The Brain Is the Screen

Deleuze and the Philosophy of Cinema

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Chapter 7

Signs of the Time

Deleuze, Peirce, and the Documentary Image

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Let us set this essay in Beirut, where documentary filmmakers have struggled to reconstruct the traces of the real—should any real still exist—buried under the heavy weight of discursive representations of their city. Beirut has been easily brought into discourse in Europe and North America, too easily, mostly thanks to the television news. In the erstwhile West, there is little sympathy for the complex history of the Lebanese civil war; the country's history has lapsed and collapsed into clichés, foremost of which is the image of a building shattered by bombs from the Israeli-occupied south. Such clichés would seem to call for a brisk volley of counterclichés, a standard documentary of what "really" happened in Beirut. Yet a number of works by Lebanese documentarists, both in that country and in diaspora, are marked by a simultaneous refusal to validate official discourse or to offer a coherent, activist rallying cry against it.

Many of these documentaries revolve around the moonscape of bombed-out Beirut, truly one of the "any-spaces-whatever" in which emerges what Gilles Deleuze calls the time-image. The Beirut of recent years is full of those "empty or disconnected spaces" that do not permit action as usual but invite contemplation.[1] From these spaces emerge the images of directors such as Jayce Salloum, Walid Ra'ad, Jalal Toufic, and Roula Haj-Ismail: a man's hands obsessively rearrange bullets on a bedspread; inmates at an insane asylum stare into space, traces of anger and intelligence on their slack faces; shot from a car window, the Palestinian refugee camp at Al-Shati blurs by, distinguishable as no more than a cloud of dust; from barred windows we stare into other windows ...[2] Do these documentaries attempt to recuperate the chaos of this postwar city into a knowable whole, or do they see in the chaos "holes" that allow them

to connect to an outside, where meanings cannot be pronounced with finality? On the one hand, these images struggle against the weight of prior pronouncements and, thus, ask to be reconnected to the "story of Beirut," brought into the organic embrace that Deleuze identifies with the movement-image; on the other hand, these images seek to deterritorialize memory, bringing what is remembered into contact with what cannot yet be thought, which Deleuze identifies with the terrible and liberating aperture of the time-image.

Deleuze himself pays little attention to the category of documentary; the conventional distinction on which documentary rests, the distinction between the constructed images of fiction film and the real-world images of documentary, is not really operative in the cinema books. The reason for this lies in Deleuze's own reconceptualization of "reality" in terms of a relationship between virtual image and actual images, both of which are real (the world—i.e., the concrete images we live among and which constitute us—is actual, but the actual is inextricable from a virtual domain that is no less real). The distinction between "documentary" images and "constructed" or "fictional" images is thus meaningless, because all of these images are actualizations of the virtual. Still, "reality" remains a crucial issue for documentary, and so we must ask: what is the real in Deleuze's philosophy of cinema? In what follows, I explore how Deleuze brings together Peirce's semiotics, Bergson's theory of memory, and Foucault's archaeology to describe the relationship between the real and its embodiment in cinema.[3]

First, I must stress that the connection between the image—that is, the Peircean sign, as Deleuze deploys it—and the real is not one of representation but one of *implication*. The sign never represents the real, in the sense of fixing the meaning of an event; rather, it enfolds or implies it.[4] As physicist David Bohm writes, in language recalling Leibniz, "Whatever persists with a constant form is sustained as the unfoldment of a recurrent and stable pattern which is constantly being renewed by enfoldment and dissolved by unfoldment. When the renewal ceases the form vanishes."[5] An image is the explicit, unfolded, or apparent form of a virtual that is implicit, enfolded, or latent; a single image may be the explicit form of an entire virtual universe. At every level of the sign, certain qualities, perceptions, actions, and thoughts are thus extracted from a virtual archive that includes, but is not limited to, memory, what is forgotten or unknown, and what is known only to the body. An image *is* the actualization—which is to say, the presentification, the making "now"—

of the virtual, and so the virtual itself remains largely "outside" the vast majority of cinematic images, comprising the "deserted layers of our time which bury our own phantoms."[6] But how do we get to this deserted layer, this "unthought" which Deleuze claims it is our task to try to think?

The question takes us to the heart of Deleuze's cinema books, and the distinction between the movement-image and the time-image. Conventional documentaries, which largely revolve around the movement-image, proceed with the belief that those images can reproduce the real, but because movement-images maintain a divide between actual and virtual, they effectively impoverish the image. The very assumption that there is a real to be re-presented dooms such images to a logic of diminishing returns, whereby the best attempts to counter the conventional wisdom (of, say, the situation in Beirut) degenerate into a new set of clichés. The time-image, by contrast, disintegrates the distinction between actual and virtual because it renders indiscernible the very distinction between present (actual) and past (virtual). As I have said, the image actualizes the virtual, but the virtual also exists as the reflection of the actual, a kind of "vast crystalline universe" of virtual images, of "[m]emories, dreams, even worlds" (*The Time-Image*, 81). Thus, each virtual image leads to "deeper and deeper circuits which are themselves virtual" (80), but at the most contracted of these circuits, past and present, actual and virtual, converge at a point of indiscernibity, a seed crystal from which the time-image germinates.

In the cinema, the time-image is catalyzed when images begin to plumb the archive of memory that is latent in the body and brain, for it is here that the empirically verifiable category of reality begins to lose its integrity. For Deleuze, the question is not to find images that approach reality; rather, it is to actualize the virtual by bringing thought into contact with a virtual image or sign, which is essentially "more real than reality." For this reason, Deleuze prefers Peirce's semiotics to Saussure's, as we find in his critique of Christian Metz, whose quasi-Saussurian semiotics effectively reduces images to linguistic utterances (25–29). Most semiotic theories tend to be theories of mediation, such that signs, typically linguistic ones, intercede between thought and reality. By contrast, Peirce's semiotics offers a flexible array of signs, of which language is only a category of the most general of signs, the *legisign*. Peirce's numerous categories of signs range from abstract and conventional signs, such as language, to the most emergent of signs, such as a physiological response to

an event. Although Peirce maintains that the world can only be known through its signs, he also maintains that signs qua images are real, and therein lies his appeal for Deleuze (30).

