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The Cinematic Relations of Corporeal Feminism **Theresa L. Geller**

Towards A Feminist Cinematographic Philosophy

[1] Over the last decade, Deleuzian feminism, the arguably incongruous conjunction of Deleuzian philosophy and feminist theory, has emerged as a field of philosophical inquiry, thanks to the significant contributions of Elizabeth Grosz, Rosi Braidotti, and others. [1] However, few have turned to Gilles Deleuze's later works on cinema. [2] Of the few who have, writers such as Patricia Pisters, Dorothy Oikowski, and Barbara Kennedy have produced volumes arguing the utility of Deleuzian cinematic concepts for feminist film theory. [3] Their works have engaged Deleuze's *Cinema* books to introduce a shift in feminist analyses of cinema and aesthetic production. Yet, Deleuze's cinematic concepts offer much more than this. As his translators note, Deleuze's intention is the creation of concepts appropriate to philosophy as well as cinema, forming the hybrid—"cinematographic philosophy." Cinematographic philosophy can be understood as the invention of "new concepts... on the basis of some well-known philosophical themes, and then put to work in cinema...For Deleuze, philosophy cannot be a reflection on something else. It is, as we have said, a creation of concepts. But concepts, for Deleuze, are...no longer 'concepts of', understood by reference to their external object...Concepts are the images of thought." [4] Cinematographic philosophy, I contend, affords feminism a range of new concepts that engages the "unthought" of feminist thought. [5] I want to map out the ways Deleuze's philosophy of the cinema provides an abundance of concepts that beget a new image of feminist thought in general.

[2] In feminism's engagement with Deleuze, it has been asked: "What sort of epistemology might work with Deleuzian metaphysics? As we move from a metaphysics of being to one of becoming, what becomes of epistemology?" [6] The following discussion attempts to answer this by sketching the ways a feminist epistemology can not only work with a Deleuzian metaphysics, it can create an altogether different image of thought when "put to work" with feminism's concern with the body and its embodiments (and refusals) of the sex-gender system. Gilles Deleuze's cinematic philosophy, I believe, offers feminism a model for elaborating the performative structures of gender identity most famously developed by Judith Butler over a decade ago. Butler argued even then, "the complexity of gender requires an interdisciplinary and postdisciplinary set of discourses in order to resist the domestication of gender studies or women's studies within the academy and to radicalize the notion of feminist critique." [7] By putting Deleuze's philosophical treatises on cinema's production of images and its philosophical implications into conversation with feminism's insights into the performative nature of the gendered body, I propose a model of feminist film theory that reflects the critical interrogation of the body elaborated by recent feminist critiques. [8] By drawing parallels to feminist theory's reexamination of the body and desire, I want to illustrate the potential for a specifically feminist cinematographic philosophy attuned to the fissures and ruptures inherent to gender performance. [9]

[3] It is the critical examination of the body and desire that has given rise to what Elizabeth Grosz names, "corporeal feminism." Corporeal feminism develops understandings of "corporeality, sexuality, and the difference between the sexes...in different terms than those provided by traditional philosophical and feminist understandings." [10] The revolutionary aim of corporeal feminism is to refigure the body "so that it moves from the periphery to the center of analysis, so that it can be understood as the very 'stuff' of subjectivity." [11] In doing so, corporeal feminists foreground the body as "crucial to understanding woman's psychical and social existence, but the body is no longer understood as an ahistorical, biologically given, acultural object. They are concerned with the *lived body*...[and] tend to be more suspicious of the sex/gender distinction...Instead of seeing sex as an essentialist and gender as a constructionist category, these thinkers are concerned to undermine the dichotomy." [12] A central precept in undermining this dichotomy is the (false) distinction made between sexuality and gender. For corporeal feminists such as Grosz and Butler, the centrality of the body and desire make such divisions untenable. It is of little surprise, in this way, that their writings have been equally categorized as both feminist and queer theory. Corporeal feminism bridges this disciplinary divide, and, in fact, shows it to

be spurious. [13] *Gender Trouble* has been particularly groundbreaking in this, introducing, to a very great extent, the analysis of the *lived body* in the sexual regulation of gender. Because *Gender Trouble* so effectively establishes the interlocking concerns of feminist and queer theory to corporeal feminism, and because it, in effect, establishes the still-dominant paradigm for corporeal feminism, it serves as a primary focus in the following discussion.

[4] If *Gender Trouble*, as an exemplum of corporeal feminism, allows us to ask how the body comes into being, then one important answer lies in attending to the ontology of the body. It is on this specific ground that, despite their explicit differences, Deleuzian thought can be brought effectively into conversation with the concerns of corporeal feminism, understood here as the rethinking of the body and desire effected by both feminist and queer theory alike. This is not a new conversation in that several corporeal feminists have engaged the writings of Deleuze and Félix Guattari because they "dis-organize the body in a way that...amounts to a radical ontological upheaval in the way they negotiate relations between presence, representation, desire, and absence. The constitutive mechanism of this ontology is desire." [14] However, how this ontology resurfaces in the *Cinema* books has rarely been seen in relation to feminist-queer issues. These issues—including a "nondichotomous understanding of the body," resisting dualism in general but between the mind and the body specifically, the development of concepts antagonistic towards "embodied subjectivity," and an interest in developing "a materialism that questions physicalism, that reorients physics itself"—can be traced in the *Cinema* books. [15]

