, to the extent that there is a quasi-casual “explanation”, one may say that Valérie saves Jef “because” they share a bond in which they mirror and guard each other’s aspects that exceed that grasp of the reductively actual. The Jef-image has earlier in the film, as described, counter-actualized the image that first presents us with Valérie playing piano, and thereby cleared the frame for her to arise as a Valérie-image. Their connection exists on its own virtual plane.

But again, their actual sides are not to be overlooked. The fact that Valérie has some narrative bond with the boss, a boss that Jef kills at the end, seemingly leads to a confrontation between the two virtual characters on an actual level – in the end, after having killed the boss, Jef enters the night club and goes up to Valérie who’s playing the piano and puts up one of his killer-gloved hands on the piano. She is completely unafraid – and her attitude, body language and the visual motif of their eye contact, releases her to a large extent from the narrative coordinates that for a while had seemed to point only in one direction and lifts her back more firmly onto the virtual surface. They have their final long eye contact, and she coolly smiles and says to him: “Don’t stay here”. Which on one level is to say: don’t reduce yourself to the actual narrative that has taken you to this point. But Jef has slowly been pushed to this point by the police investigation and by his dealings with those that hired him – it is now revealed that the person that he some moments before had been hired to kill is Valérie. As the natural outcome of the narrative, he lifts his gun and points it at her. She says: “Why, Jef?” He answers: “I have been paid to”. But just as he is about to squeeze the trigger he is shot dead by the police. However, what I said above about the virtual surface of the Jef-image thereby being penetrated by the shot and
therefore collapsing Jef into a merely actual dead body is inaccurate. The nature of his death is rather that he disappears into virtuality – his path is from the beginning a deterritorialization that has become destructive, deadly. He is shot out further from the actual, instead of being sucked into it – he perishes on the surface, a surface on which he can no longer find any actual coordinates to hold on to.

And as the main police detective reveals afterwards, Jef’s pistol had no bullets in it – he literally and figuratively did not have the means or the will to kill Valérie. Or rather: the actual narrative level did not manage to ensnare him in that sense, it failed to become dominant enough to determine the relation between the two virtual characters. The virtual-actual balanced surface, however, remains and is strengthened in the final scene.

Valérie is the last recognizable character (anonymous characters are seen in the far background) to remain in the frame in the last shot. This last shot mirrors the first shot. It is a long take filmed from some distance revealing a large room with the figure of Valérie about the same size as Jef in the first image of the film. This image is at least as iconic as the first – we will return to this image at the end of the chapter. Jef and Valérie are both predominantly virtual character-images, although the Jef-image dies and the Valérie-image lives. But dead or alive Jef does not make up an untimely-image. What makes up an untimely-image is dependent on its counter-actualizing implication in larger socio-aesthetic and even historical situations in which the film is intertwined. The Jef-image, in contrast to the Valérie-image, arguably does not counter-actualize anything and provides no real contours of the new.

The Valérie-image itself has an inherent necessity and a force that exists on a register clearly other than the sociological. The character mainly exceeds an organic social register – including being its mere quirky exception. Valérie, as an untimely-image and not only a narrative character, expresses a kind of pre-individual and pre-social potential – but in a both understated and defined way. It is far from what would be the risk with this kind of char-
acter in a more reified, “exotic”, form: the falling into some orientalist fetish of the irrationally timeless.

This screen capture (which is not a quotation of an untimely-image, but only a printed screen capture) may give the impression of a Josephine Baker kind of exotism (the character’s not entirely un-Baker-like features and the connotations of the animal coat). But while such aspects may be at play they are certainly not what dominate the Valérie-image, or rather, these aspects are counter-actualized simply by being already drowned in other forces.

But the Valérie-image is indeed a kind of “secret”. This secret eludes reification not because it is so deep or obscure or non-representational, but because it is subtle and light while powerfully sub-representational. It is a positive new contour, and not a mere absence of meaning. This subtle and light yet powerful contour forms the untimely-image “essence” of this image. (One of the men that remove some of the musical instruments from the scene that Valérie sits on at the end hits three of the drums and the cymbal. It has a tongue-in-cheek quality to it, but it is also a sophisticated sign-out that retro-actively underlines the lightness of the virtual ideas of the film.) The “secret” of the Valérie-image is nothing more mysterious than the expression of contours of the new. What paves the way for this expression is counter-actualization. But what is it that is counter-actualized?

What the Valérie-image counter-actualizes is a bit more complex, and there are certain things that should be bracketed regarding its relevance for the blackness patterns. The most immediate counter-actualization is the merely exotic idea of a jovial black female entertainer in this white milieu. But generally, the counter-actualization of the stereotypical is far from necessarily enough for the clearing of the expression of contours of the new. While important, especially at the time, this aspect of the Valérie-image is not what primarily speaks for its continued relevance as an untimely-image.
What makes it brimming with continued relevance, rather, is that it instantly obliterates the blackness patterns by having already filled the image with shapes of effortless and sober virtual becoming that has nothing to do with sociology.

**Elaboration: Valérie Reified**

As a seeming twin but really opposite of the Valérie-image – although this is taken from outside the French New Wave but within European political film with roots in the new waves of the 60s – we can mention the “black” female character in Alexander Kluge’s 1986 film “Vermischte Nachrichten” (Miscellaneous News). The character is a prostitute sold from Africa to a pimp in Germany. We follow her – mostly through the eyes of a German man that she formally marries at arrival in order to be granted residence – through a series of hardships that comes with her slavery-like situation. She does not speak but is conceived of as somewhat strong-minded. The narrative and the acting are stylized, but the coordinates are still basically sociological. The character, together with the socio-economic situation that determines her, furthermore, is quite familiar. She is – underlined by the actress being a white woman in blackface – like an illustration of a given.

Most French New Wave films are barren when it comes to untimely-images of blackness – for the obvious reason of lacking black characters. But as seen from the perspective of the Valérie-image, the whole French New Wave, if we are allowed to squeeze Le Samuraï into its historical frame, is paradoxically transformed into an untimely-site of blackness in this particular sense: as already being an untimely-site from many other perspectives, the very unusualness of black characters is now what makes it appear as ripe with possibilities for unexpected connections that may lead to counter-actualizations and the expression of contours of the new also regarding blackness. Let us therefore see how this holds up in the other exception.

In Godard’s La Chinoise (1967) the black philosophy student Omar sticks out. Does he stick out in a way that is part of an untimely-image? In this film, Godard affectionately portrays and satirizes a group of five young white revolutionary students. The group is passionate for radical action while not always very knowledgeable of the Marxist theory they constantly quote and discuss. Omar, a fellow student of one of the group members, makes his only appearance in the first third of the film as he holds a lecture on modern Marxist theory to the group. Omar’s comparably more informed discourse in conjunction with Godard’s montage between him and the main characters is the first clear revelation of the superficial level of knowledge of the group (as well as its inherent contradictions such as its classism and sexism).
The Omar-image may appear to have the markings of an untimely-image – an uncalled-for and unexpected connection between, in this case, a pervasively white milieu and a black character in an arguably politically charged role. But it is more like an honest representation of the times from an unusual angle: that is, a time in which idealistic white students could certainly be more theoretically naive than many Marxist third-world immigrants hidden from view in most European cinema at the time. The Omar-image performs a certain countering of racial markers within a given situation (the white milieu of the French new wave with all the connotations of this milieu). But this is more of a radical shifting around of what can be seen and heard on the level of representation than the expression of contours of the new. The Valérie-image, in contrast, is irreducible to a representation of a real third-world person otherwise rendered invisible or inaudible (the latter being an honorable thing but not necessarily an untimely-image). In the Valérie-image there is something expressed that subsists or inheres which remains vibrant with a cliché-busting vitality decades after it was made – perhaps it has even increased. Valérie, as an untimely-image of blackness, is certainly a “problem which is more profound than the situation” (see 2.5). Omar is instead a bringing into view of what existed in the margin of the situation.

The Valérie-image is not the actual or historical new. It is the expression of a defined contour of potential. After she is left alone on the scene of the nightclub, the last image of Le Samuraï freezes and is covered by a hazy filter. It is like the Valérie-potential is finally cocooned in a historic bubble, but ready to be repeated and put to use if and when its force would be relevant to repeat in another situation regarding another problem.

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339 There is a third example, which is quite similar to the Omar-image. In Godard’s Weekend (1967) there are two African garbage collectors, one black and one Algerian, who recite Lenin and Fanon.
An untimely site or image can certainly remain as a resource of potential. Of course, if repeated, it must be modified – it must be a repetition that equals differentiation. But the Valérie-image is highly relevant to the thought of counter-actualizing the blackness patterns of today and expressing contours that exceeds them. The potential that the Valérie-image gives virtual “consistency” to – which is not to say that the potential is timeless, static or completely unaffected by actual history – remains precisely a resource of potential. But if repeated one would have to be creative with it in order to revive the potential (instead of merely appropriating its forms). In relation to the blackness patterns the Valérie-image is not an ideal, but it remains an untimely-image.
Chapter 6. Capitalism & the Problem of Cartography

This chapter deals, as announced, with the second of the two main political problems in *The Wire*: the mapping of contemporary neoliberal capitalism. Neoliberalism as social policy – as theory, ideology, and practice (on the level of cities, states and globally) – and as producer, or at least accelerator, of a sociocultural state of history often referred to as postmodernity, is the fundamental antagonist of *The Wire*. This is obviously not to say that the characters talk about neoliberalism explicitly. The serial rather deals with the less visible effects and residues of a neoliberal rationale for running a society: its detrimental effects on various social institutions, the “war on drugs”, the war on labor unions and the offshoring of blue-collar jobs, all kinds of deregulations, and the deregulated (global) flows of finance capital as the final determining factor. This does not mean that *The Wire* is anti-capitalist *per se*. But it is an angry, but coldly analytic, critique of neoliberalist policies in the sense of “raw” or “untethered capitalism”, as described in Chapter 4. But it is also a kind of cartographic venture – it is a mapping of the above-mentioned aspects of contemporary capitalism. This is the second of *The Wire*’s two political problems to be investigated (the first was blackness which we dealt with in the preceding chapter). This chapter delves into the intricacies of what it means for political art to map advanced capitalism. The point is to assess different conceptions of such mappings in view of the parameters of the untimely-image and the untimely-site. In what senses can this kind of mapping be an untimely-image or an untimely-site?

6.1. The Generative-Map and the Symbol-Map

Deleuze and Guattari are concerned with doing cartography. But theirs is a kind of cartography chiefly concerned with *diagramming multiplicities*. Deleuzian maps do not focus on symbolic or iconic representations of given actualities. They aim to chart forces or potentials for transformation that exceed but subsist within the actual of a situation. These maps, as John Rachman writes, “indicate ‘zones of indistinction’ from which becomings may arise, if they are not already imperceptibly in the making” (100). The
maps are rigorous – the zones have an “objective indetermination” (FB, 132) – but they are also themselves innovative with its coordinates: they distribute new kinds of relations, make connections, sketch lines. The drawing of a map is a co-creation of potentials for new terrains. Commenting on the notion of cinematic auteurs as thinkers that think in and through movement-images and time-images, Tom Conley writes in his rich treatment of film and cartography, that the concept of the auteur is in Deleuze “broadened to mean that the films of certain directors invent new and other types of time and space”, and that the “auteur in this broad sense can also be understood to be a cartographer” (2007: 21).

Cartography normally tends to concern more representational ventures – whether social-historical, geographical or both: the representation of actual states of affairs or more or less already determined topographical coordinates. Let us therefore make a principal distinction between what for the sake of simplicity can be called a generative-map and a symbol-map respectively. This is not so that we can proclaim The Wire – which is itself a map – to unambiguously exemplify the latter. But this distinction is a first step in making a map of a map: that is, to diagram The Wire as a mapping venture. The question for this meta-map is: does The Wire, in spite of its basically sociological perspectives, contain aspects of a generative-map?

Let us immediately complicate the principal distinction above. There are many complications that disallow any simple opposition between a diagram or “generative-map”, and a traditional figurative map or “symbol-map”. For Deleuze a productive diagram in contemporary art cannot be diagrammatic all over. This is clear in Deleuze’s contrasting of Bacon and Pollock. In Pollock, the diagram “covers the entire painting”. While the Pollock painting displays the “power of mechanical repetition raised to intuition”, its spread-out diagram also “creates a veritable ‘mess’”, and nothing is able to “emerge” from this mess. In Bacon’s work, in contrast, there is the “absolute necessity of preventing the diagram from proliferating, the necessity of confining it to certain areas of the painting [---] The diagram must not eat away at the entire painting, it must remain limited in time and space. It must remain operative and controlled” (FB, 108, 109, 110). A productive diagram is not only about “capturing forces” that are “nongiven” and invisible (an aspect of Deleuze’s thought that is more famous). Rather, “something must emerge from the diagram”, which adds a kind of clarity and precision. On the one hand this clarity and precision is irreducible to representation or the realm of actual facts and objects. On the other hand it takes us out of the “catastrophe [i.e. Pollock’s diagram] rather than submerging us further” (FB, 56, 57, 61, 109-110, 138, 156). The diagram in Bacon is made, writes Deleuze, “in order for something to emerge from it, and if nothing emerges

340 To “write is to struggle and resist; to write is to become; to write is to draw a map”, Foucault, 44.

216
from it, it fails” (FB, 159). As we remember from 2.9 above, “art” in Deleuze’s terms is irreducible to chaos and must instead be a “chaos-germ”.