The flexibility of Peirce's sign system is most useful for describing how documentary engages with events. Documentary does make generalizations about the world, but it also depends an intimate contact with the world. Peirce suggests three different modes in which the real appears; he calls these three modes Firstness, Second-ness, and Thirdness, though there remains a kind of "before of First-ness." "The present pure zero is prior to every first.... It is the germinal nothing, in which the whole universe is involved or fore-shadowed. As such, it is absolutely undefined and unlimited possi-bility—boundless possibility. There is no compulsion and no law. It is boundless freedom."[7] As the material of the world is taken up in signs, this fecund field of pure possibility remains, and in it lies the hope of infinite, unimaginable signs to come. We shall see that this quality of limitlessness, the virtual reservoir that exists before a sign has been marshaled to particular uses, returns (in some sense) at the level of Thirdness, the most rigorous and abstract mobilization of semiotic material.

Firstness, for Peirce, is "a mere quality," such as "red, bitter, tedious, hard, noble."[8] This remarkable range of first impressions indicates that for Peirce sensibility does not distinguish between sub-jective and objective perceptions. Indeed, a documentary that aims to be "objective" is in fact screening out the experience of Firstness that does not accord with the dictate of objectivity. Firstness is some-thing so emergent that it is not yet quite a sign, for it is perceptible only in the crowd of other signs: we do not perceive only the quality of red, or of melancholy; rather, we perceive these as a complex with other signs. It is a sign of possibility, "a mere may-be." Firstness char-acterizes the complex of possible images among which, according to Bergson, we selectively choose only those that interest us. Yet as soon as we perceive a sign (as soon as there is, in Bergson's term, a brain-image), it enters into action and into the sensory-motor schema. Peirce has a special love for Firstness: it is "predominant in the ideas of freshness, life, freedom."[9] Semiotic terms associated with Firstness are the sign itself, namely, the *qualisign*; the relation of the sign to its object, which is *iconic*, that is, the sign denotes the object by being like it; and how the interpretant represents the sign, as a *rheme* (Deleuze's *reume*), a sign of possibility. Deleuze translates Peirce's category of Firstness as the *affection-image*, an image of barely contained feeling

or affect: "it is quality or power, it is potentiality considered for itself as expressed."[10] In the affection-image, a becoming-other occurs; for as soon as we have sensation or feeling, we change. Thus, in the affection-image there is an enfolding of perceiving self into perceived world.

Firstness, the realm of barely observed qualities, is where documentary films whet their whistles on the stuff of reality. Documentaries remain fascinated with qualities observed as they emerge fresh from the undifferentiated mass of the world. Indeed, this is one strength of documentary of which Deleuze takes little account. The gleam on the knife in *Lulu* and the luminous planet of Falconetti's face in *The Passion of Joan of Arc* are arresting affection-images, as Deleuze attests, but they are so partly because of the efforts of the lighting director and others responsible for the mise-en-scène. In a documentary, by contrast, we observe the birth of affection-images from the world itself, with minimal intervention by the filmmaker.[11]

The sense of possibility that characterizes the affection-image precedes perception, for affection conjures an anonymous quality of feeling. Zero in the Peircean categories. In perception, by contrast, certain aspects of the image are seized in their usefulness, and others ignored as blithely as the herbivore ignores all aspects of the grass that do not concern its appetite.[12] In the perception-image, then, a great narrowing of focus takes place; yet documentary maintains the advantage that other potential perceptions remain latent or implicit in the image. The image is still rich with qualities of Firstness and invites the viewer to bring them forth, to actualize them.

Secondness is for Peirce where the actual emerges from the virtual. Struggle enters the sign in Secondness, for here everything exists through opposition: this and not that, action-reaction, and so on. A feeling of unease may entail Firstness; a summons from the courthouse, which I may obey or not, may entail the symbolic domain of Thirdness; but the firm hand of the sheriff on my shoulder, Peirce writes, is a brute fact of Secondness.[13] Semiotic terms associated with Secondness are the sign itself, namely, the *sinsign* (Deleuze's *synsign*), an actual thing or event; the relation of the sign to its object, which is *indexical*, that is, the sign denotes the object through an existential connection to it; and how the interpretant represents the sign, as a *dicisign*, a sign of possibility. It is in the realm of Secondness, of "brute facts,"[14] that qualities become attributes of objects and events, which are perceived in their individuality and in opposition to everything else. This we might term the realm of the real. "Qualities

and powers are no longer displayed in any-spaces-whatever, no longer inhabit originary worlds, but are actualised directly in determinate, geographical, historical and social space-times."[15]

Secondness is evidently the realm where the documentary is most at home. As the realm of the index, Secondness is certainly where the documentary places its chips. The pockmarks of bullet holes on Beirut apartment buildings (Toufic's *Credits Included: A Video in Red and Green*), or the scars that Arab prisoners gained in a prison camp in southern Lebanon (Ra'ad and Salloum's *Talaeen a Junuub*), produce a chill of recognition in the spectator, who knows she or he is witnessing indexical evidence. Secondness is the realm of relations—not of causality, but of brute matter in contact with brute matter—that the documentary must claim to accurately record. But no sign is an island: the evidence of sinsigns draws from the affective power of qualisigns when our observation of the scars is tinged with fascination, or a sense of the offhand way the former prisoner pulls up her sweater to show the scar to the camera. And by movement-image standards, it would be a poor documentary that did not posit relations between the affective response and the indexical evidence, introducing the Thirdness that observes general patterns (40 percent of prisoners in Lebanese jails are Palestinian, and 30 percent of them are journalists) and passes judgments of one kind or another. Hence, a Nietzschean sense of power already enters the sign at the level of Secondness, for as soon as there is action there are relations of power (not forces of destruction but inducements of movement).