[5] Cinema's particular facility with excavating subjectivity, of producing a distinction between affective intensities and the totalizing conception of subjectivity, is especially provocative for Deleuze. As Melissa McMahon points out, "In one text, and not his books on cinema, Deleuze writes: 'there are no more forms but cinematic relations between unformed elements.' Even before looking at Deleuze's specific writings on cinema one can make connections with the operations of the cinematic apparatus, or rather, see how Deleuze's understanding of the body is itself informed by the cinema." [16] It is this cinematic understanding of the body central to Deleuze's cinematic philosophy that I want to map out in relation to the interrogations of the body pursued by corporeal feminism, especially in Butler's *Gender Trouble*. If, as Deleuze insists, "there are no more subjects but dynamic individuations without subjects, which constitute collective assemblages," then feminist and queer theory must ask what remains to be said of (and for) sexuality and gender? [17] To do away with the problem of the subject altogether and instead propose a model of feminist "cinematic relations" would appear to be quite an epistemological shift in the terms of inquiry for "gender studies." However, corporeal feminism/ queer theory has been undergoing this transformation in thinking for some time. As Colebrook points out, if we see the history of feminist thought not "as the unfolding or progression of reason," but rather as "directed to interventions, encounters, formations of identity and productive becomings," then it "seems to suggest...that feminism finally finds itself when it becomes Deleuzian." [18] In moving away from a representational model of the body, feminist and queer theory have reconceptualized bodily inscription in terms that are, I argue, profoundly cinematic.

[6] Cinematic philosophy, it must be recalled, is not a philosophy of the cinema per se but rather the coincidence of mental images and cinematic images, forming images of thought; "Cinema, therefore, has the power of taking thought beyond its own fixed images of itself and the world; we can think of images that are no longer images of some being." [19] It is because cinema allows us to think in images no longer anchored in "being" that Chela Sandoval believes "differential consciousness" is cinematic rather than nomadic: "Differential consciousness represents a strategy of oppositional ideology that functions on an altogether different register. Its powers can be thought of as mobile—not nomadic, but rather *cinematographic*: a kinetic motion that maneuvers, poetically transfigures, and orchestrates while demanding alienation, perversion, and reformation in both spectators and practitioners." [20] Cinema works for both Deleuze and Sandoval as a concrete mode of becoming that can be disengaged from the given images of being in the world. Sandoval, in tracing a "methodology of the oppressed," finds in Deleuzian cinematic "consciousness" a way out of the problem of subjectivity, a paramount problem for feminist and queer theory alike. The *Cinema* books, in fact, can be seen as a response to "the 'problem of subjectivity' Deleuze finds in his early study of Hume... that the self is not given, but formed through habit from an indeterminate world, and is itself a strange kind of 'fiction' difficult to dissipate, since it is precisely the fiction of ourselves and our world." [21] Deleuze's discovery is also corporeal feminists' discovery—the subject (of the sex-gender system) is a constitutive fiction.

Cinematic Relations

[7] Deleuze's unique response to this fiction is to turn to the powers of the false, embodied by artistic expression, to unhinge subjectivity from affect. For him, "the proliferation of intensities in art destroys the image of a unified viewing subject who recognizes a meaningful world that is there for us all... Cinema frees affect or the power of images from a

world of coherent bodies differing only in degree." [22] Opposed to the structuralist mode of film analysis, Deleuze argues that cinema's affects, catalyzed by an "impersonal" unconscious, are antithetical to the very notion of representation. Cinema, for Deleuze, does not "mean" or "represent" something other than what it is; rather, it multiplies affects, where "affect in general, is just a sensible or sensibility not organized into meaning (affect is in some ways the opposite of a concept... A concept gives order or direction to our thinking. Affect, by contrast, is the power to interrupt synthesis and order)." [23] In rejecting representation in the name of the powers of affect, Deleuzian film philosophy, despite its own disinterest in gender, resonates with corporeal feminism's reconsideration of the powers of the body and the ways in which the materiality of the body remains in excess of representation.

[8] Cinema, for Deleuze, is not a "symbolic" art form masking hidden meanings. In proposing an "impersonal" unconscious, the activity of interpreting the symptoms of an unconscious (of a film, a "person") no longer makes sense. This has profound implications, obviously, for film theory. The Oedipal paradigm has not only grounded much film interpretation, it has described the process whereby the spectator "identifies" with the screen image. [24] However, Deleuzian practice replaces the extant model of identification, with its presupposition of "lack," with the concept of becoming. Cinema is not a "text" to be interpreted but an assemblage of becoming because "cinema is not representation; it is an event of intuition which goes beyond the actually given to the Idea of the image. Cinema sees, not a world of things, nor even a distinct world, but the movement of imaging from which any perceived world is possible." [25] Cinema, in this way, challenges the idea of identification with its representational assumptions and instead champions the movement of images in the process of becoming.

[9] Now we can better understand Chela Sandoval's definition of differential consciousness as the mobile powers of thought. These powers are *cinematographic* because the movement of images has the potential to produce an idea or image of thought that is "alienating" and "perverting," in Sandoval's words, rather than self-identical. As such, cinematographic thought opens up the analysis of gender to something other than the totalizing conceit of identity. The cinematic form mobilizes an image of thought quite distinct from identity, identification, being—all of which define the sexed subject. As Colebrook argues, "In order to understand what is cinematic about cinema we need to ask how cinema works. It takes a number of images and connects them to form a sequence, and it cuts and connects sequences using the inhuman eye of the camera, which can therefore create a number of competing viewpoints or angles...in becoming infinitely cinematic—cinema can offer a challenge to the whole of life." [26] The challenge the cinematic poses to feminism is to think bodies in these terms. In this way, "Cinema 'teaches us' that there are no moving bodies that take place in time. Rather, there are flows of time as movement and change from which we abstract distinct beings and bodies. The body is an effect or outcome of its movement and does not precede the flow of time through which it becomes." [27] Cinematic philosophy can, therefore, provide a specific methodological practice mapping the processes of becoming to bodies for feminism and queer theory.