The Wire is certainly not a painting, and if it were it would not be a Pollock and it would not be a Bacon. The untimely-image and its contours of the new, furthermore, is not chaos but rather the “something” that “emerges”. Still, there is a formal correspondence here with the discussion of the untimely-site in 2.6. An untimely-site does not – or at least far from have to – have (possible) untimely-images “all over”. It needs only one aspect, creatively borrowing a notion from Badiou, “at the edge of a void”. To the extent that The Wire is an untimely-site (which it remains to fully evaluate), we deal with the questions of the nature of its specific global-capitalist kind of “void” and the nature of its mappings. What does it mean to (quasi-)contain this kind of void within a work and in what sense does this make The Wire’s mappings bordering the diagrammatic or generative? And in what sense does the (quasi-)containing of this “void” help to make The Wire an untimely-site? And finally, on the next level: if it is to some extent diagrammatic, does something “emerge from the diagram”? Put differently: does it contain any untimely-images?

Let us go further with the complication of the distinction between the two kinds of maps: the generative-map is creative, but it is also a kind of realism – it must be, otherwise it would belong to the categories of idealistic imagination or fantasy. Rajchman writes in his book on Deleuze that in order for thought to make new connection, “it needs the sobriety of a certain realism. Often it is a matter of making visible problems for which there exists no program, no plan, no ‘collective agency’ problems that therefore call for new groups, not yet defined, who must invent themselves in the process in accordance with affects or passions of thinking prior to common cognition and its codes” (Rajchman, 2000: 8). The Wire of course does not fail to supply “the sobriety of a certain realism”. But the key questions are what it means to make “visible problems” and what kind of real is implied in “realism”. Are the problems taken up made up wholly of “molar” sociological coordinates or are there also “problematic” coordinates? To the extent that Deleuze’s philosophy can be said to be “realist”, this is not in the traditional philosophical sense of realism, which is to argue that things, objects and states of affairs exist independently of our sense experience. In Deleuze, the problem of realism does not concern things, objects and states of affairs – whose independent existence he finds no philosophically interesting reasons to either doubt or defend – but virtual forces that inheres in them that are the conditions for the new. How to systematically think the reality of virtual conditions for the new is a philosophical problem of realism for Deleuze.

Deleuze’s realism certainly maps, but the “referent” is not things, objects or states of affairs but the generative forces that subsists in them. The map is therefore less a representation than a creative repetition of such forces. But creative repetition of generative force is not chaos. The map therefore also
entails a kind of “figuration” – but figuration, to borrow a phrase from Jameson that we will return to, “on a higher plane”. In his book on Bacon, Deleuze contrasts the “Figure” to figuration (i.e. the mimesis of various givens) not in the sense that figuration is completely eliminated, but in the sense of a “second figuration” which is even more “true-to-life” – it “recovers and recreates, but does not resemble” (FB, 97, 98). It is an “intense realism” (FB, 130). The Wire is a cartographic venture on many levels that weaves together many sociological micro-maps. Some of these maps cover flows within society that are simultaneously local and global. Among the most important micro-maps are those seen in Season 2, in which the transnational, legal and illegal, shipments of goods, drugs and peoples form central aspects of the narrative.

6.2. Cognitive Mappings

Alberto Toscano and Jeff Kinkle has suggested that The Wire can be read as a specific problem of representation – representation as “cognitive mapping” in Fredric Jameson’s sense. The publication of their article preceded an article on The Wire by Jameson himself, but their article is actually more explicitly concerned with the larger implications of the problem of cognitive mapping. We will have reason to look into Jameson’s article below, but we will have much more use of his theories on cognitive mapping in his other writings. The problem of cognitive mapping regards how to represent that which appears impossible to fully represent. What seems impossible to fully represent? What is discussed must not be confused with familiar problematizations of meaning in representations of reality in general. And it is not about some “beyond” of final truth that we are considered to not have access to. It also does not concern the representation of a group of people (along the lines of gender, ethnicity, class, etc.), or even of social institutions (which may be the first that comes to mind when thinking about The Wire). Instead, the problem regards how it could be possible – and if so with what aesthetic and narrative means – to make any kind of real representation within political art of the perhaps ungraspable complexity that is the global economic system and the abstractness of its flows of finance capital. How can these things be grasped within a realist narrative? This is the Jamesonian problem

341 Toscano & Kinkle, “Baltimore as World and Representation”. A longer and more detailed version of this article was published before in the journal Dossier as “Baltimore as World and Representation: Cognitive Mapping and Capitalism in The Wire”, Dossier (April 8, 2009a).
that Toscano and Kinkle put on the table as a way to read *The Wire*. Let us now look into some of the implications of this problem.

In what sense is it a *problem*? Are there not many films that depict the global capitalism system? Many of its aspects seem perfectly representable. The representation of intricate financial transactions does not pose a very difficult problem of representation to the extent that it regards people or corporations that have money and conduct businesses. Representing the intricate workings of the contemporary system as a “whole”, not to mention its abstract flows of finance capital, is a different matter. This is why many films about big money and power resort to clichés of a conspiracy: everything is in the end determined – whether directly seen in the film or not – by an evil corporation, a group of powerful men, a corrupt president, etc. Jameson describes the dramatization of powerful individual figures in fixed settings as “the narrative stock in trade of Oriental Despotism and not of late capitalism”, and claims that the “hold over our imaginations of such antiquated narrative categories ought to tell us something about the dilemmas of cognitive mapping in the world system today”.  

The idea of a conspiracy makes things seem tangible. It provides an affect of knowledge or “epistemic closure” as remedy for a feeling of disorientation in an increasingly complex world. But the logic of the real determining structures of the world system is more elaborate and even nebulous than a representable conspiracy. The full system – including its actual conspiracies, its hierarchies and ruling classes, the neocolonial economic order, etc. – has, in its intricate ubiquity, a logic that one cannot really represent fully in any known way.

So how can any one work of art even be near a cognitive map of this situation? The representational sophistication and perhaps unmatched vastness of *The Wire* breathes new life into this problem. The problem is most explicitly signaled by its leitmotif of “following the money”. The very idea of really “following the money” – that is, all the way to the abstract flows of

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343 But the conspiracy film can of course also be quite intricate. Over the course of his discussion of conspiracy films throughout part one of *The Geopolitical Aesthetic*, pp. 9-84, Jameson makes some close readings of more sophisticated kinds of conspiracy films. Some of these films put up the social totality as semi-intangible conspiracy that therefore expresses the bewildered postmodern feeling of being-in-the-world. And through the description of the infrastructure of the (slippery) conspiracy, these films can often contain their own proto-cognitive maps or at least express the desire for one. What the cognitive map and its connections to a postmodern being-in-the-world are will be clarified below.

344 Occasions in which this leitmotif is uttered: Daniels: “This is what everybody knows and no one says: You follow the drugs you get a drug case. You start following the money you don’t know where you’re going. That’s why they don’t want wire taps, or wire CI’s, or anything else they can’t control. Because once that tape starts rolling who the hell knows what’s going to be said?” (s1:08, ca 00:24); Lester Freamon: “You follow drugs, you get drug addicts and drug dealers. But you start to follow the money, and you don’t know where the fuck it’s gonna take you” (s1:09, ca 00:12).
finance capital on a global scale – unavoidably actualizes the question of how this could be done within any one narrative. Does *The Wire* itself follow the money? To really follow the money all the way is a problem suggested and acted upon by *The Wire* only at certain times and to certain degrees – the most abstract stage is most clearly signaled through the evasive, decoded, depersonalized figure of “the Greek”. But most of the time the more profound aspects of the system is more implicit than explicit. While the serial goes far enough to add new perspectives and new intensities to this problem, there is of course a limit of what *The Wire* is actually able to do. Really following the money all the way is mostly deferred in the narrative. Still, what lies at the end of the path to follow – exploitative structures of deregulated flows of finance capital (and the neoliberal policies that allow them) – is the main, although often implicit, antagonist of the narrative. In this way, I argue, the “what” that is the referent of this problem of representation both exceeds and is intrinsic to the narrative. It is a kind of “void” that acts on everything else that happens.

Toscano and Kinkle, on their part, suggest that *The Wire* is consciously limited in its representational scope. Referencing John Kraniauskas, they also argue that there is an “epistemological reflexivity” built into the narrative. Kraniauskas himself says that *The Wire* is driven by a modernist oscillation between a “realist desire” to illuminate the socio-historical “totality” of what is portrayed, and the inclusion into its very narrative form of a reflexivity of its inability (or even refusal) to fulfill that desire.345 But despite these limitations and the suggested epistemological reflexivity, Toscano and Kinkle see *The Wire* as going beyond “to merely depict the violence and hopelessness that exists in these neighbourhoods”, in order to “expose their complex organization […] and their hostile yet symbiotic relationship with the state and neoliberal institutions”. But more importantly they also claim that this finally extends also beyond the state and neoliberal institutions, which leads them to ask whether “the success of *The Wire* rests in its capacity for developing a realist aesthetic capable of facing up to the ‘real abstractions’ of contemporary capitalism and the devastating mutations they have visited upon the modern city” (2009b: 3). They assess *The Wire* to be “one the most cogent attempts at producing a work classifiable under […] an aesthetic [of cognitive mapping]” (2009a). But their conception of cognitive mapping seem to be that it cannot really go beyond what they describe as “an inevitable aesthetic and epistemological barrier” and that *The Wire* succeeds in the sense of “dramatising the struggles of any critical or political ‘will to know’” (2009b: 10) more than answering the question of “what something like a ‘realism of abstraction’ might be” (9). But it approaches the latter enough to actualize this Jamesonian question. That is, if the fundamentally determining structures to be mapped are so intricate and abstract that

345 In this sense it is “always already incomplete”, John Kraniauskas, 2009: 27.
they seem impossible to “represent”, then what kind of aesthetics could capture the unrepresentable?

Kraniauskas holds The Wire to be relatively limited in this regard: “the narrative pursuit of [the leitmotif of following the] money through the cycle (or loop) of accumulation from the streets into finance only goes so far”. He claims that there is an “unreadability” of the “abstract” of “pure money”, which “constitutes a limit for The Wire” [...] a limit beyond which it cannot go. So it [...] returns to the streets [...]” He also adds that “Season 4 repeats the conflict between logics of accumulation, but refuses [like the state “poli-

icy based on targets and the pursuit of street crime … which ignores the cir-
culation of money capital”] to return to the unreadable sphere of finance capital” (Kraniauskas, 30-33). Kraniauskas has a point, but this also somewhat obscures how in The Wire there is still the presence of the conditioning realm of neoliberal finance capital as the determining instance for all other strata, including the streets, but also how finance capital, most explicitly through finance-capitalist characters, continues throughout to play an explicit role in the narrative. But of course, this is not so much as a direct representation of its abstract flows, whatever that would be, but this realm is still the absent-present antagonist for the whole serial, whether at the surface of the narrative or not. But in what sense could it be part of a narrative without becoming the reification of what is really much more nebulous? And in what sense is it “implicit” in The Wire in other ways than what can merely be read into it from the outside?

“Alongside technology”, writes Patrick Jagoda, “the key nonhuman actor that connects characters from different socioeconomic and institutional backgrounds in The Wire is capital”. But as he continues,

Capital in The Wire […] operates less like a standard causal agent that propels forward a linear chain of events than as the substance that links together the decentralized nodes of a social network. Of course, the police leadership repeatedly ignores a distributed perspective, insisting that predictable causal chains are less politically threatening than networks that they ‘can’t control.’ Nevertheless, the network aesthetics of the series, as a whole, reveal communications media and the systems they form to be potentially productive investigative tools that can help us better understand contemporary capitalism. Freamon, like Daniels, uses capital to discover a web of corruption that extends everywhere [...] Unfortunately, the investigation is curbed shortly after it begins. (2011: 195).