Thirdness is where signs take part in mental operations that make general statements about qualities and events: it is the realm of interpretation and symbolization. Peirce's semiotic terms associated with Thirdness are the sign itself, namely, the *legisign*, an agreed general type; the relation of the sign to its object, which is *symbolic*, that is, the sign denotes the object through its relation to an interpretant; and how the interpretant represents the sign, namely, as an *argument*—for Deleuze, a *mental image* or *relation image*.[16] A mental image or *legisign* mediates affection-images or *qualisigns* (feelings, sensations) and action-images or *sinsigns* (facts, events) and builds an argument from them. This may be as simple as remarking upon a pattern or *habit* of natural relations, or it may consist of comparing two quite different images and abstracting from them.[17] Again, Peirce stresses that the relationship among the three is very fluid. Thirdness mediates Firstness and Secondness, and so it is no dry abstraction but is constantly "wet" by Firstness and Secondness.[18] Deleuze points out

that the affection-image and the action-image already have elements of thought in them (the judgment implicit in choosing a course of action, for instance). What distinguishes the mental image is that "it is an image which takes as objects *of* thought, objects which have their existence outside of thought, just as the objects of perception have their own existence outside perception."[19] The mental image intervenes in the clichés of the sensory-motor schema by making us aware of the subtractive nature of perception.

I would suggest that the mental image may either reinforce clichés; or open the film to the whole; or open the film to the outside. In the best of cases, Thirdness tends back to a degree zero, as Deleuze remarks of Hitchcock: the mental image is not the final completion of the other images, but questions their very status.[20] Thirdness can exist comfortably within the realm of the movement-image, as when the mental image creates a relation between images, generating general laws, statements, and conventions from them, and thus producing a whole. Conventional documentaries, though they may engage with mental images, remain in the confines of the sensory-motor schema, which regulates these moments of thought. Such films might be termed *theorematic*. But the mental image can also create an *interval* between images, introducing elements from the outside that the film cannot answer. Such films might be termed *problematic*.[21]

We might distinguish mental images that reinforce clichés and those that introduce new thoughts by referring to Godard's statement, often quoted by Deleuze: "not a just image, just an image" ("pas une image juste, juste une image").[22] Just or correct ideas are those that conform to what is already known, Deleuze writes; the productive ideas are those that stammer, that confound answers, that take apart "any set of ideas purporting to be just ones and extracting from it just some ideas."[23] Such a stammering idea is Toufic's "gallery" of vernacular architecture in *Credits Included ...*

With the mental image a film begins to reflect upon itself. Reflexivity has become a trope of documentary: the filmmaker including himself or herself in the image, framing revealing how an interview is staged, the use of on-screen text, and so on. Even television news now reflects on the means of its own production, for example, in upbeat establishing shots revealing the camera crew in the newsroom. Thus, it would seem that more documentaries are entering the realm of the relation-image. But I would concur with Floyd Merrell in suggesting that it is (or has been) the tendency of our age to hypostatize the

symbolic, to ossify the mental image.[24] Deleuze remarks wearily that the world has come to resemble a bad film; even reflexivity has become a cliché. The breakdown in movement-image cinema leads back to Firstness and Secondness, but even these, as affection-images and action-images, seem destined to connect back into movement, leaving behind Peirce's degree zero where all things are still possible. Notably, Deleuze breaks with Peirce by claiming that the recycling of Firstness back to degree zero—as the legisign becomes the interpretant for a new sign—does not accomplish enough to break the cycle. Deleuze laments the dominance of an ossified Thirdness, for while the mental image builds a relation between other images, it may still subsume these into a theorem, rather than reveal these relations to be incomplete, problematic. As we shall see, Deleuze shifts to more Foucauldian language to describe this struggle, which becomes less the struggle between Thirdness and Firstness than that between discourse and the visible, on the one hand, and what is unsayable and unseeable, on the other. In our present Thirdness/symbol–saturated era, it seems urgent to look back for that source of renewal that is Firstness, to try to get past discourse to "things themselves." There are always elements of knowledge that cannot be mediated by Thirdness, that cannot be symbolized.[25] By forestalling symbolic action, however, the mental image begins to probe the affective components that are enfolded in the action-image, breaking the action-image down to its component affections.

The weighty premise of Walid Ra'ad's *Miraculous Beginnings: Part 1* (1998) is that Elias Sarkis, president of Lebanon from 1976 to 1982, sought to make a record of a momentous event by exposing a frame of film every time he believed he had brought the civil war to an end. After his death in 1994, his assistant found the exposed rolls of photographic film and developed them. We see the resulting movie: for about a minute, images flash by at the rate of twenty-four per second—street scenes, people casually snapped, plates of food, views from a window, all too quick to be deciphered. On the sound track we hear bells, whirring sounds, a cuckoo clock. Our retrospective reconstructions of these images as views, people, food are perception-images, attempts to organize the affect of the images. But really what we experience, after expecting a series of momentous occasions of state, are flashes of color—red, turquoise, the green of palm trees, figures silhouetted in the sunlight, the prospect of a meal, faces (and the suggestive faciality of all objects); the light tap of bells and the mocking of the cuckoo clock. This gentle barrage of

luminous affection-images is all there is to witness the hundreds of times Sarkis believed he had brought peace to his land—and the joke is that he was wrong every time, the war proceeded after he left office. The mental image of the end of a war shatters into bright fragments, "miraculous beginnings."