Mobile Corporeality

[10] Contra Oedipal identification, Deleuze and his corporeal feminist re-interpreters hold the anti-phenomenological position that linkages are made between forces, bodies, and the like, creating temporal assemblages. For Deleuzians, "there is always something outside our 'identifications' as subject or persons, which we play out through complexifying encounters...The whole question of 'sexuation' needs to be understood in this way, rather than through Oedipal identification; underneath the 'gross statistical categories' of sex and gender lie a whole 'molecular' multiplication of our peculiarities, which then come out in strange ways and times." [28] Elizabeth Grosz explains this in terms of the material body: "The notion of corporeal inscription of the body-as-surface rejects the phenomenological framework of intentionality and the psychoanalytic postulate of psychological depth...Rather, it can be understood as a series of surfaces, energies, and forces, a mode of linkage, a discontinuous series of processes, organs, flows, and matter... an assemblage of organs, processes, pleasures, passions, activities, behaviors linked by fine lines and unpredictable networks to other elements, segments, and assemblages." [29] To map these linkages requires a mode of thought that replaces interpretive metaphors, such as "latency, depth, interiority" with the "image of the flat surface." [30] Cinema, like the body, has been forced to conform to the "depth" model premised upon a Cartesian paradigm, one that sees the body as "the external expression of an interior... [that] needs to be interpreted, read, in order to grasp its underlying meanings." [31] However, if the body is taken as a "flat surface," we are challenged to recognize the cinematic properties of the lived body, of "the body as a social surface of inscription." [32]

[11] A specifically feminist cinematographic philosophy would look to cinema to examine how bodily experiences are socially inscribed and ordered into a narrative of identity in ways analogous to the editing operations of film, which create

the illusion of narrative continuity and progression. Along these lines, feminist cinematographic philosophy needs to "*think* the difference between the affective (the images that assault us) and the conceptual (the response and order we give to those images)." [33] This invites feminism to return to experience, a foundational principle in the history of gender studies, but in order to recognize it as an affect rather than a concept. As Grosz contends, we must acknowledge that the body is "not an organic totality which is capable of the wholesale expression of subjectivity, a welling up of the subject's emotions, attitudes, beliefs, or experiences." [34] Instead, we can approach experience cinematically, addressing it as a segment, or series, which can be explained as a *temporal* inscription. In this way, experience is no longer something that is meaningful, representing something for the subject, as it is more commonly understood. Feminist cinematographic theory, on the other hand, molecularizes experience, breaking it into even smaller segments, for Deleuzian thinking holds that "we can only radicalize politics by de-forming experience away from 'meanings' (or ordered wholes) to its effective components (those singularities which produce meaning)." [35]

[12] We learn from Deleuze that "art works by taking us back from composites of experience to the affects from which those synthesized wholes emerge." [36] Cinema, for Deleuze, exemplifies this process primarily because it is a uniquely temporal art form: "The image itself is a collection of time relations from which the present merely flows...Time-relations are never seen in ordinary perception, but they are seen in the image." [37] For these reasons, cinema affords feminism access to the time-relations otherwise unseen in experience. The alternate temporality of cinema provides a fulcrum to expose gender/sexuality as temporal phenomena, since so many slices of lived experience are made to cohere in space and time but in fact are ontologically incoherent. As Elizabeth Grosz has stated, "Time is that which disappears as such in order to make appearance, all appearance and disappearance, that is events, possible." [38] Yet, cinematographic philosophy not only maps how this occurs (*vis-à-vis* the movement-image), but offers an alternative that introduces an image of time as duration—the time-image.

A Cinematic Methodology of Sex and Gender

[13] Sex and cinema share the same fundamental building block—time. It should be recalled that the materiality of gender is not simply a "set of repeated acts," according to Judith Butler, but "the ground of gender identity is the stylized repetition of acts through *time*...a gendered corporealization of *time*." [39] For Butler, the question of the role of time in the construction of the sex-gendered subject is genealogical. [40] Deleuze's philosophical investigations push the practice of genealogy beyond Butler, indeed, to its furthest limits: "genealogy is, in a sense, an attempt to think of a different time, wherein the origin (the subject) is the effect of the cause (the act). And genealogy is also an attempt to think of time not as interpretation (a revelation of what was already there), but as *effective* history (the production of enabling origins). The self it effects is not an essence but an event." [41] By comparing Deleuze's genealogical mapping of the cinema with Butler's genealogy of the subject, an overlap in concepts emerge that found a methodological practice for feminist cinematographic philosophy. Such a comparison emerges less out of the compatibility of the two thinkers, which would be difficult to claim in light of Butler's debt to Hegel as opposed to Deleuze's debt to Spinoza (albeit their shared interest in Bergson), but rather out of the impulse to experiment with connection in order to expand and reinvigorate feminist film theory.