The Wire still implies the extent to which this web crosses the earth (most clearly through the activities of “the Greeks”). It may not investigate the global spread directly on the level of its story – although there are many indications, such as the global extensions of the “Greeks” and the strange flows of smuggled peoples and goods that go through the docks. From the local perspective of Baltimore, the realm of finance capital is still clearly a central absent-present factor regardless of how directly it is represented in
the narrative. The logic of a society determined by neoliberal finance capital is very much represented. But what about the local limitation to Baltimore itself – is this not something that more obviously compromises the idea that The Wire approaches a cognitive map? That is actually not the case. This we can learn from what Fredric Jameson himself says about cognitive mapping.

Jameson’s own article on The Wire deals to a large extent with issues not directly pertinent for our concerns, such as traditions of genre and plot. But it makes some interesting points about The Wire’s realism and local utopianisms. Jameson sees in The Wire several representations of “work and productivity, of praxis” in which “there is at work a virtual Utopianism, a utopian impulse” (2010: 364). Especially interesting for our concerns among these utopianisms is the “archivist-scholar” work of the character Lester Freemon that “ultimately cracks open financial conspiracies all over the city”. The utopian elements are not about “fantasy or wish fulfillment” but part of the “construction of the fictive, yet utterly realistic, events” (371). Jameson:

The Wire can [thereby] be observed to be ceasing to replicate a static reality or to be “realist” in the traditional mimetic and replicative sense. Here society, on microlevels of various dimensions, is finding itself subject to deliberate processes of transformation, to human projects, to the working out of Utopian intentions that are not simply the forces of gravity of habit and tradition (365).

Jameson says about mapping in this late article, with some Deleuzian undertones, that it may be spatial “but it does not inventory objects and substances but rather flows and energies” (361). But in what sense are these local utopianisms about cognitive mapping? Is it about its fractured traces? Jameson’s notion of cognitive mapping is a bit multifarious – it is simultaneously the drive to create a map, an intricate aesthetic problem, and the phenomenological result of experiencing a cognitive map. But in all its aspects cognitive mapping is intertwined with utopian desire and utopian imagination – this is a point that we will come back to below. But how does cognitive mapping relate to the local limitation of The Wire? The utopian aspects already indicate that the cognitive map does not concern spatial totality in any simple sense. But the relation between The Wire’s “local” mappings and the global “totality” can be further understood.

From The Geopolitical Aesthetic, one can gather that cognitive mapping of the “social totality” can function through the local, more specifically, through the systematic revealing of the local’s internal logic as implicated within the global system in such way that it represents the global system. “Within” must not be understood as simple part in a whole. There is here, however, a certain allegorical function. But “allegory” in a “new and postmodern sense”, which is to say that it is not static or mechanical “in which cut and dried meanings are paired off one by one with equally cut-and-dried
features or aspects of the narrative situation and its components” (146). In the postmodern, Jameson writes, “the relations between universal and particular, if they persist at all, must be conceived in an utterly different way […]” (155). A film that turns the local into something that approaches a cognitive map is no longer a map of something provincial – even if the local place is outside given power centers, say in the third-world. In his article on The Wire, Jameson describes its depiction of Baltimore as precisely not a province. This means that it is not a particular local offshoot within a global spatial empire, but rather an “allegory” within a different kind of spatial logic. Most straightforwardly, Baltimore stands in for many other cities and places (which many others have pointed out, not least the creators themselves). An allegory in Jameson’s sense, however, also means a certain local self-containment. But again, this locality should not be thought in a linearly spatial sense. The Wire’s Baltimore both opens up to and includes within itself a larger global structure. It is in this sense a more intricate statement than it may seem when Jameson writes almost in passing, that “the docks and the port [in The Wire] come as a real spatial opening” (369). This non-linear logic of the local standing in for larger structures, I may add, is also clearly there in The Wire on a smaller scale. Each stratum or scene is often implicitly or explicitly expressive of a larger logic that dominates all the other strata portrayed. This is most obvious in how the capitalism of the drug trade and the more “legal” capitalist structures, not only share a similar span between codes and decodings as well as ways of thinking (“it’s just business”), but are also intertwined through their flows of money and part of the same larger globalized logic. A local of a series of events in one place within The Wire’s Baltimore is often symptomatic of deeper structures within the whole.

The Wire’s local focus on Baltimore, then, is not merely a limitation from the perspective of cognitive mapping. It is informative about the logic of the local-global as seen from the perspective of a “local” point. But the allegory is not the full cognitive map in miniature. The whole “world system” as such, “is a being of such complexity that it can only be mapped and modelled indirectly” (1995: 169) – although, as we will see, Jameson also speculatively imagines a more full or at least direct map. The local can, however, expose a “social totality” in the sense of revealing the logic of the world system. But not even an imagined “full” cognitive map needs to be a map of everything in a spatial sense. The need to cover everything or reveal how all the parts in a whole relate are further made irrelevant by the fact that power is increasingly less reducible to spatial centers. In postmodernity, the “social totality itself“ writes Jameson, “is not an empirical entity and cannot be made to materialize as such” (1995: 46). So what is the “social totality” if it is not an empirical entity?

346 C.f. note 255 in Chapter 4 above.
The term “totality” is not a simple term in Jameson. But since Jameson picks up this term from Lukács, let us reconnect with the discussion of his theory of realism from Chapter 4 above, since one of its central tenets is precisely social totality. The work of art, Lukács argues, must “reflect correctly and in proper proportion all important factors objectively determining the area of life it represents”. Written in a pre-postmodern era, there is a certain conflict here with the spatial idea of “correctly” reflecting in “proper proportion”. But if we bracket this aspect, Lukács ideas helps to clarify Jameson’s ideas:

[The work of art] must so reflect these [factors objectively determining the area of life it represents] that this area of life becomes comprehensible from within and from without, re-experiencable, that it appears as a totality of life. This does not mean that every work of art must strive to reflect the objective, extensive totality of life. On the contrary, extensive totality of reality necessarily is beyond the possible scope of any artistic creation […] The totality of the work of art is rather intensive: the circumscribed and self-contained ordering of those factors which objectively are of decisive significance for the portion of life depicted, which determine its existence and motion, its specific quality and its place in the total life process. In this sense the briefest song is as much an intensive totality as the mightiest epic.347

The “totality”, then, is like an intense selection, enfolding and compression into to a structured work of art (a map) of the most significant characteristics of the “extensive totality of life” – a kind of microcosm in this particular sense. The “most significant characteristics” of the social totality for the Marxist Lukács is the relations of class conflict. It is therefore not surprising that the Marxist Jameson also defines his idea of cognitive mapping of the totality as “in reality nothing but a code word for ‘class consciousness’”. But he adds the caveat that “it proposed the need for class consciousness of a new and hitherto undreamed of kind, while it also inflected the account in the direction of that new spatiality implicit in the postmodern […]”348 The need of a new kind of cognitive mapping stems from how class-consciousness in postmodernity has become too complex to even imagine since the first step would have to entail a sense of the possibility of basic orientation, which is increasingly denied.

But what we can primarily gather about cognitive mapping from Jameson’s specific article on The Wire is that it is very much connected to his notion of utopian imagination. Let us now delve a little deeper into his theories in order to grasp this. We will go into the details of what Jameson actually means by cognitive mapping, what kind of problem it is aimed to solve,

347 Lukács, “Writer and Critic” 38. On how he conceives global capitalism to be a “totality”, see “Realism in the Balance”, 27f.
and what the stakes are. First of all, a complete cognitive map is a speculative idea: no (at least no successful) works of this kind exist as of yet. At the time of developing this concept in the 1980s, he writes that he is “not even sure how to imagine the kind of art [he wants] to propose here, let alone affirm its possibility [...].”\(^{349}\) Still, the formulation of this concept is and continues to be completely central in Jameson’s thought. Cognitive mapping is meant to serve the didactic point of representing individual subjects and classes to themselves inside an increasingly bewildering socio-economic situation. This is a situation that does not merely contain “contradictions” but that is so complex that it can no longer be “represented”, he argues, at least not through any known conception of realism. The sense of bewilderment comes from a “postmodern” division between (Marxist) knowledge and phenomenological experience: we may know the contemporary capitalist global world system through scientific abstraction while unable to properly experience it since it is unrepresentable.\(^{350}\) Cognitive mapping is a speculative solution for this problem of representing the unrepresentable.

Cognitive mapping does not concern the representation of “space” in the literal cartographic sense (although Jameson has often been critiqued for being too concerned with spatial relations).\(^{351}\) The terrain to be mapped in

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\(^{349}\) Fredric Jameson, “Postmodernism, or The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism”, New Left Review (146, July-August, 1984), p. 91; this essay is the culmination of a couple of earlier published versions, and it is reprinted “without significant modifications” as the first chapter of his subsequent, similarly titled, book Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1991), p. 52. In the following I will give reference to both the 1984 and 1991 versions, except in cases where there is some small discrepancy when I will choose the version that best fits with the circumstances considering spelling or if the year it was written is of relevance. Naturally I will only reference the 1991 book when dealing with chapters in it other than the famous opening essay.

\(^{350}\) Regarding the critique of Jameson as too concerned with spatial factors, a comparison with Hardt and Negri is instructive. As Vidar Thorsteinsson writes, Hardt and Negri “contributes significantly to a Jamesonian ‘cognitive mapping’ of the apparent mysteries of postmodern capitalism” – especially with all that is entailed in their concept of the “common”; “The Common as Body Without Organs”, Deleuze Studies (4, “Deleuze and Political Activism”, ed. Marcelo Svirsky, 2010), pp. 60-61. But what appears as a fundamental difference between Jameson’s and Hardt & Negri’s conception of the infrastructure of postmodern capitalism is the following: for Jameson its structure is quasi-spatial, while for Hardt & Negri, the global postmodern capitalist system (“Empire”) is primarily a rhizomatic “non-place” that exercises power through “flexible and modulating apparatuses of control” on the level of affect and an immaterial biopolitics as the “production and regulation of subjectivities”. So, according to Hardt and Negri, “the topography of power no longer has to do primarily with spatial relations but is inscribed, rather, in the temporal displacement of subjectivities” (Empire, 318-321). A progressive “mapping” but also genealogy of this topography – which is what Empire itself is about – must therefore primarily cover “temporal” structures. Hardt and Negri have been criticized for failing to take into account the very real materialist infrastructure of the world-order. But even in Hardt and Negri the struggles of the “multitude” must as a first step concern the re-appropriation of “control over space and thus to design the new cartography” (400, 396-397), even if they hold the creation of new temporalities as a more central factor (401-403).
postmodernity is not a natural spatiality containing artificial instances. It is rather a totality in which nature has become artificial and in which “reification and commodification […] have become so universalized as to seem well-nigh natural and organic […]” (1995: 212). But it still regards a kind of “spatial” analysis of culture, in the more abstract sense of grasping the totality of socio-economic relations on a global scale – including its “flows and energies”. He describes it as a “social cartography” of contemporary capitalism. This kind of “spatiality” is both concrete and abstract. The relations that it aims to map make up a historical phase and a cultural logic. “[T]he three historical stages of capital”, Jameson writes, “have each generated a type of space unique to it” (Cognitive Mapping, 348). The third stage of “postmodernity” does not indicate a purely defined period delimitated by some historical rupture, but a state that stems from a slow and unevenly spread process. It starts to appear after WWII and roots itself more clearly in the 1970s. The state of postmodernity increasingly produces a space devoid of cognitive coherence even on the most immediate and concrete levels. This is what Jameson aims to show in his famous early 80s analysis of Bonaventura hotel in Los Angeles, where “postmodern hyperspace” has “finally succeeded in transcending the capacities of the individual human body to locate itself, to organize its immediate surroundings perceptually, and cognitively to map its position in a mappable external world”.

**Elaboration: The Postmodern as a Historical Phase and a Cultural Logic**

The terms postmodern/postmodernism serve many masters and functions, spanning from the well-defined to the fully confused. We will therefore pause and make a note of how these terms function here. We are concerned with what Jameson means by these terms. For many these terms may only connote well-known stylistic traits: pastiche and other “depthless” conducts like – most of them reconstitutions of the sense and meaning of modernist traits – irony, pastiche, stylistic allusions, eclecticism, appropriation, simulation, hybridity, etc. This familiar set of stylistic conducts and sentiments culminate in the art world in the 80s and are by now staples of globalized culture. But in Jameson’s analyses they are only secondary symptoms of deeper processes. He conceives of the postmodern primarily as a historical concept (in the Marxist materialist sense). It is a “genuinely dialectical attempt to think our present of time in History”. The postmodern, which corresponds with what others before him had already recognized as a “third stage” of capitalism, is not a “specifically cultural category” but an attempt to “name a ‘mode of production’ in which cultural production finds a specific functional place […]”.