Miraculous Beginnings: Part 1 is, like many works by Ra'ad and the other Beirut filmmakers I mention here, a fake documentary. Of course Sarkis did not expose these random images on those important occasions. But this tape exploits the rift between the (false) pronouncements of history and the fragments of the real contained in the affection-image. In an especially spectacular example of what many documentarists do more subtly, *Miraculous Beginnings* reintroduces subjectivity into the documentary. This subjectivity is not the earnest reflexivity of the documentarist who endeavors to include himself or herself in the frame (a mental image of subjectivity), but rather an opening to the flow of Firstness. As Patricia Pisters points out, cinema's becoming-time-image blurs the distinction between documentary and fiction, and fake documentaries are the current apotheosis of this tendency. Whether it is "moral" to fool the audience, she argues, is not the question: "Nietzsche taught us that it is better not to ask 'Is this true?' but 'What does it do?,' 'What forces are at play?'"[26]

Documentary's discursive stumbling block is the myth of objectivity. Deleuze critiques the "cinema of reality," the founding documentaries of Grierson and Flaherty, for the fundamental mistake of preserving an ideal of truth that is itself based on cinematic fiction.[27] Where documentary should be the model of opening to the outside—for we cannot know what is going to happen in the real world—classical documentary's ideal of truth is itself a fiction. It confuses truth with what can be said "objectively." In the documentary, the legisign dominates in the presumption that objectivity is the guarantor of truth. What might be called bias in the documentary prevents such objectivity and instead invites the transforming flow of the outside. A documentary whose underlying *affect* is "I love or I hate" invites the good that is "ascending, outpouring life."[28] Rhetoric, then, far from revealing the ethical inferiority of the "biased" film, invites the powers of the false into documentary. Rhetoric returns difference to documentary, as Bill Nichols argues,[29] by inviting others to intercede in the film's production of mental images.

It is interesting to note how film and television funding enforce

the production of documentaries on the fiction model. Documentary filmmakers are usually dependent on some kind of public funding, such as from the Public Broadcasting Corporation in the United States or the National Film Board in Canada. To secure funding, they must submit support materials, such as a script, before they can make the film. Mainstream funding bodies, of course, tend to be suspicious of subjective documentaries. Further, a proposal for a vérité-style documentary, where the filmmaker plunges into the event with no foreknowledge of its outcome, is less likely to get support because funders cannot be sure whether the film will succeed. The funding process therefore biases documentary production to prejudge the world, rather than allow the world to flow into the film.

Deleuze devotes a fair amount of space to those documentary films that critique the dominant or colonizers' notion of truth through "creative falsification." Rather than hooking up with sensory-motor extension, the optical image connects with virtual images that are dreams, fantasies, the sense of a general past.[30] When the people's experience cannot be represented in discourse, *the story must be creatively falsified in order to reach the truth.* Jalal Toufic expresses this beautifully:

> What I dread when I am asked to bear witness is not only or primarily the pain of accessing extremely painful memories; and/or the pain of discovering all or part of what I thought unforgettable; but that I am asked also to definitively forget in order to release, this side of the event horizon, the created voice that can tell about a created but true event.[31]

Such documentaries are not in a position to posit a complementary and opposite truth to that of the dominant discourse, for such truth still lies dormant in experience. In Deleuze's example, the Québécois filmmaker Pierre Perreault represented the "people who do not yet exist" of the emerging Québec nationalist movement in the 1970s—not by claiming an opposite truth to that of the dominant Canadian narrative of Anglo-national unity but by telling stories.[32] These are not the filmmaker's individual stories, but the stories of intercessors, those whose tales falsify the filmmaker's own narrative.

As at every level of the Peircean sign system an enfoldment takes place, so every image enfolds a heterogeneous element. What Deleuze terms "peaks of present" are those points where two or more pasts are enfolded in an image. To unfold or explicate the image requires retracing each of these pasts into histories that are incommensurable

with each other. Thus, to invite an intercessor into a film is to refold the sign according to another point of view, bringing out elements that were implicit, absorbing elements that were explicit. Falsified documentaries mobilize the stories of these opinionated tellers against official versions of history in absurd or poignant pairings, crystal-images that falsify the official story while respecting the partial views of the intercessors. It is conventional for a documentary to represent "diversity," for example, by including interview subjects of different classes and ethnic groups, but this is mere inclusivity. Intercessors speak in voices that break open the film's unity.

The political stakes of intercession are especially clear in Ra'ad and Salloum's *Talaeen a Junuub*. This video deals with the near impossibility of representing the Lebanese political situation to outsiders, particularly to North Americans, given the way "Lebanon" is circumscribed by North American political interests and cultural expectations. The video is composed almost entirely of interviews with numerous Lebanese political and cultural figures—figures who are not identified, in a refusal of talking-head authority. Their speech, in Arabic and French, is subtitled for an English-speaking audience, in long strings of words that rush along the bottom of the screen, often too quickly to be read. But there is enough information to know that their views differ widely with regard to the Lebanese political situation and with regard to the very possibility of representing it to North Americans. Ra'ad and Salloum invite their interviewees to reroute their project by questioning the videomakers' assumptions.

These intercessors unfold the implicit sentiments of sincerity and search for the truth that produced the action-situation in which filmmakers and authority figures face each other on opposite sides of the camera. One woman in particular refuses outright to discuss her opinions on camera, that is, to deliver her experience to the goal of narrative containment. "I know you will only use my words to make your own point," she says (in Arabic, translated in subtitles). "Even my refusal to speak you will use as part of your argument." By frustrating the videomakers' attempts to mobilize their opinions (with, one suspects, the videomakers' willing consent), the intercessors of *Talaeen a Junuub* delaminate the notion of balanced reportage that is a trope of official history. As it turns out, all the interviews in *Talaeen a Junuub* are staged, although there is not necessarily any way the viewer would know this.[33] About halfway through the tape, some people speak who have been jailed and tortured in Lebanese prisons. These images come as a pure shock, for the relation-images that

might have connected them into a meaningful (and forgettable) narrative have been dismantled. *Talaeen a Junuub* is not resolved as a plea for human rights. It maintains a rigorous pessimism about communication throughout.