[14] It is a Deleuzian impulse that encourages me to think Deleuze *and* Butler together despite their palpable differences; "We must always *make* connections, since they are not already given.... To connect is to then work with other possibilities, not already given." [42] To place an "AND" between two very different philosophers may seem an experiment that "crosses the bounds or frames of common sense," indeed may appear altogether irrational, but it is in the interest of formulating "new problems or suggest[ing] new concepts," rather than simply applying "concepts already supplied by a given theory." [43] To this extent, the conjoining of Deleuze and Butler does not "seek the good sense of [either] work," but rather follows Deleuze's lead to "look at what a philosophical text creates." [44] Deleuze's own monographs constitute a series of infidelities, or, in his terms, "a philosophical buggery," producing "monstrous offspring." [45] Certainly the marriage of Butler and Deleuze is bound to produce a monstrous child of its own, but such "hetero-genesis" is preferable to generating a "reactive theory, ...pretend[ing] to be the mere adherence, representation, replication, or faithful copy of some prior truth or meaning." [46] In fact, this may be the only palpable commonality Deleuze shares with feminism—a "theoretical heritage, where questions have always been voiced in terms of what thought might become (rather than the correctness of this or that model)." [47] By reading Deleuze's *Cinema* books alongside *Gender Trouble*, I do not wish to assess either "thinker in terms of some unquestioned image of thought," which, as Colebrook and others assert, would "be anti-Deleuzian." [48] It is, instead, to work with concepts presented by both Deleuze and Butler, without necessarily appealing "to the true meaning or function" of their works, in order to ask how cinematographic philosophy may be made to work with corporeal feminism, inventing new concepts for feminist film theory to utilize. [49]

[15] Deleuze's cinematographic philosophy starts with the movement-image. In his first of the *Cinema* books, we learn that the movement-image subordinates time to movement, describing "the narrative organization of classical cinema." [50] The movement-image works to mask over the force of time, creating a closed system of cause and effect. The way this works is: "Through integration, related images are internalized into a conceptual whole whose movement expresses a qualitative change: the whole is different from the sum of its parts. But the whole in turn enlarges itself through retotalization in related sets...Deleuze argues that the classical cinema, the cinema of the movement-image, provides a concrete image of this process." [51] Deleuze's source for understanding the movement image is the philosopher, Henri Bergson, who was describing "the essentially temporal character of thought;" Deleuze turns to cinema to demonstrate this character of thought. [52] However, I argue, Bergson's image of thought is also demonstrated in Butler's elaboration of gender performance. To this extent, the movement-image is a concept that allows us to better understand the foreclosure of sex/ gender/ desire.

[16] The movement-image describes a form of cinema that is usually edited temporally to force the set of images into a coherent narrative whole. This is very similar to Butler's description of the way a unified narrative of identity is formed in the organizing of our bodily experiences through time. For Butler, gender identity can be understood as a kind of performance:

Consider that a sedimentation of gender norms produces the peculiar phenomenon of a 'natural sex' or a 'real woman' or any number of prevalent and compelling social fictions, and that this is a sedimentation that over time has produced a set of corporeal styles which, in reified form, appear as the natural configuration of bodies into sexes existing in a binary relation to one another. If these styles are enacted, and if they produce the coherent gendered subjects who pose as their originators, what kind of performance might reveal the ostensible 'cause' to be an 'effect'? In what senses, then, is gender an act? As in other ritual social dramas, the action gender requires a performance that is *repeated*. [53]

As Butler points out, the notion of the performative "moves the conception of gender off the ground of a substantial model of identity to one that requires a conception of gender as a constituted *social temporality*. Significantly, if gender is instituted through acts which are internally discontinuous, then the *appearance of substance* is precisely that, a constructed identity, a performative accomplishment which the mundane social audience, including the actors themselves, come to believe and to perform in the mode of belief." [54] Butler's theatrical metaphor of actors and acts is noteworthy. Indeed, the social images are clearly more cinematic than theatrical in that such performances are "finally phantasmatic, impossible to embody," appropriate more to the mode of thought implied by the "screen" as a "surface signification," as Grosz suggests above. Gender performance, like the cinematic screen image, only gives the "appearance of substance," in its ephemeral existence.

[17] The depthlessness of the cinematic apparatus is an apropos topology for the de-substantialization affected in Butler's description of the sexual regulation of gender identification. Despite Butler's criticisms of Deleuze and Guattari, there seems to be a shared fundamental philosophical position on the subject, that is, "the very idea of the subject depends upon the temporal logic of reactivism whereby an effect is grounded as a cause." [55] This reactivism is one particular image of thought underpinning both Butler's definition of gender performance and the Deleuzian conception of the body: "A body becomes virtual by organizing itself into a subject; this virtual effect then posits itself as the actual ground. For Deleuze, then, reactivism of the subject is overcome not by denying the subject—the death or critique of the subject—but by affirming the subject as a virtual effect, and then multiplying movements of subjective 'virtuality.'" [56] It is through the cinema that Deleuze argues that such movements can be witnessed, because cinema, at its core, reflects and reifies an image of the world as a *social temporality*.

[18] The social temporality given in the movement-image is the indirect image of time. This indirect image is founded in a reactivism that suppresses duration. In more pedestrian terms, the cinema of the movement-image impels an order to the flow of images passing on the screen, effacing the visual and temporal incongruencies (of segments and cuts) for the sake of a linear, causal narrative. Such an indirect image of time is also present in "the oedipalized sexed body," which "is a performance involving the compulsive repetition of unconscious forgetting." [57] This unconscious forgetting is not unlike the forgetting of the interval urged by the cinema of the movement-image. What Butler describes is the totalizing force of the sex-gender system that impels us to "forget" the "cuts" in (and of) our experiences—the disruptions of affect, incongruencies of desires, and the discontinuities of an "impersonal" unconscious—in order to create a performance of gender that can be taken as both unified and consistent. Another way to think this is as an indirect image of time in and on the body. The indirect image of time is the "temporal dimension" of gender performance where "the performance is effected with the aim of maintaining gender within its binary frame—an aim that cannot be attributed to a subject, but,

rather, must be understood to found and consolidate the subject." [58]