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Postmodernity is a phase of history in which much seems to wane or be out the door – not least, laments Jameson, our sense of history itself. Jameson begins to explain what he picks up on in his seminal article in 1984:

The last few years have been marked by […] [how] premonitions of the future, catastrophic or redemptive, have been replaced by senses of the end of this or that (the end of ideology, art, or social class; the ‘crisis’ of Leninism, social democracy, or the welfare state, etc.): taken together, all of these perhaps constitute what is increasingly called postmodernism.356

But how are we to understand the postmodern as a culture and art in this phase of history? As gradually and unevenly spread process, postmodernism consists of an economic mode of production that equals advanced capitalism on a global scale as well as a corresponding cultural logic. Art is now systematically subsumed into commodity production – not least counter- or oppositional art.

This new cultural logic became dominant in the West, mainly in America, from the beginning of the 70s.357

The cultural logic Jameson regards as a kind of “superstructure” for contemporary capitalism, provided the term is defined not merely as “a cultural ideology or fantasy”, but as having “genuine historical (and socio-economic) reality” (1984: 88). Here aesthetic production is more or less fully integrated in general commodity production.358 Besides this integration, what is the function and content of this cultural logic? If we look at the postmodern styles themselves, they signal, according to Jameson, the deprivation of an orientation towards the future. Any of these traits, he thinks, “effectively abolishes any practical sense of the future and of the collective project, thereby abandoning the thinking of future change […]”.359 Postmodern aesthetic traits like pastiche signals for Jameson the breakdown of the belief in the continuing progression of history. Pastiche (as opposed to parody) reflects a state in which nothing re-

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357 Especially as seen through the eyes of Hardt and Negri, the way for these changes was paved in parts by movements of resistance, as afterwards subsumed and exploited by a new postmodern capitalist logic that appropriated its force and drained or rechanneled its utopian aspects and desires. The new forces that were exploited can schematically be described as the decolonization movements in the third world in the 50s followed by the various 60s cultural revolutions in the West, followed by the commodification of sub- and/or countercultures in subsequent decades, indicating a historical shift in logic of capitalist relations in society at large. For a rich and nuanced genealogical sketch leading up to the anti-essentialist “new cultural politics of difference” among black intellectuals and artists of the 80s and 90s – spanning from the crumbling of the Age of Europe and the rise of the American capitalist hegemony, to the decolonization movements, to the contributions by a complex web of movements and 20th century intellectuals, see Cornel West, “The New Cultural Politics of Difference” [1993], The Cornel West Reader, (New York: Basic Civitas Book 1999), pp. 119-138.
mains but a critically impotent “random cannibalization of all the [dead] styles of the past”, where the past, furthermore, is reduced to a “simulacrum” image deprived of the reference to “real history”.\(^{360}\)

Jameson is pessimistic but is not resigned or cynical like many of his contemporary diagnosticians of “the society of the image” (Baudrillard et al.). But the postmodern in his conception indeed refers to a state of history that appears stuck in a way where it is highly difficult to even imagine something outside it, or even find a position where a critique can be made, since capital has eaten its way into nearly every pocket of the social body. Jameson: “What we must now affirm is that it is precisely this whole extraordinarily demoralizing and depressing original new global space which is the ‘moment of truth’ of Postmodernism.”\(^{361}\) New strategies and forms of resistance must be invented. The old modes – spanning negativity, opposition, and subversion to critique and reflexivity” – have become outmoded since they require a relative autonomy and “critical distance” outside the “massive Being of capital”, no longer available. Jameson in 1984: “countercultural forms of cultural resistance and guerrilla warfare, but also even overtly political interventions like those of The Clash are all somehow secretly disarmed and reabsorbed by a system of which they themselves might well be considered a part, since they can achieve no distance from it”.\(^{362}\)

This predicament creates for Jameson a “need for maps”, more precisely, cognitive maps, which he describes as “at least one possible form of a new radical cultural politics”.\(^{363}\) Just like The Wire itself, Jameson’s concept of cognitive mapping aims to aesthetically counter postmodern aesthetics with a new kind of pedagogical image of a “totality”.\(^{364}\)

Jameson conceived of Bonaventura hotel as a concentration of a larger phenomenon: it “can itself stand as the symbol and analogue of that even sharper dilemma which is the incapacity of our minds, at least at present, to map


\(^{362}\) Jameson, 1984: 87. For an extension of how there is no longer any outside to contemporary postmodern capitalism, see Hardt and Negri, Empire, 46, 256-259, and on how it subsumes its own outside, 272.


\(^{364}\) This does not mean that The Wire is completely devoid of postmodern aesthetic traits. There are certain aspects in The Wire that are postmodern in the aesthetic sense. But at least on occasions these aspects are used for critical and diagnostic ends. A character like Brother Mouzone can be argued to be less a mere stereotype and more of a pastiche, but a critical one in the sense of him being put forth as a sort of postmodern symptom of how the broken down spirit of the 60s’ civil rights has become an empty image. Along these lines we can pick up on how Sheehan & Sweeney describe Brother Mouzone as having an “appearance [that] evokes Malcolm X” while being “without substance. He prides himself on reading The Nation, New Republic, Atlantic Monthly and Harpers, but how he relates the political debates in them to his role as enforcer in the drugs trade is unclear. A philosophy of collective liberation has morphed into a Hobbesian war of all against all” “The Wire and the World”, 2009, op.cit.
the great global multinational and decentered communicational network in
which we find ourselves caught as individual subjects."\(^{365}\) For Jameson this
requires, in the Marxist sense, pedagogy: "'To teach, to move, to delight': of
these traditional formulations of the uses of the work of art, the first has vir-
tually been eclipsed from contemporary criticism and theory. Yet the peda-
gogical function of a work of art seems in various forms to have been an
inescapable parameter of any conceivable Marxist aesthetic […]" (1988:
347).

Cognitive mapping is intimately connected with the concept of “totality”,
but as we have seen, in Jameson this is basically a Lukács-inspired code
word for class-consciousness. It is about illumination for subjects and collec-
tives about their place in the globalized world. Jameson explains the shifts as
already starting to occur at the time of the earlier time of imperialism:

At this point the phenomenological experience of the individual subject – tradi-
tionally, the supreme raw materials of the work of art – becomes limited to a tiny
corner of the social world, a fixed camera view of a certain section of London or
the countryside or whatever. But the truth of that experience no longer coincides
with the place in which it takes place. The truth of that limited daily experience
of London lies, rather, in India or Jamaica or Hong Kong; it is bound up with the
whole colonial system of the British Empire that determines the very quality of
the individual’s subjective life. Yet those structural coordinates are no longer ac-
cessible to immediate lived experience and are often not even conceptualizable
for most people (1988: 349).

This kind of disorientation is escalated to a whole new level in postmodern-
ism. Important here is not Jameson’s quasi-yearning for the “return” of a lost
phenomenological subjective experience. What is important is that the local
is by now so intermeshed with a gradually more complex global capitalism,
that even the immediate is increasingly ungraspable – to the point that it
seems impossible to even imagine a “totalizing” map. But what is significant
to note, is that the point of the cognitive map is not to be totalizing in the
sense of showing “everything”, but in really revealing and explicating the
logic of the “totality” within the local.

Elaboration: Syntheses of Previously Conflicting Strategies of Marxist
Pedagogy
The vast modernism/realism debates across the history of art theory are outside
of the grasp of this study. But much in our discussion of both The Wire and
Fredric Jameson resonates with strategies at stake in those debates. But to the
extent that they resonate, it is in the form of creative syntheses of what in pre-
vious eras appeared as conflicting strategies of Marxist pedagogy. \(^{366}\) Jameson

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\(^{365}\) Jameson, 1984: 84; 1991: 44.

\(^{366}\) For an overview of realism/modernism debates – where the former was equated with dis-
sseminating the dominant ideology of Hollywood (and its hegemonic reproduction of subjec-
wants to show how Marxist pedagogy in art must be calibrated to the specificities of our era. He argues that we must be inspired by but not simply reuse earlier strategies, or repeat the understandings of how different strategies conflict. The thinking through of new syntheses of different strategies is a central concern for Jameson, but with the general objective being that we need new aesthetic forms adapted to a new social space. In the particular discussion of the vanished pedagogical aspect of art referenced above, he touches on reintroducing Marxist pedagogy only after understanding that postmodernism requires not only new strategies but new syntheses of old ones. Jameson:

[T]he prodigious and still imperfectly understood work of Brecht reaffirms, in a new and formally innovative and original way, for the moment of modernism proper, a complex new conception of the relationship between culture and pedagogy. The cultural model I will propose similarly foregrounds the cognitive and pedagogical dimensions of political art and culture, dimensions stressed in very different ways by both Lukács and Brecht (for the distinct moments of realism and modernism, respectively).

We cannot, however, return to aesthetic practices elaborated on the basis of historical situations and dilemmas which are no longer ours. On the one hand modernist critics like Ernst Bloch concerned with utopia and the new, who in their aim to surpass and supplant realism had a tendency to reject Marxist theory’s notion that the system of capitalism is “an objective totality of social relations”. On the other, Lukács, whose aim was to upgrade realism in direct opposition to modernist art, since he regarded the latter to reduce itself to the “level of immediate experience” of the surface of “modifications in the reality of capitalism” and to be unable to “pierce the surface to discover the underlying […] real factors that relate their experiences to the hidden social forces that produce them” (2010: 33). In Lukács’ conception, realism is able, and he sees this as the highest objective of art, to represent an “objective reality” “as it truly is”, which here means the “totality” or “whole” of determining capitalist relations (2005: 25-60). Modernist art, in Lukács mind, conceals such objective underlying totality of determining social forces in its adherence to “subjective experience” devoid of context, while realist art works compose “wholes” that give an exhaustive account of such underlying totality of forces in and through an apparent subjective experience. Jameson synthesizes strands from these seemingly incompatible notions of political art, and adapts them to his analysis of contemporary society.

368 On Jameson’s conception of realism/modernism as pertaining to film, see for instance *Signatures of the Visible*, 223ff.
Elaboration: Jameson’s Quest for Updating of the Parameters of the Movement-Image:

Cornel West, in 1982, describes Fredric Jameson’s central question as “How can one take history, class struggle and capitalist dehumanization seriously after the profound poststructuralist deconstructions […]”.\(^{369}\) Cognitive mapping, as we will see, is part of Jameson’s larger task to come to terms with the “dilemma” of “how to imagine Utopia”. But while stressing that the way to go about this is not to merely return to older aesthetic forms, be it Brecht or Lukács or a Jamesonian merging of the two, his objective is on a more abstract level to return to old parameters adapted for a new phase of history. He wants to rejuvenate much of what he considers to have been lost, such as a more immediately present sense of history and meaning, subjectively centered affects, revealing a totality of class-relations, collective action, socialist utopia etc., that is, the reviving of a “practical sense of the future and of the collective project”. If we regard what Jameson wants to revive from the perspective of Deleuze’s cinema books, we may say that he laments the waning of the logic of the movement-image and aims to revitalize it for new times.\(^{370}\) It is in this sense, that he is concerned with the question of how to restore a Marxist “vision of the future that grips the masses” (1988: 355). Jameson’s notion of cognitive mapping aims towards the possibility, if those forms of representation were to be invented, of beginning “to grasp our positioning as individual and collective subjects and regain a capacity to act and struggle which is at present neutralized by our spatial as well as our social confusion” (1984: 92). Beyond the spatiality of the map, Jameson’s objective is to reestablish, in a present state that suffers from a “weakening of historicity”, a *historical* temporality. The aesthetic means to achieve this must refrain from (history-obscuring) fragmentation and regain an organic quality capable of restoring an organic notion of

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\(^{370}\) In an article on Deleuze and Guattari’s *Anti-Oedipus* and *A Thousand Plateaus* which he find lacking in their ability to grasp the third stage of so-called “late” capitalism, Jameson writes that it is instead in the second volume of Deleuze’s cinema books “qu’il faudrait chercher une méditation deleuzienne sur les formes et sur les possibilités inédites de l’époque actuelle. C’est une analyse indispensable que nous n’aurons pas le loisir d’entreprendre aujourd’hui”. Jameson, “Les dualismes aujourd’hui”, *Gilles Deleuze, une vie philosophique*, ed. Eric Alliez (Le Plessis-Robinson: Synthélabo, 1998), p. 381. But he connects with its analysis of a present state, but when it comes to the possibilities of countering this (postmodern) state Jameson actually does not address the time-image but seems to connect only with movement-image parameters. For instance in his *Signatures of the Visible*, a book on cinema, the more or less only discussion of Deleuze’s cinema books is the conception of the “whole” in *Cinema I*, see 2007: 330, note 37.
time, that is, a coherence between the past, present and future – which is to say, to reestablish the temporality of the movement-image.  