Following Foucault, Deleuze argues that experience cannot be represented directly and in its entirety, but only approached partially by the orders of the seeable and the sayable.[34] These orders cannot be reduced one to the other. They are two incommensurable forms that confront each other at a given historical moment. "'What we see never lies in what we say', and vice versa."[35] A given discourse must be broken open to find its implicit statements, which cannot be conceived of in the terms of the discourse. Things (not in the sense of objects, but of space that has been stratified in a historically particular way) must be fractured open to find the visibilities concealed in them. These have the emergent qualities of Firstness: "Visibilities are not forms of objects, nor even forms that would show up under light, but rather forms of luminosity which are created by the light itself and allow a thing to exist only as a flash, sparkle, or shimmer."[36]

Reading Foucault literally, Deleuze understands the cinematic image to correspond to the notion of the visible, the layer of things in which one can read about a particular stratum or historical formation. Thus it would seem that documentary film is in a special position to hear what is just beyond discourse and see the flash at the edge of known things; for, even in its most conventional form, documentary bears witness to the world and in so doing exceeds the instrumental, sensory-motor use (pedagogical, investigative, etc.) for which it was intended. Image and sound tracks usually corroborate each other, but they can also be used to undermine each other, to show the limit of what each is able to represent. "What constitutes the audio-visual image is a disjunction, a dissociation of the visual and the sound, each heautonomous, but at the same time an incommensurable or 'irrational' relation which connects them to each other, without forming a whole."[37] The time-image is distinct from the movement-image in that its relation-images do not reintegrate its First and Second elements but allow them to continue to destabilize each other. And in forms that break open the cracks in the sensory-motor schema, the suggestions implicit in discourse and the light implicit in things begin to emerge.

At points in his cinema books Deleuze conflates a "speech act" with a "sound image,"[38] but I would argue that the rift between seeable and sayable is not the same as the difference between cinematic

image and sound. The sound track exceeds the sayable, for it contains far more than words and other kinds of symbolic sound. For that matter, some elements of the image track exceed the seeable, in that they are *not* perceptible (they are enfolded) in the dominant discourse. All these extradiscursive sounds and images appear as noise. What Deleuze's optical image does is "finally SEE" what has not been encoded in discourse—and finally hear it as well. In showing the disjunction between the seeable and the sayable, falsified documentaries reveal how power has constructed the contents of these categories.

Consider how D. N. Rodowick describes the evocative juxtaposition of incommensurable image and sound in Claude Lanzmann's *Shoah* (1985). Rather than attempt to reproduce the experience of the concentration camp at Chelmno according to the sensory-motor schema—to render the events of the Holocaust imaginable, containable, and cathartic—the film brings together the image-trace of the camp with the memory-trace of survivors. The camp is silent to what it witnessed, and the words cannot re-create the survivors' memories. Yet it is precisely in the asymptotic meeting between the two that the documentary establishes both that the Holocaust happened and that it is unimaginable, that is, beyond the confines of both discourse and visibility.[39] Rodowick suggests that Shoah "authenticates" the survivors' testimony. This, I would argue, is not something the time-image is capable of, if to authenticate means to testify to the truth of an event. Rather, *Shoah*, like the documentaries I discuss here, unfolds a sheet of past from a peak of present. The ethical nature of *Shoah* exists not in authenticating testimonies, but rather in demonstrating that some events are too terrible to be fully actualized, to be animated like puppets by the movement-image. As Paul Celan once cautioned, "Niemand zeugt für den Zeugen" ("No one bears witness for the witness"). The ethics of the time-image is that it allows inconceivable events to remain inconceivable, while insisting that they must be conceived of.

Time-image documentaries are "difficult"—not because they intentionally seek to frustrate the viewer, but rather because they seek to acknowledge the fact that the most important "events" are invisible and unvisualizable. A tape by Jayce Salloum and Elia Suleiman, *Muqaddimah Li-Nihayat Jidal (Introduction to the End of an Argument) Speaking for Oneself . . . Speaking for Others* (1991), laments the impossibility of representing the experience of the Middle East when that experience is already so utterly spoken for—that is, determined—in

Western contexts. Barely any of the footage is original: instead the tape is a jarring pastiche of images of Arabs borrowed from American movies, cartoons, and television news. What images are shot by the artists themselves are uninformative and thus resist being brought into narrative: landscapes filmed from a moving car so as to strip them of any picturesque quality; streetscapes shot at waist level; a handheld shot of Israeli souvenir T-shirts, emblazoned with menorahs and M-16s (the videographer, Salloum, asks, "Do you take American dollars?"). Similarly, Toufic's *Credits Included: A Video in Green and Red* (1995) presents the destruction, homelessness, and insanity that the Lebanese "civil" war produced, without suggesting any possibility of a return to normal life or normal speech. Much of the tape is shot in a southern Lebanon mental hospital, where men from a local village now live, driven mad by the incessant shelling, the loss of their homes, and the incomprehensibility that as Lebanese, not Palestinians, they would be imprisoned in their own country. The tape is filled with optical images that are forever stranded, refusing to be brought into movement by the memory of one who would make sense of them. In an ironic twist on Deleuze's notion of faciality, or the face-like quality of the close-up, lingering shots of the plastic dishes on which the inmates are served their lunch seem to search these ordinary objects for memories that are lost from the vacant faces of the insane.

Toufic draws a parallel between the destroyed buildings of Beirut and the men who have lost their minds: both have become any-places-whatever, terrible to behold, but also the place where new images might come into being in the rubble of the old. A segment of the tape is devoted to "An exposition of anonymous architecture, manifesting a revival of that art in Lebanon." The harsh screeches of John Zorn's guitar play over images of damaged walls that people have reterritorialized, by filling in the most gaping of the holes with bricks, cinder blocks, and plastic sheeting, so as to go on living in them. Similarly, Toufic witnesses the creativity of the mad in a long "interview" with a dignified man clutching his battered Koran. His rants, in which he conflates himself with the prophet Muhammad and even with the state of Lebanon, begin to have a ring of truth, to generate the kinds of mental images that only the rants of a schizophrenic can. Madness, *Credits Included* suggests, is not only the most logical way to respond to war; madness is also an image of ruin, an image that cannot be connected to memory, much less to chronology.