[19] The similarities between Butler's analysis of the psychical construction of gender and Deleuze's genealogy of the images of thought made available in the cinema are striking. Both trace the psycho-mechanics of a given system of representation—gender and cinema, respectively, to challenge the very idea of representation. Further, their projects share a central imperative to replace the commonly held spatial metaphors subtending these representative systems of thought with a temporal epistemology. For Butler, recognizing gender performance as a set of stylized repeated acts "through time" effectively disproves "the spatial metaphor of a 'ground'" to gender, a ground typically anchored to the concept of "nature." [59] Deleuze, as well, is concerned with overturning the reigning spatial model of the cinema. For both theorists, temporality disrupts the "seemingly seamless" perception of the stability of gender identity, on the one hand, and the continuity of the cinematic image of thought, on the other. The action-image, which is the most common incarnation of the movement-image, is exactly this mistaking of edited scenes as a "seemingly seamless" flow of images. The action-image suppresses that which is "cinematic" in the image to sustain a central narrative of cause and effect. This cinema of the action-image, like the compulsion to repeat in order to "naturalize" the gender binary, enables a reactive image of thought of the world as deterministically cause and effect.

[20] To move from a philosophy of identity to one of becoming begs the question: "It is possible, for example, to think of the project of sexual difference in two senses: reactively (as a truth of the subject, self, or body to be revealed) or actively (as an event of differentiation or dispersion that then produces positions or perspectives from which revelation takes place. The question, of course, is whether such an active overcoming of the logic of subjectivism is possible." [60] In cinema, it can be argued, we come closest to the temporal event of differentiation that, as spectators, we bear witness to the unfolding of such revelations. The unique use of time in the cinema is why Deleuze sees it as an exemplary form because, while we watch, we are co-present with the virtuality of the screen image, not knowing what may come next. Still, for both Deleuze and Butler, even reactive formations or "performances" embody the potential for their own subversion. In other words, the movement-image and gender performance both may "seek to approximate the ideal of a substantial ground of identity;" however, "their occasional *discontinuity*, reveal the temporal and contingent groundlessness of this 'ground.'" [61] Discontinuity reveals what, in effect, constitutes both bodies and the cinematic image—singularities. "Singularities are the impersonal events from which we compose the world into actual bodies," and it is from decomposing the cinematic image, or gender performance, into its singularities that an active image of thought is made available. [62]

The Time-Image of Queer Bodies

[21] Butler's text asks "how do non-normative sexual practices call into question the stability of gender as a category of analysis?" [63] This question has at its root a similar impulse as Deleuze's query: what is it that throws the movement-image into crisis, that is, what destabilizes the narrative totality presented in classical cinema? The answer for him is the direct image of time. This image begins with the recollection-image, that which introduces "a whole new sense of subjectivity... Subjectivity, then, takes on a new sense, which is no longer motor or material, but temporal and spiritual." [64] In this way, Deleuze introduces a philosophical concept applicable beyond the scope of cinema, and, in fact, aptly descriptive of non-normative sexual practices. The recollection-image builds in complexity towards the time-image, moving further away from subjectivity altogether. To this extent, non-normative sexual practices and desires moves us away from subjectivity per se and towards the singularities that are constitutive of bodies, giving us a direct image of time in and on the body.

[22] Butler's explication of subversive desires, indeed, comes remarkably close to Deleuze's exploration of "the problem of 'time-images' in *Cinema 2* [which] is to show how multiplicities figure in our lives just when their time is freed at once from psychological memory and linear causality, and so from 'consciousness'...Although they take us away from our 'selves or 'persons', in another sense they are what are most peculiar to us or about us." [65] The multiplicities that constitute desire work as the ontological lynchpin for both authors. The time-image, it should be recalled, is made up of irrational cuts that cannot be reconstituted into a whole, "breaking experience down into the irrational (or not yet unified or conceptualized) singularities." [66] These singularities are one way to define the "trouble" to gender that Butler parses out in her landmark text. By subdividing gender performance into its constitutive acts, she not only highlights these singularly gendered acts as *acts* but also foregrounds the disruptive properties of the intervals *between* acts. Akin to Deleuze's cinematic interval, "the possibilities of gender transformation are to be found precisely in the arbitrary [*irrational*] relation between such acts, in the possibility of failure to repeat, a de-formity, or a parodic repetition that exposes the phantasmatic effect of abiding identity as a politically tenuous construction." [67] Much of the power to "de-form" a phantasmatic representational system, such as gender or the cinema, lies in the ability to expose the intervals that disrupt

the otherwise uninterrupted system.

[23] One of the significant overlaps in these theories turns upon the theatrical metaphor at work in both. The direct image of time in terms of the intervals now visible between acts leads to theatricalization of the body of the actors themselves. The introduction of the time-image in cinema means that, "attitudes and postures pass into this slow theatricalization of the body." [68] For both writers, such theatricalization is ultimately subversive and, to a great extent, a cause for laughter. In other words, the altering of the role of time to expose its otherwise elided intervals invites the spectator to chuckle at effects of the contraction of time, which create the phantasm of "plot" or "subject." In terms of cinema, Deleuze names this, following Brecht, the "gest": "What is important is less the difference between poles [man, woman, and child] than the passage from one to another, the imperceptible passage of attitudes or postures to 'gest'...making it the essence of theatre, irreducible to plot or the 'subject'...the gest...carries out a direct theatricalization of bodies." [69] Butler, of course, calls this "gender parody;" what is gender parody if not a performance "to get to attitudes as to [sexual] categories which put time in the body, as well as thought into life"? [70] From Butler it is clear that drag, butch, and other gender de-formations, reduce "natural" gender to a set of "bodily attitudes," resulting in a "spectacle" of the body that is a social gest or parody of the sex-gender system.