For Jameson, the cognitive map itself is a means to an end. On the first level, the aim is to restore a proper sense of the collective by realistically situating the individual in relation to class-relations on a global scale; and of action, by providing a way to “grasp our positioning as individual and collective subjects and regain a capacity to act and struggle which is at present neutralized by our spatial as well as our social confusion.” But the final aim of cognitive mapping is to rejuvenate utopian imagination. The cognitive map is meant to illuminate on the level of experience, and through this illumination liberate utopian desire. The term “utopia”, as Ian Buchanan clarifies Jameson’s position, does not indicate a concern with some “dreamt-up fantasy space where everything is miraculously ‘better’”. It concerns rather “a cognitive procedure of determining what it is about our present world that must be changed to release us from its many known and unknown unfreedoms” (2006: 118). But from this it seems highly unclear in what sense the map itself supplies anything else than an orientation of states of affairs – however much seen as a prerequisite and a catalyst for spawning a utopian imagination in its spectators. Jameson describes how his own method, which has seemed to many people to be frustrating and pessimistic [---] generally has been a negative one, that is, it’s to examine the blockages on the future and on the utopian impulse rather than to propose positive new utopian visions of the type the nineteen century in its crucial utopian movements projected so brilliantly, from Fourier to Morris”. 

But of course, the two options Jameson holds out here – utopian visions or examining blockages – do not exhaust the possibilities of political art. As should be clear by now, the untimely-image and the contour of the new it entails are not captured by either of these options. The map itself, then, seems mostly reduced to illumination. In one sense, cognitive mapping is a devise in the service of making possible “spatial”

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371 Jameson: “If we are unable to unify the past, present and future of the sentence, then we are similarly unable to unify the past, present and future of our own biographical experience or psychic life”, 1984: 72.
373 Since Jameson’s concern with utopia also spans his work not explicitly about cognitive mapping, it is imperative to note Buchanan’s claim that cognitive mapping and utopia constitute the “core of Jameson’s thought and practice as a critic” throughout his “entire carrier”, Ian Buchanan, Fredric Jameson: Live Theory (London/New York: Continuum, 2006), p. 106. For a critical treatment of Jameson’s complex relationship with the problem of utopia, across the whole of his oeuvre and with special emphasis on Archaeologies of the Future, see Darren Jorgensen, “Anti-Utopianism and Fredric Jameson’s Archaeologies of the Future”, Colloquy: text theory critique (14, December, 2007), pp. 45-57.
representations in the minds of its spectators (which then leads to other things). But could we not take the idea of cognitive mapping beyond this, and conceive of the map itself as a kind of “utopian imagination”? Not in the sense that Jameson himself speaks about utopian parts of the narrative in *The Wire* merely as characters that in the story are driven by a “utopian impulse”. But rather in the sense of a map seen as a diagram, a generative-map, or perhaps even an untimely-image. What specifically makes Jameson’s idea so interesting also beyond his concern with representation in the minds of spectators and what happens in their faculties of imagination, is that the map itself must be seen as anonymous or general – it first exists outside the spectator as a configuration that stands on its own.\(^{375}\) The “need for the maps” stems exclusively from perceptual and cognitive limitations in the human organism for grasping the postmodern world system (1995: 2, 16). We must therefore conclude that the map itself must already be cognition before it supplies its service to a spectator. That is, the cognitive map must be a system of thought in its own right. Based on this, could we not conceive of many different kinds of cognitive-map-thought, such as, schematically, movement-image-maps or time-image-maps; symbol-maps or generative-maps, etc.? Such differentiations open up for conceiving of cognitive mapping not only as a representation that causes the desire for generative potential in the heads of individuals and collectives, but rather as being itself generative potential.

What does Jameson say about the actual configuration of the map itself? What kind of thought is it implied to consist of? Besides a speculative idea for political art, cognitive mapping is also a kind of methodology that guides Jameson’s own (at least latter) writings. Especially in this sense, it is mainly a mapping of what blocks the possibility of a full map and what blocks utopian desire. But let us focus on the more speculative idea of cognitive mapping as political art. Although such a cognitive map would have to be a quite dynamic totality, containing new forms of figuration, it simultaneously is and responds to a representational framework. But what does “representation” mean here? Cognitive mapping, Jameson argues, is no target for the known critiques of representation. Jameson:

> I tend to use the charged word “representation” in a different way than it has consistently been used in poststructuralist or postMarxist theory: namely, as the synonym of some bad ideological and organic realism or mirage of realistic unification. For me “representation” is, rather, the synonym of “figuration” itself, irrespective of the latter’s historical and ideological form (1988: 348).

How does Jameson’s concept of representation relate to Deleuze’s critique of representation? Deleuze’s critique of representation is not merely a critique, but a way to clear the field for the construction of something else.

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\(^{375}\) I discuss the relation between work and spectator in 1.2.1 above.
Deleuze’s logic of sub-representation cannot be the target of Jameson’s terms “poststructuralist or postMarxist theory”. The target is rather, as Jameson writes, “the various poststructuralist discourses” that has “stigmatized […] anything that smacks of ‘reality,’ ‘representation,’ ‘realism,’ […]” (1991: 93f). But this is about Jameson’s conception of Derrida or Derrida-inspired notions of “textuality”, in which neither the forces of the real nor the signified referent is possible to grasp or make present outside traces in the meaning deferring play of signifiers. A correct assessment of Derrida or not, such conceptions illustrate for Jameson the very ills of the postmodern, and the new forms of representation he imagines must combat exactly this and find new ways to make present the real. But this is about the making present of the real on a “higher plane”: cognitive mapping cannot be about some naïve realism, that is, a sign system conceived as an unproblematic direct-relation to a referent in the real (1991: 94-96). One of the things that most fundamentally distinguish Deleuze from the kinds of theories Jameson targets here (especially in its Baudrillardian form) is of course his realism, as described above. Deleuze’s critique of representation is not about pointing out some impossibility of making present the referent/signified. It is about revealing how the real itself is essentially sub-representational – at least, this is the aspect of reality that productive political art and philosophy must extract from a situation. The problem of representation in Deleuze is not about the various intricacies of (non-)access to the real outside mediation. It is not about referencing some self-identically real or in-itself. It is, as we saw above, about thinking in and through the real as itself creatively differential. In contrast to the play-of-signifiers-kind of critique of representation, both Deleuze and Jameson are shamelessly concerned with the real itself. But their ways of conceiving of the real, and what political art should do with it, are very different.

While Jameson’s notion of figuration on a higher plane is not exactly organic, it seems clear that it does not venture into the sub-representational in Deleuze’s sense. The imagined new forms of figuration themselves, the means for the representation of states of affairs in cognitive mapping, entail ideas of reinventing cartography. This can occasionally lead to Jameson expressing himself in terms seemingly Deleuzian, such as when he refers to the vocation of cognitive mapping as “that of inventing new geotopical cartographies” (1995: 189). But it seems that such invention is – more on this below – more a means for tracing postmodern topographies already there, than it is the drawing of new lines. But from this does not follow that it is concerned with any simple notion of identity. Jameson’s cognitive mapping, as well as The Wire (as described in 2.8 above), represents something comparably supplier. Jameson: “In this new machine, which does not, like the older modernist machinery of the locomotive or the airplane, represent motion, but which can only be represented in motion, something of the mystery
of the new postmodernist space is concentrated.”376 Because of the supple nature of the referent, the idea of cognitive mapping approaches a stretching of what representation is or could be, and raises questions about its stretchability as well as its limits, while simultaneously being all about representation on a “higher plane”. Jameson regards cognitive mapping to have to be “a breakthrough to some as yet unimaginable new mode of representing this”.377 The postmodern entails a loss of representational space. Jameson wants to restore representational space on a higher plane. Deleuze in Cinema 2, in contrast, sees a similar kind of “loss” of representational coordinates that gradually starts to dominate after WWII, as a possibility to think not merely representation on a higher plane, but the sub-representational – not to invent a new macro-politics of the whole, but to invent new forms of micropolitics.378 Both, however, analyze a similar state of history: confusion and disorientation as problems after organic representation – and both from perspectives other than cynicism or resignation.

But the aim of Jameson’s cognitive map – as representation on a higher plane – is traditionally Marxist: to reveal the real states of affairs veiled by ideology. Although in Jameson’s conception, “ideology” is not a mere “fantasy” following some overplayed separation between base and superstructure, but rather part of the real of “spatial” relations, which now works more through the fragmented and non-overviewable than the “false”. Still, what is at stake is to unravel ideology in the sense of, Jameson quoting Althusser, “the representation of the subject’s Imaginary relationship to his or her Real conditions of existence”.379 The goal of the “pedagogy” of cognitive map-

378 Regarding the opposition between the Marxist will towards a politics of a Whole – reducing the specificity of various micro-politics to Parts that can be subsumed in a Whole of the great Marxist struggle – Deleuze and Guattari can also be contrasted with Hard and Negri. While retaining a certain inspiration from Deleuze and Guattari, Hard and Negri still wants to unite “struggles” in a collective whole (Empire, 206) – although in a somewhat different regard than Jameson. They do not want to unite in the sense of a general global class of people, but as a whole in the sense of a differentiated field of singularities, a “multiplicity”, that they with a Marxified Spinoza names “multitude”, Empire, 103, 156, 316, 61-2. The multitude is the common name for what they regard to be a creative specter that haunts an already much deterritorialized (but by updated means still highly hierarchical and exploitative) world order in the form of an ontological revolutionary “potential”. However, I consider this to be an organic – not to mention vague and romantic – concept of a Whole, merely conceived of a little differently than in Jameson. Comparably, as Braidotti writes, “[t]here is no over-arching meta-narrative of one global multitude in Deleuze’s philosophy of radical immanence, as there is in Hardt and Negri’s totalizing neo-Marxist narrative”, 2006: 82. For an account of the differences on these matters between on the one hand Marxist thinkers of the Whole and unified struggle like Jameson and David Harvey and on the other Deleuze and Guattari’s micro-politics as well as various “minoritarian” movements, see Pelagia Goulimari, “‘Myriad Little Connections’: Minoritarian Movements in the Postmodernism Debate”, Postmodern Culture (14:3, May, 2004).
ping, then, corresponds to the Marxist notion of having to bring illumination about the real nature of the whole to those (all) who are fooled not by a “false consciousness” so much as a disoriented consciousness.\footnote{This shift is also reflected in Jameson’s usage of other classical Marxist terms. In questioning the continued relevance of the term “alienation”, he suggests “psychic fragmentation” as a “better term for what ails us today”, 1991: 90.}

So what does \textit{The Wire} manage to do? Toscano and Kinkle find value in \textit{The Wire}’s “epistemic reflexivity”: there is no promised revelation of a truth-explanation (such as a conspiracy) “‘behind all the tragedy and the fraud’ and the idea of money’s routes” (9). They regard this epistemic reflexivity to be about, as stated above, an “inevitable aesthetical and epistemological barrier” that is “dramatising the struggles of any critical or political ‘will to know’” (10). But if “inevitable” does this not also uphold a barrier towards revealing the full complexities of global capitalism? Is there not a certain conflict between an “inevitable aesthetical and epistemological barrier” and the speculative idea of a cognitive map? It seems to me that a successful cognitive map – whether possible or not – is precisely the speculative idea of going beyond any such “inevitable” limits.

What is epistemic reflexivity? Generally, reflexivity and especially “epistemic reflexivity” can mean different things. Various notions of epistemic-(or self-) reflexivity are a part of reactions against assumptions of accessing reality directly in certain documentary traditions. But documentary reflexivity can also be part of what seemingly paves the way for an objective real instead of problematizing the notion of being able to access it as such. Epistemic reflexivity regarding aesthetic parameters is part of the positivistic methodology of a certain classical anthropological film – which is certainly driven by a will to know. Here epistemological reflexivity, as Trinh T. Minh-ha writes, is “virtually synonymous with being scientific” (1993: 103f). It concerns the exposing of techniques, perspectives and methods in production, she argues, with the aim of making see-through that which otherwise stands in the way of truth and fixed meaning. If there is an epistemological reflexivity in \textit{The Wire} it is part of fiction and has other expressions and aims (political argument) compared to the anthropological film referred to here. But the similarities in positing and adhering to an aesthetics subordinated to epistemological and representational aims, however, are still there to the extent that a comparison could be made. When \textit{The Wire} is the least representational in Toscano and Kinkle’s suggested sense of being reflexive about what they can and cannot represent it might be even more representational in the sense of partly pertaining to a sort of scientific methodological rigor.\footnote{“Attention to visual and material mediations also shows \textit{The Wire} to be a very reflexive study on what modalities of mapping and representation are bearers of effective knowledge”, Toscano and Kinkle, 2009b: 9.} But it is highly doubtful that their idea of an epistemic reflexivity is particularly applicable to \textit{The Wire}. There are more prosaic reasons for why...
The Wire avoided a more expansive representation of the more abstract or intricate parts of global capitalism than epistemic reflexivity. For David Simon, you “can find where the money went”, but The Wire made a “choice to center itself on the other America, the one that got left behind”. And regarding a kind of “figuration” of the abstract, for Simon, the anonymous and globally moving Greek “represented capitalism in its purest form”. The choice not to further map their global movements is also less about reflexivity than conditions of production. In a DVD commentary, Ed Burns says:

Something we really didn’t explore, or couldn’t get around to explore, is how fascinating their world [the Greeks] must be, since Baltimore was just a little sliver of their world [...] They are the only thing that really went global. I mean the whole idea of globalization, as being pushed by the school in Chicago, never really materialized, or can’t materialize. But in the criminal world, it did materialize. So you have Columbians in bed with the Russians, Yugoslavs in bed with the Turks, and all these groups coming together because its capitalism without any barrier (s5:04).