Deleuze's conception of time is drawn from Bergson, for whom

time is based on a forking model: at each moment that the present passes it is doubled, and thereby preserved, in the past. Actual and virtual images are constituted around the splitting of time, and this indiscernibility, and our concomitant inability to designate either as the true image, is what Deleuze calls the powers of the false. This struggle over the truth is, of course, of paramount concern in documentary. But where a conventional documentary ultimately judges (or encourages the viewer to judge) that one image is truer than others, the time-image strategy is to create the conditions for new thought in this confrontation among incommensurable images. In other words, the past is preserved among various discursive strata that confront each other with, in Leibniz's term, incompossible truths. Time puts the truth into crisis, not in the sense of shifting cultural values, but in that we cannot know today what will come to pass tomorrow and thus must acknowledge the existence of more than a single world—one in which the event does occur, one in which it does not. As time passes, an actual image will be plucked from the field of virtualities; but in acknowledging all the virtual images, a film keeps open the idea that any of these may have been true and may come to be true. Elias Sarkis's fictional film diary in *Miraculous Beginnings* is a sweetly ingenuous example of the powers of the false, for it acknowledges that in every actual moment—whether one is eating or showering or blinking on the balcony—there are virtual events, such as the possible conclusion of the civil war.

Deleuze reminds us that the virtual image (what may or may not be recorded in memory) is opposed to the actual image (what was recorded), but not to the real—"far from it."[40] Such an indiscernible complex he calls the *crystal-image*: the original point at which actual and virtual images reflect each other produces a widening circuit of actual and virtual images like a hall of mirrors. Is it the end of the war or just a glance down the street (in *Miraculous Beginnings*)? Is it a prison camp or a mirage (in *This Is Not Beirut*)? Is this articulate interviewee an expert or an expert liar (in *Talaeen a Junuub*)? The powers of the false are at work when there is no single point that can be referred to as real or true—for example, when an intercessor's tale derails the unity of the film's story. The lucid madman in *Credits Included* is such an intercessor, and Toufic is utterly willing to allow this character to introduce the postulate (the mental image) that madness is the correct perspective with which to comprehend civil war.

Another way a documentary acts as this sort of catalytic crystal is by reflecting upon the obstacles to its own production, reflecting the

film-that-could-have-been in the complex of its virtual images (*The Time-Image*, 76). A documentary that foregrounds how much money it cost to make, or mourns the shots it could not get or the rights to archival footage the filmmakers could not afford to purchase, reveals the real film-within-the-film: money. "Time is money" (77), Deleuze reminds us, and the poverty of many independent documentaries is a way of immediately bringing forth time-images. Toufic's *Credits Included*, for instance, begins with a scene in which a young teacher, who turns out to be Walid Ra'ad, discusses the finer points of video-making with students in a Beirut classroom. In fact, this class resulted from Jayce Salloum's efforts to bring video equipment and training to Beirut so that Lebanese students could give expression to the experience of the civil war. One of those filmmakers may well be Roula Haj-Ismail. Salloum's *This Is Not Beirut* includes a shot of Ra'ad animatedly discussing an extremely elaborate chart in which the filmmakers are planning the issues to be dealt with in *Talaeen a Junuub*. Such intertextuality suggests that this small group of Lebanese filmmakers are all each other's intercessors, that none need create a final statement, because each other's work will both complete and creatively falsify what has been said.

The difference between this collaborative work and Salloum's and Ra'ad's individual videos reveals two central documentary strategies, one archival and one embodied. Both are devoted to the question of how to evoke the contemporary state of Lebanon without fixing its images, but each deploys its own strategy to accomplish this. Salloum takes the archaeological approach in his work, frustrating efforts to carve a coherent meaning from the images by revealing their discursive construction at every turn; for instance, into *This Is Not Beirut* Salloum incorporates footage that he shot during the making of *Talaeen a Junuub*. Most of the images are public and street scenes of Beirut, but Salloum uses a battery of techniques to prevent them from signifying the city, or much of anything at all. Many shots are taken from a speeding car; jump cuts obliterate objects just coming into view and abort dialogue mid-sentence. The result is jarring and frustrating, and it effectively blocks the mental image that automatically links the affection-image "war-torn" with the index "Lebanon."

Meanwhile, Ra'ad was shooting footage of a quite different sort: not the public spaces of the city but the intimate and largely uninhabited interiors of his father's house and office in Beirut. While Salloum seeks to obliterate easy signification by fracturing images ad

infinitum, Ra'ad attempts to do so by slowing images almost to stillness. In *Missing Lebanese Wars*, long takes slowly scan the furniture, objects, walls, and other mute interior surfaces. The objects seem to hold within them histories that Ra'ad is anxious to indicate, but he is hesitant to do so by narrating stories—stories of his family life in Lebanon, for example. Ra'ad's use of snapshots attributed to a fictional family heightens this effect. Autobiography is veiled in the restrained voice-over, which indicates merely that "Mrs. Zainab Fakhouri" transported seventeen objects, some of which are presumably those pictured, in her successive moves from Palestine to Jordan (1947), to Lebanon (1967), to Sierra Leone (1969), and again to Lebanon (1971) following her divorce.

Family snapshots, one would think, are introduced at such a point to explore the untold stories—by, for example, scanning the image of Mrs. Fakhouri's face for clues to her unhappiness. The camera does move into each image in three increasingly close-up shots, but instead of examining the family's faces, it slides over their shoulders to focus on a chair, a sculpture, or some other object, which we recognize as being the same things that populate Ra'ad's father's home now. It is the surface of these objects that the camera scans, with infinite slowness, as though seeking to massage forth from them the stories of his family's dispersal. The emergent quality in *Missing Lebanese Wars*, then, is of a tactile sort of perception. Ra'ad extracts affection-images from the photographs, in an attempt to evoke memories that seem unable to take shape any other way. Whereas Salloum excavates the image from the archive, Ra'ad returns to the body of the image.