[24] Where Butler and Deleuze diverge, and this is important to note, is in his historicization of the time-image. For Deleuze, this arises in the aftermath of postwar reconstruction, when a new cinema provides a direct image of time, effecting both a change in affect and perception. However, the challenge of feminism is to introduce a "new image of thought" that resists the totalization of identity. Certainly, what Deleuze favors as the time-image, such as neo-realism and the French New Wave, do little in general to destabilize gender and sexuality as they are commonly understood. Therefore, feminist cinematographic philosophers may turn to cinema for a "genealogy" of gender identity and the role of time in it but may be hesitant to duplicate Deleuze's taxonomy. Feminists may be less quick to distinguish between "good" and "bad" films, between the "new" and the "cliché," as Deleuze often does. In fact, his "good" film of the time-image often reifies heterosexual desire and gender dimorphism. However, the content of his analyses of film (and, frequently, the content of the films he chooses) are less instructional than his invitation to a certain kind of philosophy of form. For Deleuze, "the time-image organizes a new geometry of the interval marked by the concept of 'irrational' divisions...the flow of images or sequences bifurcate and develop serially, rather than continuing a line or integrating into a whole." [71] A specifically feminist cinematographic practice can develop this "new geometry of the interval" to allow feminist film theory to move away from concepts such as representation and subjectivity, embracing another image of corporeal feminist thought altogether.

[25] Is there a way to hold onto the "irrational" interval in rethinking the acts, the singularities, which are constitutive of sex/gender? Corporeal feminism, in its account of the role of time in gender formation, aims to understand the "volatility" of the body not "determined in relations to goals and means which would unify the set, but...dispersed in 'a plurality of ways of being present in the world, of belonging to sets, all incompatible and yet co-existent.'" [72] Grosz's "volatile bodies," Donna Haraway's "cyborg," Cherrie Moraga's chimeric monster of *La Malinche*, the figure of the radical *mestizaje* taken up by many U.S. feminists of color, all the many tropes of differential consciousness forwarded by Sandoval embrace the irrational interval, that which resists the foreclosure of gender/racial/sexual binaries. [73] These conceptual tropes allow for a more direct image of time in and on the body.

[26] For Butler and Grosz, the "time-image" of gender is located in the queer body: "those bodies for which gender does not follow from sex and the practices of sex do not follow from either sex or gender—that is to say, queer bodies." [74] Feminist queer theory points out the arbitrary intervals in the sex-gender system by stressing those desires that create, if you will, a time-image of the body: "the obliteration of a whole or of a totalization of images [acts], in favor of an outside which is inserted between them." [75] Desires from outside, that is, obliterate the unified totality that coheres sexuality and gender identity. The time-image of cinema and the queer body are similarly destabilizing because of their similar source material—the affects of an impersonal unconscious. Butler claims, "If every performance repeats itself to institute the effect of identity, then every repetition requires an interval between the acts, as it were, in which risk and excess threaten to disrupt the identity being constituted. The unconscious is this excess that enables and contests every performance, and which never fully appears within the performance itself." [76] In this way, gender performance can be seen as a series, whose intervals, like the cuts in the movement-image, most often remain unseen, unnoticed. However, in queer bodies, a different image is revealed, exposing these cuts as "irrational" or "arbitrary," as gest or parody, by introducing the duration of time into the performance.

A Differential Consciousness of Feminist Film Theory

[27] It is in the name of radicalizing feminist critique that I turn towards the less-than-feminist Deleuze. For some time, the intersections of feminist theory and cinema studies have produced powerful arguments concerning the construction of gender identity and its inherent "performativity," such as the concept of "masquerade." Yet, the argument has remained dominated by the psychoanalytic paradigm and, before it, the more straightforward theory of representation that psychoanalysis sought to challenge. Deleuze, with little interest in the feminist branch of film studies, set out to confront the psychoanalytic and semiotic models that dominated most film theory in general. His cinematographic philosophy introduced a completely different and differential methodology of the cinema and thought in one. His important contribution to film studies was to see that "the advent of cinema might give us one form of transversal becoming; not a becoming that is grounded in a being and which simply unfolds itself through time, but a becoming that changes with each new encounter." [77] It is this precisely cinematic becoming that gave Deleuze "reasons to believe in the world and in vanished bodies." [78]

[28] If "becoming-woman" remains, as it must, a controversial concept, moored to a dualistic concept of gender that it cannot ever completely shuck off, then a feminist incursion into cinematographic philosophy, I would suggest, can proffer concepts less troublesome for feminism. [79] Indeed, for feminist film theory and interpretation particularly, "the shift from psychoanalytic and semiotic perspective to a Deleuzian problematics of surfaces brings with it a series of transformations in focus in conceptions of corporeality, sexual specificity, and sexed subjectivity." [80] To this extent, Deleuze not only transforms what has been such a predominant model within film analysis, but also invents concepts in his film-philosophy fitting feminist and queer theory broadly conceived. I have tried to show just how well these distinct disciplines fit by tracing their parallel lines of flight. However, this conjunction is less shocking when one considers the goals shared by a feminist and queer theory such as Butler's and the fundamental principles of Deleuzian philosophy: "By thus introducing multiplicity into eros, Deleuze tries to get away from... the centrality of the ideas of identity and identification... the question then becomes how to conceive of our ethos—our 'modes of being'—in a manner no longer based on identity." [81] The apposition of Deleuze's film-philosophy and Butler's genealogy of the sexed body I have undertaken here can be seen as one way to conceive of a corporeal feminist "mode of being" that defies identity.