And when Ed Burns (in the documentary The Game is Real) says that The Wire only “allude[s] to the real”, which Toscano and Kinkle find resonating with their own argument, this has, if considering the full quote, actually nothing to do with an aesthetical reflection of the limits of representation in relation to the unrepresentable. It is instead about how the actual fates of real people in the ghetto is too bleak, and would therefore not work as engaging fiction. I argue that reflexivity in the sense of dramatizing an epistemic limit as described by Toscano and Kinkle is not a central factor in The Wire. It does not offer epistemological closure, that is true, but from that does not follow that it foregrounds an epistemological limit. The Wire, rather, is an epistemic opening. It is less about the hardships of dealing with an “inevitable” limitation for a will to know, than it is an opening to transgress such limitations. Beyond his own pessimistic concerns with blockages, this is also what is interesting with Jameson’s basic idea of cognitive mapping. The idea of cognitive mapping arises from a need to find a solution to the problem of there being a limit to what can be grasped.

Let us now get back to what is entailed in the idea of cognitive mapping, how Jameson conceives of it and what it could be beyond his conception. Would not a mapping of the most abstract global capitalist structures unavoidably have to be about sub-representational mapping? In many senses what for Jameson is in excess of representation-knowledge is mostly a matter of “spatial” complexity – a totality of relations that are too vast and complex for the possibility to be boiled down to a representation for an individual. But the basic idea of cognitive mapping still certainly have room for – or

382 Simon interviewed by Jesse Pearson, Vice, op-cit.
383 Simon interviewed by Meghan O’Rourke, Slate Magazine 2006.
rather must contain – the mapping of capital itself, which from a Deleuzian perspective, as we will see, is something like a problematic multiplicity. But even if we underline this aspect of the cognitive map, the question is: does the map merely trace the subrepresentational flows of capital or does it help to draw new lines? Here we find a real limit of a full cognitive map – it seems that whatever it covers it merely traces it. Deleuze and Guattari argue that the following of a flow, in a material or a phenomenon such as the market, is what the “artisan” (craftsperson) does. They contrast this with the artist (or the “tranhumant”) that does not follow flows, “but draw a circuit” – if they follow a flow they do so only to enter into a “circuit” (ATP, 409-410).

To make a cognitive map of contemporary capitalism must in some sense unavoidably be a creative act that stands on its own. Even the most representational of Jameson’s conceptions of the map does something to the terrain by making it cognitively overviewable (and, as Jameson would say, by infusing the field with the very utopian desire that drives the very creation of the map). But we must also recognize this as a reduction of what political art does from a Deleuzian perspective as well as from the perspective of the untimely-image. This is because it only mirrors what is wrong with what is already there (no matter how much a utopian desire is the cause or how many characters that are driven by a utopian impulse). Jameson’s idea of the cognitive map itself surely has the aim of reconfiguring people’s desires (instead of merely appealing to their “interests” or sense of knowledge). But on the one hand it is still unclear why, of all kinds of political art, cognitive mapping would have the capacity to reconfiguring people’s desires. There is no reason, writes Rancière, “why understanding the state of the world should prompt a decision to change it”.384 But on the other hand, the very idea of cognitive mapping is to go beyond mere abstract knowledge and provide an illuminating experience. Still, the cognitive map is basically meant to represent already given relations – with the added caveat that this representation would have to be stretched-out and supple in its axes and coordinates in or-

384 Rancière, 2009: 75. As pointed out above the politics of The Wire seem to be conceived of in the classical sense of showing an intolerable reality in order to anger the viewers enough to take action. Rancière writes about what he calls the “classic use of the intolerable image”, which “traced a straight line from the intolerable spectacle to awareness of the reality it was expressing; and from that to the desire to act in order to change it”, ibid., 103. But this logic with its assumed links “between representation, knowledge and action” was part of a larger social frame or logic that made it possible. The chain, which included “the strength of political movements that translated [the content of the art] into practice”, has been undermined and its links divorced. This is of course in agreement with what many have pointed out before, not least Fredric Jameson. Rancière also does not have particularly unique ideas about what political art could be today. He has found a “[r]enewed confidence in the political capacity of images” that “assumes a critique of this [older] strategic schema”, and that instead “help[s] sketch new configurations of what can be seen, what can be said and what can be thought and, consequently, a new landscape of the possible”, ibid.
der to truly mirror these relations. But in this sense, it seems that the cognitive map is not itself expressing generative potential.

But if we push the idea of the cognitive map beyond this, we could ask in what sense the problematic multiplicity of capital is a material for creation? Or how any mapping of capitalist structures at large could be a generative-map? Capitalism for Deleuze and Guattari is basically a new logic of socially distributing flows of life. From its earliest phases, it is a highly deterritorializing force, “an immanent system that’s constantly overcoming its own limitations” (Negotiations, 171). (Or as David Harvey puts it: “capitalism [...] a social system internalizing rules that ensure it will remain a permanently revolutionary and disruptive force”, op-cit.) But no matter how decoded it becomes, capitalist deterritorializations can only be relative. Capitalism always come up against the limits it transgresses “in a broader form”, first of all, “because its fundamental limit is Capital itself” (Negotiations, 171). But given this unavoidable limitation to Capital, capitalism is a harnessing of capital through “axioms”. It adds new axioms or subtracts them, or subtracts axioms in one place and adds them in another. A central thesis in Deleuze and Guattari, is that capital as such is “schizophrenic” while capitalism and the capitalist institutions like the state are axiomatic. While abstract capital can translate into actual money, capital itself (monetary mass) is something like a problematic multiplicity that fluctuates outside the control of any agency.

Capital is a deterritorializing force that must be harnessed somehow – if only by the minimal amount of regulating axioms – in order for capitalist society to hold together. Capitalism must be axiomatic. But no axiomatic can ever be fully binding: flows constantly “escape”. Furthermore, capital constantly creates new flows – flows of populations, commodities, labor, knowledge, etc. – and new problems in a never-ending process of unfolding.

### Elaboration: Capitalism as an Immanent Axiomatic

Deleuze and Guattari conceive of capitalism as an immanent axiomatic system. “Capitalism is indeed an axiomatic”, they write, “because it has no laws but immanent ones.”

This is best understood in contrast to “codes”, which are transcendent in the sense of fixed at a point outside of that which it regulates. Codes may be said to correspond with “Law” (e.g. traditional moral Law). It is in this sense that capitalism is de-coded (barring its basically fluid social reterritorializations and neo-arcaism). Compared to Laws or the codes of for instance feudal forms of social organization, monetary axioms have a processual nature and are immanent to the system. They are subject to, or constantly under

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385 Daniel Smith makes the connection between Deleuze and Guattari’s conception of capital and Deleuze’s concept of a problematic multiplicity, 2003: 435. Fredric Jameson on his part conceives of Capital in advanced capitalism as an absent totality but that is also an ontological ground the equivalent of the Hegelian Absolute or Spinoza’s God or Nature, 1995: 82.

386 ATP, 463. For how this relates to the term axiom in science and mathematics, see 461
the possibility of being subject to, changes from within (and no one expects otherwise). Monetary axioms – i.e., capitalism’s “internal barriers” – therefore concerns “experimentation” and even “intuition” and correspond to jurisprudence more than Law in the transcendent sense. Subtracting axioms, which is most pronounced in neoliberalism, is itself an axiomatic practice (ATP, 462).

We live in a capitalist world. Local variations in ways of axiomatizing are not a very decisive factor in the larger scheme of things. There is “an independent, worldwide axiomatic that is like a single City”, a world market to which all states are different “models of realization”. The global axiomatic structures diminish the importance of differences between states in axiomatic practice – neo-liberal, socialist, social democratic, totalitarian, etc.

A basic premise for the side of capitalism that is deterritorializing is its being organized around immanent processes instead of transcendent Law – processes, furthermore, in which the circulation and growth of capital is the value, not what is produced or sold. The axioms that regulate the flows of capital, of populations, commodities, labor, knowledge, etc., therefore do not constitute a system of “meaning”. (This is also why Capitalism can adapt to and harmonize with a wide spectrum of social value systems or states forms – reactionary, progressive, totalitarian, liberal, etc.) But the axioms themselves do not constitute a deterritorializing driving force, they only capture the flows into a regulatory system of sorts. But capitalism as a larger system is constantly escaping on all sides. Its productions, its art, and its science form decoded and deterritorialized flows that do not merely submit to the corresponding axiomatic, but cause some of their currents to pass through the mesh of the axiomatic, underneath [...] the reterritorializations. [...] Capitalism is continually cutting off the circulation of flows, breaking them and deferring the break, but these same flows are continually overflowing” (AO, 410-11).

Axioms harness and utilize capitalism’s otherwise uncontrollable, expanding movements (that draws nearer its absolute limit or “threshold”, i.e. the point where as a form of social organization it could no longer hold together). In Anti-Oedipus Deleuze and Guattari also point out – following Marx’s notion of capitalism as the best and the worst that has happened to the human race, and in any respect better than the modes of production with its rigid hierarchies that preceded it – how capitalism produces real, and often highly affirmable, change in the actual, in that it deterritorializes and decodes rigid hierarchies, structures and identities in the social body. Important for Marx and parts of subsequent Marxist thought – obliterating any desire to go back to previous stages – is that this doing away with previous static and hierar-

387 For further elucidations of Marxist accounts of how capitalism’s purely economic “internal barriers” work (in conjunction with its constant need for expansion in relation to a not yet internalized outside), see Hardt & Negri, Empire, 221-27.
chical structures increases new potential to go beyond it. As capitalism de-
territorializes the conditions of possibility to go beyond it increases. This is
about countering that does not try to negate but rather pass through capitalism.
Having to pass through capitalism instead of trying to critique it or
bring it down from an imagined outside position, is of course a fundamentally
Marxist position, shared also by Jameson.389 Deleuze and Guattari certainly
share this position in the sense of having to pass through. But they are less
concerned with some majestic overturning, or transformation of a Whole.
They conceive of potential for the new within capitalism differently than a
certain Marxist tradition on many other accounts. “Revolutionary probabi-
lities”, says Deleuze, “do not consist in the contradictions of the capitalist
system, but rather in its efforts to escape – always unexpected, always re-
newed – that undermine it. […] A system like capitalism escapes in every
direction; it escapes and then capitalism fills in the gaps […]”390 It is perhaps
with the inclusion of such lines that a map of capitalist structures could form
a generative-map.

But what is the point of countering capitalism if it is itself such a deterri-
torialization-fest? As stated, Marx held capitalism as both the best and the
worst. It frees up and creates new forms of exploration and repression. In
Deleuze and Guattari’s terms capitalism deterritorializes with one hand
while it tends to bring along even worse forms of repressive social and eco-

dnomic reterritorializations with the other. Capitalism may leak and provide
new flows, but is also exploitive and repressive on a whole new level. It
effects new forms poverty and underdevelopment for many, and introduces a
new logic of hierarchy. Deleuze and Guattari describe the history of capita-
ilism as the history of preventing “the becoming of subjected peoples” (WPh,
108). Capitalism decodes only to recode on another level and through other
means – although the recodings are not codes in a transcendent or static
sense; they rather serve as functions relative to the more or less temporary
needs of the system (AO, 168, 253). Deleuze and Guattari: “Everything re-
turns or recurs: States, nations, families. That is what makes the ideology of
capitalism ‘a motley painting of everything that has ever been believed.’ The
real is not impossible; it is simply more and more artificial” (37). Any gen-
erative-map of capitalism would therefore have to be extremely creative with
what it maps.