A first videotape by Roula Haj-Ismail, *I Wet My Hands Etched and Surveyed Vessels Approaching Marks Eyed Inside* (1992), brings images to the limit of the seeable and, I would argue, into a Firstness located in the body of the viewer. This work is especially notable because Haj-Ismail, a philosophy student living in Beirut, is clearly suspicious of the ability of either the verbal or the visual to embody the experience she wishes to evoke. At one point the story spoken on the sound track is sped up so that it becomes all but unrecognizable, mere noise. The tape attempts to give form to the "inner scars" of both the artist and her grandmother, a Palestinian from Haifa, by exploring visible scars on the people and buildings of Beirut. "Death cannot be made visible or cast the shadow of its presence," the artist says in voice-over, as the camera slowly pans over images of suffering bodies—not Lebanese bodies, but European clichés of suffering,

in the manner of a Philippe Halsman photograph of child whose face is covered with flies. Such images cannot give a sense of the wounds that constitute the experience of this community: this is an experience that can only be touched.

Images of bomb-pocked walls are common in films and videos about Lebanon, but Haj-Ismail's camera treats them like bodies, caressing the buildings, searching the corners of shutters and stone-latticed windows like folds of skin. Shot thus, these exterior scars increasingly resemble the image with which they are paired, a close-up of a woman's fingers, with red-enameled nails, repeatedly pressing into her Caesarian scar. "Everything around me is imperfect, broken, shattered, destroyed. Holy wars, broken windows, jagged edges. My world and I, we echo each other. We reflect upon each other: two broken pieces of another broken part." The devastation of Beirut, the brokenness and incompleteness of each person, family, and house, have forced a greater porousness among them, and Haj-Ismail reenfolds the images of the wounded city into her own body.[41]

Are these images affection-images, struggling to extend into movement and into history? Or are they opsigns and sonsigns, the motes of pure perception that for Deleuze inaugurate the time-image? Both are signs that do not *in themselves* connect to movement. Affection-images ask to be felt, and in being felt they often are actualized in movement. Opsigns and sonsigns, by contrast, ask to be *read*; they are characteristic of the lectosigns of the time-image, not comprehensible in terms of ordinary extension into movement but through contemplation. However, those affection-images that occur in any-spaces-whatever may indeed lead to contemplation, as Deleuze remarked of French impressionist cinema.[42] It is a bodily contemplation, however: neither the instantaneous reaction of movement, nor a purely intellectual response. If such images ask to be read, they ask to be read by a whole body. The affection-images of Haj-Ismail's tape, such as the long-nailed fingers caressing the Caesarean scar, invite a bodily response—a shudder, perhaps—but they do not extend into movement. Rather, they are followed by an irrational cut (to the windows, themselves like scars) that invites continued, embodied contemplation. Thus the affection-image is the domain of what Deleuze calls the ceremonial body.[43] It offers a time-image that is both experienced in the body and invites a direct experience of time.

Deleuze writes that cinema cannot give us back the body, but it can give us "the 'genesis of an unknown body' which we have in the

back of our heads, like the unthought in thought, the birth of the visible which is still hidden from view."[44] The time-image "opens to the outside" because its images are connected to an unseeable and unsayable real. What is implicit in the image ruptures any continuity offered by its explicit face. This hole in the image connects to the body of the viewer, inviting us to complete in our bodies what cannot be said in the image. Thus documentary returns to the body to seek that degree zero from which experience might arise anew. Where the memories of the Lebanese war were found by Toufic to be concealed in madness and incoherence, and by Ra'ad to be concealed in the muteness of objects, Haj-Ismail elicits individual and common memories by appealing to the way those memories are embodied. She makes a hole in the image through which the scars speak. The excavation of the time-image has brought us to these scars, in which we witness a return to that "germinal nothing, in which the whole universe is involved and foreshadowed."[45]

NOTES

Many thanks to Gregory Flaxman for his illuminating comments in the course of this writing.

1. Gilles Deleuze, *The Time-Image*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989), 272–73.

2.. Images from *Missing Lebanese Wars* (1996) by Walid Ra'ad; *Credits Included: A Video in Red and Green* (1995) by Jalal Toufic; and *This Is Not Beirut* (1994) by Jayce Salloum. As it happens, all these works are videotapes. Although Deleuze saw video as a medium quite distinct from film, I would argue that these works have more in common with film than not. The fundamental difference is the conditions of exhibition, that is, broadcast rather than projection; but most of these "art" videos are exhibited as single-channel works or projected, making their conditions of exhibition similar to film. Activist video has a lineage in the cinéma-vérité films of Rouch and Perreault that Deleuze discusses; video art has roots in the experimental films of Vertov, Snow, and others, which, he writes, permit a "gaseous" perception; and generally these works share the critical strategies of Godard and many other filmmakers in whose works Deleuze sees the inauguration of the time-image. The fact that video is less *visual* than film, literally harder to see, has interesting consequences for the status of the sensory-motor schema. Conventional video, such as most of what gets shown on TV, may encourage viewers to simply fall into clichéd perceptions with even less visual distraction than in conventional film. But this lack of things to see in video may also disrupt the sensory-motor schema and encourage viewers to draw imaginatively on their own resources. See my essay "Video Haptics and Erotics," *Screen* (fall 1998): 250–69.

3. I shall concentrate here on the role of Peircean semiotics in Deleuze's theory, as it applies to documentary. Elsewhere I have taken a more Bergsonian and Foucauldian approach to the time-image documentary; see Laura U. Marks, "A Deleuzian Politics of Hybrid Cinema," *Screen* 34:3 (autumn 1994): 244–64.