[29] The powers of the false appear in both texts since both authors "oppose 'regimes of truth.'" [82] For Butler, it is the regime of truth that deterministically links sexuality to gender identity. She opposes this regime of truth by averring "performativity is not a singular act, but a repetition and a ritual, which achieves its effects through its naturalization in the context of a body, understood, in part, as a culturally sustained *temporal duration*." [83] It is this concept of temporal duration that is central to feminist cinematographic philosophy. Both Butler and Deleuze emphasize temporal duration in making these systems—gender and cinema—either go on without interruption or breakdown, allowing for new bodies, new thoughts to come to the fore. To this extent, Deleuze's philosophy of the cinema, with its detailed account of the images of time and movement, helps to open out and expand the notion of performativity, and its political implications, so central to Butler's project, pushing it much further away from its residual belief in agency or autonomy. [84] However, what Butler challenges Deleuzian film philosophers to consider is that cinematic typology is not enough. One may produce an extended taxonomy of the cinema, and it may be reproduced by Deleuze's epigone, but "a typology of actions [or images] would clearly not suffice, for parodic displacement, indeed, parodic laughter, depends on a context and *reception* in which subversive confusions can be fostered." [85] What is lost in Deleuze's extended taxonomy of the cinema is this very concept of reception and context. [86]

[30] Cinematic images, much like gender performance, do not occur in a vacuum. The claim that films do something, like produce images of thought, implies that films are received, are seen. Although not seen by subjects per se, the *assemblage* established in the viewing situation must take account of *both* machines—cinematic and spectatorial. Feminist cinematographic philosophy must ask at each moment: "What performance [what type of cinematic image] will invert the inner/outer distinction and compel a radical rethinking of the psychological presuppositions of gender identity and sexuality? ...What kind of gender performance will enact and reveal the performativity of gender itself in a way that destabilizes the naturalized categories of identity and desire?" [87] This question can only be answered when spectatorial bodies are acknowledged. Yet, it is of little surprise that these questions have not been of much interest to cinematographic philosophy; for as Grosz points out, "when the body is discussed [in philosophy], it is conceptualized in narrow and problematic, dichotomized terms. It is understood in terms that attempt to minimize or ignore altogether its formative role in the production of philosophical values...Above all, the sexual specificity of the body and the ways sexual difference produces or effects truth, knowledge, justice, etc has never been thought." [88]

[31] It falls upon *feminist* cinematographic philosophy to recognize that "as a discipline, philosophy has surreptitiously excluded femininity, and ultimately women, from its practices through its usually implicit coding of femininity with the

unreason associated with the body." [89] Feminist film theory, in general, has not affected this illusion, but erred on the other side, by fetishizing sexual difference as the key difference embodied in the film image. Deleuze, however, risks privileging the mind over the body in pushing cinema towards philosophy. In this way, the *Cinema* books reflect that tradition in philosophy "concerned primarily or exclusively with ideas, concepts, reason, judgement... terms which marginalize or exclude considerations of the body. As soon as knowledge is seen as purely conceptual, its relations to bodies, the corporeality of both knowers and texts, and the ways these materialities interact, must become obscure." [90] Yet, Chela Sandoval's definition of differential consciousness addresses both concepts and bodies. The transfigurative powers of cinematic thought works through both simultaneously because affect and thought are inseparable. Feminist cinematographic philosophy needs to be particularly concerned with introjecting the body back into "consciousness." Butler's concept of performativity can provide one of the terms of this re-membering of the corporeality of the body by recognizing the body as an image in and of time. Deleuzian film-philosophy and Butler's theoretical inquiry into the sexed body, taken together, may well provide a conceptual apparatus for a cinematographic philosophy of corporeal feminism.

Endnotes

[1] See Rosi Braidotti, *Nomadic Subjects: Embodiment and Sexual Difference in Contemporary Feminist Theory* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), and Elizabeth Grosz, *Volatile Bodies: Toward A Corporeal Feminism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994). The incongruity of Deleuze's writings—which certainly cannot be construed as feminist—with feminist inquiry has been amply addressed by these writers, and in the anthology edited by Claire Colebrook and Ian Buchanan, *Deleuze and Feminist Theory* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000), which places an ampersand between the two: "It has never been a simple matter of application or addition when feminism has addressed a body of thought" (Colebrook 5). Rather, the conjoining of the two schools of thought can be seen, at best, as feminism's "odd relation to its other" (4), and, at its most extreme, as feminism's "confrontation with Deleuze" (12).

[2] In fact, the lack of work on gender and the *Cinema* books has been lamented: "These vantages on gender and sexuality are only beginning to be explored, but in the future they will likely play an integral role in any consideration of the cinema books." See Gregory Flaxman, "Introduction," *The Brain Is The Screen: Deleuze and the Philosophy of Cinema* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000) 29.

[3] Barbara Kennedy, *Deleuze and Cinema: The Aesthetics of Sensation* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000); Patricia Pisters, *The Matrix of Visual Culture: Working with Deleuze in Film Theory* (CA: Stanford University Press, 2003); Dorothea Olkowski, *Gilles Deleuze and the Ruin of Representation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999). However, several years before these books were published, an excellent collection of essays came out in the anthology, *Kiss Me Deadly: Feminism and Cinema for the Moment* (Sydney: Power Institute of Fine Arts, 1995). Edited by Laleen Jayamanne, this collection offers some early examples of incorporating Deleuze's *Cinema* books into feminist film analysis.