So how does this conception of capitalism apply to the world depicted in
The Wire? Neoliberal capitalism, which subtracts axioms at least as much as
they add new ones, of course entails the increased deregulation of capital.
But as Eric Beck writes, neoliberalism has

389 This also Hardt and Negri’s basic point of view, see for instance, Empire, 218.
390 Deleuze, “Five Propositions on Psychoanalysis”, Desert Island and Other Texts, 279.
been forced to subtract particularly those [axioms] relating to labor productivity, because workers, the traditional instigator of new axioms, have become less massified and have ceased making demands of the state. The consequence of this is that capitalism is not pushing beyond its limits with as much regularity and with as great a force as it used to. It has become internally impoverished and ascetic, which manifests itself in growth rates in the “core” capitalist economies that are much slower than during the Keynesian era, the time of maximum axioms. Indeed, if the neoliberal era has seen the deregulation of capital, it has also witnessed new and aggressive regulations of populations and of individuals (op–cit).

The artistic expression that is The Wire mirrors or rather concentrates and excels upon these kinds of effects of deregulated capitalism (a chaos-capitalism, if you will). The Wire critically and angrily reflects a blocked “earth” and a blocked people. There is an extent to which this can be contrasted to Deleuze and Guattari’s notion of the “resistance to the present” in art and philosophy. They conceive of a “resistance to the present” as creation that “calls for a future form, for a new earth and people that do not yet exist”. And as they go on to write: “Art and philosophy converge at this point: the constitution of an earth and a people that are lacking as the correlate of creation.”

Is this a call for the “majestically New”? No. This conception is irreducible to the utopian impulse towards a different actual whole. It is also not about the actually new as a part. First of all, it is not, of course, about the actual creation of a people. It is merely a “summoning” that deals with the sub-representational itself (beyond the representational plane of “a people”). “The artist or philosopher”, write Deleuze and Guattari in What is Philosophy?, “is quite incapable of creating a people, each can only summon it with all its strength”. Neither is it, of course, a people to come in a linear or fascist sense since “the race summoned forth by art or philosophy is not the one that claims to be pure but rather an oppressed, bastard, lower, anarchical, nomadic, and irremediably minor race […]”

It is also not about providing the seeds for a preconceived idea of an actual future people, but could instead regard the dispersion, fragmentation or minorization of an existing, seemingly existing, or even still “lacking” one, capturing or “summoning” movements of becoming in it (ATP, 346). Powerful political art, as seen from the perspective of Deleuze and Guattari, is about the summoning and co-creation along with more or less existing virtual forces. With the terminology of the untimely-image we can say that art helps to shape a virtual “contour” from virtual movements on the way. As Deleuze and Guattari write in A Thousand Plateaus: “The poet […] is one who lets loose molecular populations in hopes that this will sow the seeds of, or even engender, the

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391 WPh, 108. In principle, the origin for these types of claims can most likely be found in Spinoza’s claim that the prophet produces his own people. For a definition of what Deleuze and Guattari means with the concept of the “Earth” see, ATP, 509.

392 WPh, 110, 109. See also ATP, 345-346, 379.
people to come, that these populations will pass into a people to come, open a cosmos” (345, emphasis mine). So while art is (of course) “incapable” of creating an actual people, its generative abilities work on these levels of virtual potential.

Is this a way to abstract away from the specific and actual cases of political struggles? Yes, in the sense of a refusal to be reduced to actual states of affairs. But more importantly no, since this type of creation is always extracted from an actual and specific now-here, and is “always at the critical point at which it is connected with the present relative milieu, and especially with the forces stifled by this milieu.” (WPh, p. 100.) With the untimely-image we must press the importance of adding to these kinds of counter-actualization of the actual, the creation of contours of the new. The counter-actualization of a specific situation (actual) and the extracting of a specific problem (virtual), and the creation of a contour, created along with the problem, guarantees that the creation is simultaneously rooted in an actual political situation while dealing with virtual potential that exceeds it.

But if The Wire is the mirroring of a blocked “earth” and a blocked people in a way that can be partly contrasted to Deleuze and Guattari’s notion of summoning a new earth and a new people, in what sense could it ever be an untimely-image or even an untimely-site? Above we have many times and in different forms encountered the problem of an increased proximity between a deterritorializing political art and a deterritorialized/deterritorializing contemporary capitalism. Given the “increasing isomorphism of processes of complexity and difference to capitalist productivity” (Thoburn, op-cit), it seems that a political art specifically concerned with mapping contemporary capitalism would have at least to limit its diagrammatic aspects – be much closer to Bacon than Pollock, to reference the discussion in 6.1. A strict limitation of diagrammatic aspects is certainly achieved by The Wire’s mapping of capitalism – although it may remain too limited. But even if macro-sociological and strictly representational aspects are in many ways dominant, The Wire as a whole constitutes a real and relevant political force that makes graspable vast sociopolitical relations that are otherwise hard to grasp. It fulfills a function of cognitive mapping, in a semi-local way, but in what sense could it also be a generative-map? And in what sense could it be an untimely-site? The untimely-site or even the untimely-image cannot stand in simple opposition to totalizing or macro-political efforts when warranted. But the main point is that The Wire is not only a totalizing or macro-political effort. It contains a “void” of abstracts flows of Capital that curbs any “molar” harmony. The Wire is a connection and weaving together of many small

注393 This is basically the argument made by Peter Hallward in his Out of this World: Deleuze and the Philosophy of Creation (New York: Verso, 2006). For a critiques of this critique, see Williams, 2011: 177f, n. 10; see also “Deleuzian Politics? A Roundtable Discussion. Éric Alliez, Claire Colebrook, Peter Hallward, Nicholas Thoburn, Jeremy Gilbert (chair), New Formations (68, Spring 2010), pp. 143-187.
maps into big map. But the connections or superimpositions of the smaller maps produce leakages. The larger map in the end contains fissures, holes and indications of strange movements – from the level of capitalist flows to the level of its cyclic temporarily.

6.3. Conclusions for Chapters 5 and 6 – Two Problems, Two Diverging Evaluations

In Chapter 1 Deleuze was quoted saying that there “is no phenomenon, word or thought which does not have a multiple sense”. The Wire is easily recognized as having a “plurality of senses”. Given this, how has The Wire been evaluated from the perspective of the untimely-image? The untimely-image, both as an image and as a critical framework, is always relative to a specific aesthetic-political problem. Chapters 5 and 6 have focused on what I have argued to be The Wire’s two most explicit aesthetic-political problems – the blackness patterns and the cartography of contemporary capitalist structures. These two problems are intertwined but distinct. The evaluation of The Wire from the perspective of the untimely-image therefore diverges along the specific parameters of the respective problems.

When it comes to the blackness patterns, The Wire fails to do any kind of counter-actualization – in many ways it is merely an unconscious large-scale example of the blackness patterns. But this failure has allowed us, utilizing the untimely-image as a critique, to make a plethora of points around what a contemporary untimely-image of blackness must entail, which culminated in an analysis of an untimely-image in Melville’s Le Samuraï. When it comes to the mapping of advanced capitalism, the evaluation is more complex. There are primarily three aspects of The Wire’s mappings of neoliberal capitalist structures that strongly actualize the question of whether it is an untimely-site that possibly contains untimely-images. The first is the treatment of abstract finance capital in the sense of what has been described as a “void” that is both internal and external to the narrative. The second aspect is the quasi-metaphysical circles described in Chapter 3. The third aspect is the connections or superimpositions of the smaller maps into a big map. The big map thereby comes to contain certain fissures with a kind of “objective indetermination”. Together these three aspects make up a playing field that contains some of its elements on the edge of generative forces and/or the non-

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394 Nietzsche and Philosophy, 4. This “plurality” is a more or less objective and determined multiplicity and is therefore not to be confused with the very different notion of “open for subjective interpretations”.

244
actual in some form, and which hints at "a problem that is more profound than the situation", and which therefore seem to contain conditions of possibility for an untimely-image. In this sense *The Wire* is a kind of untimely-site. As such it includes certain tendencies of untimely-images. In the end *The Wire* is unable to let these tendencies breathe and be fully expressed – in the end they are too immersed in and controlled by the sociological coordinates among which they occur.

The value of the discussion of *The Wire* for further defining the untimely-image, as stated, is not that it would merely provide a given empirical example of the theory. The main value lies in everything that has been thrown up and articulated along the very path of investigating it. One of the central questions asked in advance concerned the natures also of its specific ways of possibly failing to express clear untimely-images (see the preface & 2.6 above). As we have seen, *The Wire* contains aspects that points to it being an untimely-site. But it is in many ways too much of a representational-sociological venture for there to be any clear untimely-images. The path across *The Wire* has still been very instrumental for the questions dealt with in this study. It has on the one hand revealed how the untimely-image as a critical framework can function and along the way helped to explore different notions of what political art is or could be, and on the other hand served, both negatively and positively, to further articulate complexities in the concept of the untimely-image itself as political film-thinking expressing contours of the new.
Summary and Conclusions

The untimely-image crystallizes a set of criteria for thinking potentials for the new in film regarded as thought. Over the course of six chapters, this study has developed this concept – including two sub-concepts called contours of the new and the untimely-site – and put it to work. It was developed across discussions of a range of thinkers with emphasis on Deleuze, and across several works with emphasis on *The Wire*. The overarching concern has been how to conceive of moving-image thought in the contemporary world as directly expressive, *not of the new itself*, but of potentials for the new – or more specifically, what I call *contours* of the new. An untimely-image counter-actualizes specific aesthetic-political givens and extracts from the givens inherent generative tendencies, and then co-creates with these tendencies and shapes them into sub-representational contours. It concerns the clearing for and the expression of new figures of potential in thought in the form of moving-images. This study goes through many levels of definitions and investigates many implications of these ideas, with the final aim of formulating a distinct conception of political moving-image art, which can also serve as a critical framework for evaluating political art more generally.

In Chapters 3 to 6 *The Wire* has served the double function of on the one hand complicating and giving specifica
tion to the development of the untimely-image and on the other serving as a case in which the untimely-image has been put to work as a critical framework. Across 2.8 and Chapters 3-6, *The Wire* and the untimely-image were put together in processes of juxtaposition – they have been seen to meet up, cross over, separate, and reproblematize each other – in a way that kept deferring a final evaluation until the end for the sake of further revealing nuances of both *The Wire* and the untimely-image.

What it means to express contours of the new is an intricate problem that this study has investigated from many angles. Chapter 1 articulated the specific definitions of the terms “contour” and “new” as operative in this study. From an extensive treatment, first of all, of the partly differing conceptions of the new in Badiou and Deleuze, a set of coordinates were selected and extracted that were then composed into a definition of contours of the new that can be summarized as concerning subtle and micro-political generative ideas. The term “contour”, furthermore, was defined as a distinct formulation of generative tendencies or potentials, in contrast to its normal aesthetical meaning as “outline” of a given shape. This chapter also discussed in what sense the new can be thought of as something more “objective” or “anony-
mous” than what is new for an individual subject or a mere social construction; in what sense the concept of the untimely-image, somewhat controversially, does not directly concern spectators; and ended with a first comment on how to think the problem of the new in the sense of the untimely vis-à-vis the more “timely” function of the “new” in consumer culture but also in relation to the larger mechanisms of an increasingly deterritorialized advanced capitalism – the latter also functioned as an introduction to a problem that ran through all the chapters.

Chapter 2 narrowed down the discussion to moving images. It began by developing the most basic components of the untimely-image as regarding moving images with sound, mostly through an extensive reading of Deleuze’s cinema book’s concept of image, taxonomy of different kinds of moving-image thought, and what I conceive of as its central theme: the creation of the new as an aesthetic-ethical-political struggle. From there the chapter worked its way towards a more full definition of the untimely-image, and its central characteristics of contours of the new, counter-actualization, and an interlinked concept called the untimely-site, as now all concerning moving images with sound. This chapter then proceeded with a discussion of the importance of “retaining a form of the true” in political art in a situation that is dominated by powers that are increasingly working through the fluid, open, and modulating than through strict identity and representational forms. The Wire was here introduced as a stretching and complication of representation that requires extensive investigation in order to be evaluated from the perspective of the untimely-image. A discussion of Deleuze’s notion of sub-representational logic and the intricate ways that it unavoidably is and has to be intertwined with the actual and the representational concluded this chapter.

Chapter 3 continued with a closer inspection of The Wire as a further complication of the parameters of the untimely-image. It investigated first the various “literary” structures of this serial, and conceptualized its “naturalism”, its “tragic” aspects, and its “circular” motifs. The second part of this chapter consisted of a “methodical” remark on this study’s treatment of The Wire. It described the senses in which it was to be subjected to an explication as well as a “complication” and “reproblematization”. But key here was an elucidation of the ways in which The Wire is a kind of moving-image social science, and how to assess this from the perspective of the untimely-image and from the perspectives of Deleuze and Guattari’s ideas of the relations between art, philosophy, and science.