4. François Zourabichvili, *Deleuze et l'événement* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1994), 38.

5. David Bohm and Basil J. Hiley, *The Undivided Universe: An Ontological Interpretation*

of Quantum Theory (London and New York: Routledge, 1993), 357. Patricia Pisters discusses the fascinating confluences between rhizomatics and theoretical physics in a running countertext of footnotes to her "From Eye to Brain—Gilles Deleuze: Refiguring the Subject in Film Theory" (doctoral dissertation, University of Amsterdam, 1998).

6. Deleuze, *The Time-Image*, 244.

7. Charles Sanders Peirce, "Objective Logic," in *Collected Papers*, vol. 6, ed. Charles Hartshorne and Paul Weiss (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1985), 148.

8. Charles Sanders Peirce, "The Principles of Phenomenology," in Justus Buchler, ed., *The Philosophy of Peirce: Selected Writings* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1950), 77.

9. Ibid., 79.

10. Gilles Deleuze, *The Movement-Image*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), 8.

11. The films of Robert Flaherty, for example, dwell in Firstness: the white vastness of the snow in *Nanook of the North*, the gleaming lily pads on the bayou in *Louisiana Story*. Deleuze suggests that Flaherty's documentaries extend to Secondness but not beyond: this particular struggle between human and nature is their subject (ethology), more than a generalization about such struggles (ethnology), the realm of Thirdness (ibid., 143).

12. Deleuze, *The Time-Image*, 45.

13. Peirce, *The Philosophy of Peirce*, 79.

14. Ibid., 79.

15. Deleuze, *The Movement-Image*, 141.

16. Deleuze beautifully explicates the relationship among Firstness, Secondness, and Thirdness by observing them among the Marx Brothers: "The three brothers are distributed in such a way that Harpo and Chico are most often grouped together, Groucho for his part looming up in order to enter into a kind of alliance with the two others. Caught in the indissoluble group of 3, Harpo is the 1, the representative of celestial affects, but also already of infernal impulses, voraciousness, sexuality, destruction. Chico is 2: it is he who takes on action, the initiative, the duel with the milieu, the strategy of effort and resistance.... Finally, Groucho is the three, the man of interpretations, of symbolic acts and abstract relations.... he is the master of *reasoning*, of arguments and syllogisms which find a pure expression in nonsense: 'Either this man is dead, or my watch has stopped' he says, feeling Harpo's pulse in *A Day at the Races*" (*The Movement-Image*, 199–200).

17. Ibid., 197–98.

18. As Walter Benjamin noted—in terms that evoke the swirling of Firstness, Secondness, and Thirdness in Peirce's semiotics—even language contains the traces of a mimetic, relatively immediate, relationship to the world: "The coherence of words or sentences is the bearer through which, like a flash, similarity appears. For its production by man—like its perception by him—is in many cases, and particularly the most important, limited to flashes. It flits past" ("On the Mimetic Faculty," in *Reflections*, trans. Edmund Jephcott [New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1978], 335).

19. Deleuze, *The Movement-Image*, 198.

20. Ibid., 200–205.

21. Deleuze, *The Time-Image*, 174.

22. Gilles Deleuze, "Three Questions on *Six Times Two*," in *Negotiations*, trans. Martin Joughin (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), 38.

23. Ibid., 38–39, 43.

24. Floyd Merrell, *Peirce's Semiotics Now: A Primer* (Toronto: Canadian Scholars' Press, 1995), 170–76.

25. Floyd Merrell gives the example that the wine taster, the jazz musician, and others with a nonverbal grasp of their art *"know more than they can explicitly tell.* A portion

of their knowledge will always remain at the level of Firstness and Secondness, unmediated and unmediable by Thirdness" (ibid., 116). In other words, the mental image may create a kind of closure in which some kinds of knowledge, especially embodied knowledge, are inexpressible.

26. Pisters, *From Eye to Brain*, 83.
27. Deleuze, *The Time-Image*, 149.
28. Ibid., 141.
29. Bill Nichols, "Film and the Uses of Rhetoric." Talk at the Society for Cinema Studies, San Diego, April 4, 1998.
30. Deleuze, *The Time-Image*, 55.
31. Jalal Toufic, *Oversensitivity* (Los Angeles: Sun and Moon, 1996), 46.
32. Deleuze, *The Time-Image*, 221–23.
33. The videomakers present such information selectively. For example, Ra'ad says that he presents the tape to Middle East specialists and historians as Lebanese history and to filmmakers and theorists as a meditation on representation. The former are not let in on the fact that the interviews are acted and (unless they speak Arabic) that some of the subtitles do not translate what is spoken; the latter are.
34. I believe it is also possible to talk of an order of the *sensible*, which, like the seeable and the sayable, is the sum of what is accessible to sense perception at a given historical and cultural moment. Just as we can only speak in the language that surrounds us, so we can only feel in the ways we have learned it is possible to feel.
35. Gilles Deleuze, *Foucault*, trans. Seán Hand, foreword by Paul A. Bove (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988), 64; quoting Foucault.
36. Ibid., 52.
37. Deleuze, *The Time-Image*, 256.
38. Ibid.
39. D. N. Rodowick, *Gilles Deleuze's Time Machine* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1997), 145–49.
40. Deleuze, *The Time-Image*, 41.
41. Deleuze suggests that female directors deploy the body as one of these any-spaces-whatever through which they may "conquer the source of their own attitudes and the temporality which corresponds to them as individual or common gest" (ibid., 197). This argument is not as sexist as it first appears. Deleuze is privileging those whose bodies have been inhabited by legisigns, or who have been forced to embody a mental image (here, of woman), as agents of deterritorialization of those same signs.
42. Deleuze, *The Movement-Image*, 40–45.
43. Deleuze, *The Time-Image*, 190–91.
44. Ibid., 201.
45. Peirce, "Objective Logic," 148.

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Heure Exquise, BP 113, Mons en Baroel, 59370 France. 33-20-049574.

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