Chapter 4 first analyzed the intricate structures of The Wire as a system of ideas and theses, or differently put, as a thought-image-map of sociological relations that also constitutes a set of political arguments. The second part of the chapter analyzed and conceptualized the details and the overall logic of its audiovisual configuration.
Chapters 5 and 6 extracted and directly dealt with what had been announced as *The Wire’s* two most explicit political problems – its expression of blackness, and the mapping of contemporary capitalism. Chapter 5 formulated first what was called the blackness patterns, which are a dominant expression of blackness in contemporary serial drama, and which does *not* concern stereotypes or some simple binary other to whiteness, but rather a more abstract logic of clichés that reduces blackness to the sociological. These patterns were set up as the target for what an untimely-image of blackness in contemporary drama primarily needs to “counter-actualize”. These patterns, and the possibility of their countering, were also situated within a larger capitalist context of commodification of difference and otherness. The next part of this chapter interrogated *The Wire* from the double perspectives of the blackness patterns and the untimely-image, which revealed it as a failure regarding this particular aesthetic-political problem. Given this failure, Chapter 5 ended with a presentation and conceptualization of a more clear case of an untimely-image of blackness, labeled the Valérie-image, found in Jean-Pierre Melville’s *Le Samouraï* (1967), and which was described as highly relevant as a continued resource of potential also for the counter-actualization of contemporary blackness patterns.

Chapter 6 investigated *The Wire’s* mappings of neoliberal capitalism. It grappled with the questions of how differing conceptions of mapping in political art relate, and how to evaluate them in view of the idea of expressing contours of the new. It dealt with the difficulties of what it must mean for political art to map the intricate logic of contemporary capitalism, and evaluated different conceptions of such mappings in view of the parameters of the untimely-image and the untimely-site: in what senses can this kind of mapping be an untimely-site or an untimely-image? In what senses can a thought-image map be formative of potential for new thought instead of merely more exhaustively cover the given? And how is the mapping of abstract flows of capital to be conceived? *The Wire* was investigated as a kind of “cognitive map” in Fredric Jameson’s sense, and compared with a Deleuzian conception of mapping as a “diagram” which is to say the drawing of a map of potentials that is also an act of co-creation with those potentials. In the end a series of factors – its treatment of abstract finance capital, its quasi-metaphysical circles (as treated in Chapter 3), and its superimpositions of maps that made up a bigger map containing certain leakages and fissures – helped add up to an evaluation of *The Wire* as a kind of untimely-site, but an untimely-site that while containing certain tendencies was unable to express any clear untimely-images. Still, *The Wire* was confirmed to have been highly valuable in the gradual development of this concept.

The untimely-image is both a distinct idea of what political moving-image thought could/should be and a specific but adaptable critical framework for evaluation. It is not a distinct idea in the sense of a manifest, a program or a set of actual rules to follow. The untimely-image has a very specif-
ic abstract content—schematically, counter-actualization and creating contours of the new—but as both art and concept it is always relative to the specificity of a given problem. For a thinker like Deleuze, the specificity of every problem is central. But where Deleuze tends to invent a new concept or reinvent an old one for each problem, the untimely-image crystallizes a set of abstract coordinates that must be part of the treatment of the shifting parameters of any concrete problem.

But this means that an untimely-image is only fully defined in relation to the concrete problem. The development of the untimely-image has in this study therefore been conducted on two levels. The first level regarded the extensive articulation of the components and characteristics that, independently of the problem, remain in every case. The second level, which also complicates and develops the core components and characteristics, put the concept to work regarding two problems in *The Wire* that added specifications. But this second level opens up to an infinity of untimely-images, all with the core ideas intact but with new specifications. Through this opening the untimely-image finally extends beyond this study.
Abbreviations

AO – Gilles Deleuze & Félix Guattari, Anti-Oedipus
ATP – Gilles Deleuze & Félix Guattari, A Thousand Plateaus
BE – Alain Badiou, Being and Event
C1 – Gilles Deleuze, Cinema 1: The Movement-Image
C2 – Gilles Deleuze, Cinema 1: The Time-Image
DR – Gilles Deleuze, Difference and Repetition
FB – Gilles Deleuze, Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation
LS – Gilles Deleuze, The Logic Of Sense
WPh – Gilles Deleuze & Félix Guattari, What is Philosophy?
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Index of Persons

Adorno, Theodor W., 61
Aeschylus, 134, 136, 143
Agamben, Giorgio, 91
Akerman, Chantal, 177
Alexander, Michelle, 193
Alliez, Eric, 34, 46, 47, 48, 231, 243
Altman, Robert, 92, 93, 167
Alvarez, Rafael, 159
Andersen, Thom, 184
Anderson, Angela, 140, 141
Ansell-Pearson, Keith, 65
Aristotle, 141, 143, 171, 172
Artaud, Antonin, 71, 83
Atlas, John, 142, 144
Bacon, Francis, 48, 53, 58, 69, 74, 98, 115, 126, 127, 216, 217, 218, 243
Badiou, Alain, 11, 16, 18, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 48, 51, 55, 60, 114, 117, 118, 217, 246
Balzac, Honoré de, 133
Baudrillard, Jean, 78, 79, 228
Bay, Michael, 111, 112
Bazin, André, 133, 147, 180, 181, 182, 183
Beck, Eric, 161, 241
Beer, David, 150, 153, 162
Beistegui, Miguel de, 38, 42, 43, 44, 71, 77, 141
Bellour, Raymond, 81, 82, 83
Benjamin, Walter, 141
Bergson, Henri, 35, 36, 37, 38, 42, 44, 45, 66, 75, 76, 77, 79, 81, 83, 86, 91, 100, 102, 103, 106, 107, 109, 150
Blanchot, Maurice, 71, 81
Bloch, Ernst, 230
Bogue, Ronald, 97, 101, 120, 148
Bohrer, Karl Heinz, 141
Bonta, Mark, 152
Boundas, Constantin, 47, 66
Braidotti, Rosi, 14, 61, 62, 65, 111, 125, 196, 197, 198, 235
Bresson, Robert, 97
Briesewitz, Uta, 167, 174, 175, 176
Buchanan, Ian, 232
Buñuel, Luis, 136, 137, 139
Burnett, Charles, 183, 184
Burns, Ed, 149, 159, 167, 237
Burrows, Roger, 150, 153, 162
Butcher, S.H., 135, 136
Chaddha, Anmol, 142, 153, 202, 203
Chanan, Michael, 59
Chappelle, Joe, 167, 177, 178, 179
Clarke, Kamari Maxine, 197
Colebrook, Claire, 79, 243
Colesberry, Robert F., 167, 168, 174, 175, 181
Conley, Tom, 81, 216
Costa, Pedro, 99, 116
Dastur, Françoise, 145
Debord, Guy, 78
Deleuze, Gilles, vi, 9, 11, 12, 13, 15, 16, 18, 19, 20, 23, 24, 25, 30, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60, 61, 62, 63, 64, 65, 66, 68, 69, 70, 71, 72,
231, 232, 233, 234, 235, 236, 237, 238, 239, 241, 248
Johnson-Lewis, Erika, 144
Jones, Kent, 149, 167, 176, 177
Jorgensen, Darren, 232
Kahn-Harris, Keith, 144
Kant, Immanuel, 36, 65, 66, 86, 141
Keeling, Kara, 199
Kelly, Lisa W., 188, 189, 200
Kinkle, Jeff, 169, 182, 183, 218, 219, 220, 236, 237
Kirkegaard, 97
Klein, Amanda Ann, 35, 174
Kluge, Alexander, 212
Kraniauskas, John, 126, 220, 221
Kurosawa, Akira, 82, 113
Lampert, Jay, 50, 51, 105
Latour, Bruno, 152
Lavery, David, 190
Lavik, Erlend, 175
Lazzarato, Maurizio, 165, 197
Lecercle, Jean-Jacques, 35
Lehane, Dennis, 159, 167
Lucasi, Stephen, 163
Lukács, Georg, 138, 172, 224, 229, 230, 231
Lumet, Sidney, 92, 93
Lundemo, Trond, 9, 75
Marrati, Paola, 79, 80, 81, 82, 83, 90, 91, 92, 100, 110, 183
Marshall, C.W., 133
Martin, Jean-Clet, 79, 84, 167
Marx, Karl, 62, 240, 241
Mascaro, Thomas A., 201
Massumi, Brian, 42, 43, 44, 62, 112
Melville, Herman, 133
Melville, Jean-Pierre, 18, 185, 205, 244, 248
Mitchell, W. J. T., 75
Mittell, Jason, 132, 166, 169
Morrison, Toni, 188, 189
Murray, Taber Augustus, 135
Nannicelli, Ted, 182
Negri, Antonio, 122, 192, 193, 225, 227, 228, 235, 240, 241
Newton, Isaac, 45
Nichols, Bill, 173
Nietzsche, Friedrich, 15, 34, 44, 50, 66, 77, 79, 82, 83, 84, 97, 109, 114, 120, 136, 139, 141, 142, 143, 144, 145, 188, 244
Nilsson, Jakob, iii, 16, 132
Ophüls, Max, 105, 106, 109
Ozu, Yasujirō, 94, 98
Pascal, Blaise, 97
Patton, Paul, 65, 66
Péguy, Charles, 108, 109
Peirce, C.S., 78, 89
Pelecanos, George, 159, 167
Penfold-Mounce, Ruth, 150, 153, 162
Pepper, Stephen C., 45
Peroni, Geraldine, 167
Pisters, Patricia, 104, 105
Plato, 37, 39, 79, 83, 120, 139, 141
Polan, Dana, 78, 133, 185, 186
Pollock, Jackson, 216, 217, 243
Potter, Tiffany, 133
Price, Richard, 159, 167
Proust, Marcel, 53, 66, 83, 100, 119
Rajchman, John, 46, 48, 60, 61, 97, 110, 122, 127, 129, 217
Rancière, Jacques, 11, 16, 59, 60, 73, 96, 116, 117, 132, 189, 194, 195, 196, 238
Ray, Nicholas, 136
Read, Jason, 163
Renoir, Jean, 106, 107, 108
Resnais, Alain, 99, 104
Riggs, Marlon, 190
Robinson, Andrews, 189
Rodowick, David N., 86, 88, 101, 180, 198, 199, 230
Roffe, Jon, 34
Rohmer, Éric, 97
Ropars-Wuilleumier, Marie-Claire, 84
Rose, Brian G., 167
Rosenberg, Harold, 53
Rossellini, Roberto, 97
Rushton, Richard, 57, 106
Sabin, Roger, 169, 201
Salam, Reinhan, 144
Schopenhauer, Arthur, 144, 145
Schwartz, David, 186
Scorsese, Martin, 92, 167
Shakespeare, William, 135
Sharma, Ash, 133, 152, 160, 161, 202
Shaviro, Steven, 111
Sheehan, Helena, 160, 168, 203, 228
Shohat, Ella, 180, 198
Singleton, Brian, 191
Smith, Daniel W., 25, 34, 36, 38, 39, 40, 41, 51, 52, 65, 79, 239
Sokurov, Alexander, 177
Solanas, Fernando, 59
Sophocles, 134, 136, 143
Spindler, Fredrika, 9, 106
Spinoza, Baruch, 235, 239, 242
Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty, 189
Stace, W. T., 45
Stam, Robert, 180, 198
Straub, Jean-Marie, 99, 101
Stroheim, Erich von, 136, 137
Sweeney, Sheamus, 160, 168, 203, 228
Söderbergh-Widding, Astrid, 9, 97
Tarde, Gabriel, 152
Thoburn, Nicholas, 62, 243
Thomas, Deborah A., 197
Thorsteinsson, Vidar, 225
Tormey, Simon, 189
Toscano, Alberto, 26, 169, 182, 183, 218, 219, 220, 236, 237
Trinh T. Minh-ha, 169, 236
Venkatesh, Sudhir A., 142, 153
Vertov, Dziga, 69
Vieyra, Paulin Soumanou, 204
Vincendeau, Ginette, 205
Visconti, Luchino, 109
Valiaho, Pasi, 9, 77
Walker, Jesse, 177
Wayne, Mike, 59, 147
Welles, Orson, 94, 99
West, Cornel, 79, 134, 159, 194, 203, 227, 231
Whitehead, Alfred North, 35, 44, 45
Williams, James, 34, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 103, 104, 105, 243
Williams, Linda, 149, 153, 174
Wilson, William Julius, 142, 152, 153, 202, 203
Wiseman, Frederic, 175
Wollen, Peter, 180
Woodberry, Billy, 183, 184
Zimny, Thom, 174
Žižek, Slavoj, 174
Zola, Émile, 133, 134
Zorzi, William F., 159


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