[4] Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam, "Translators' Introduction," in *Cinema 1: The Movement-Image*, by Gilles Deleuze (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), xi.

[5] Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 2: The Time-Image*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Robert Galeta (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989) 189.

[6] Linda Martin Alcoff, "Becoming An Epistemologist," in *Becomings: Explorations in Time, Memory, and Futures*, ed. Elizabeth Grosz (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999) 58.

[7] Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, 2nd Edition (New York: Routledge, 1999) xxxii.

[8] My usage of the term "model" follows from Elizabeth Grosz: "a model is a heuristic device which facilitates a certain understanding, highlighting certain features while diminishing the significance of others; it is a selective rewriting of a situation whose complexity entails the possibility of other, alternative models, models which highlight different features, presenting different emphases." For Grosz, the Möbius strip works as a model for elaborating the complexity of the sexed body, although she suggests many other models are available and should be developed. See *Volatile Bodies: Toward A Corporeal Feminism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994) 209.

[9] Grosz, *Volatile Bodies*, 209. These parallels have been made in terms of queer theory's particular engagement with the

body in Steven Shaviro's *The Cinematic Body* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), and in David Pendleton's "Out of the Ghetto: Queerness, Homosexual Desire, and the Time-Image," in *Strategies: Journal of Theory, Culture and Politics* 14.1 (May 2001): 47-62. D.N. Rodowick, on the other hand, has applied Deleuze's cinema concepts and his "conceptual personae" to the question of gender in film. Although feminist filmmakers are engaged in his discussion, *feminist theory* is not; Foucault, rather, is referred to as the sole theorist of "difference." See "Unthinkable Sex: Conceptual Personae and the Time-Image," in *Invisible Culture: An Electronic Journal For Visual Studies* (2000).

[10] Grosz, *Volatile Bodies*, vii.

[11] Grosz, *Volatile Bodies*, ix.

[12] Grosz, *Volatile Bodies*, 17-18; Grosz includes Luce Irigaray, Hélène Cixous, Gayatri Spivak, Jane Gallop, Moira Gatens, Vicki Kirby, Judith Butler, Naomi Schor, Monique Wittig, and others among the participants of corporeal feminism (17).

[13] Because this discussion addresses corporeal feminism specifically, I use the terms "queer theory" and "feminist theory," to a large extent, interchangeably. This is to underscore the ways in which the writers I cite, especially Butler and Grosz, succeed in persuading this reader of the inextricability of sex, sexuality, gender and desire.

[14] Melissa McMahon, "'Fourth Person Singular'—Becoming Ordinary and the Void in the Critical Body Filmic," in *Kiss Me Deadly: Feminism and Cinema for the Moment*, ed. Layleen Jayamanne (Sydney: Power Institute of Fine Arts, 1995) 131.

[15] Grosz, *Volatile Bodies*, 21-23.

[16] McMahon 133; citing Gilles Deleuze, *Dialogues*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987) 93.

[17] Gilles Deleuze and Claire Parnet, *Dialogues*, 93.

[18] Claire Colebrook, "Introduction," in *Deleuze and Feminist Theory*, eds. Claire Colebrook and Ian Buchanan (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000) 10.

[19] Claire Colebrook, *Gilles Deleuze* (New York: Routledge, 2002) 54.

[20] Chela Sandoval, *Methodology of the Oppressed, Theory Out of Bounds, Volume 18* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000) 44.

[21] John Rajchman, *The Deleuze Connections* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2000) 17.

[22] Colebrook, *Gilles Deleuze*, 39.

[23] Colebrook, *Gilles Deleuze*, 35.

[24] See Stephen Heath, *Questions of Cinema* (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1981).

[25] Colebrook, *Gilles Deleuze*, 53.

[26] Colebrook, *Gilles Deleuze*, 31.

[27] Colebrook, *Gilles Deleuze*, 43.

[28] Rajchman 89.

[29] Grosz, *Volatile Bodies*, 120.

[30] Grosz, *Volatile Bodies*, 121.

[31] Grosz, *Volatile Bodies*, 121.

[32] Grosz, *Volatile Bodies*, 121.

[33] Colebrook, *Gilles Deleuze*, 35.

- [34] Grosz, *Volatile Bodies*, 120.
- [35] Colebrook, *Gilles Deleuze*, 48.
- [36] Colebrook, *Gilles Deleuze*, 35.
- [37] Gilles Deleuze, "The Brain is the Screen: Interview with Gilles Deleuze," *Discourse* 20.3 (Fall 1998): 53.
- [38] Elizabeth Grosz, "Becoming...An Introduction," in *Becomings: Explorations in Time, Memory, and Futures*, ed. Elizabeth Grosz (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999) 1.
- [39] Butler, *Gender Trouble*, 179, emphasis added.
- [40] Butler, *Gender Trouble*, xxix.
- [41] Claire Colebrook, "A Grammar of Becoming: Strategy, Subjectivism, and Style," in *Becomings: Explorations in Time, Memory, and Futures*, ed. Elizabeth Grosz (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999) 132.
- [42] Rajchman 6-7.
- [43] Rajchman 6, 115.
- [44] Colebrook, "Introduction," *Deleuze and Feminist Theory*, 3.
- [45] Ian Buchanan, "Introduction," in *A Deleuzian Century?*, ed. Ian Buchanan (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999) 8.
- [46] Colebrook, "Introduction," *Deleuze and Feminist Theory*, 8.
- [47] Colebrook, "Introduction," *Deleuze and Feminist Theory*, 10.
- [48] Colebrook, "Introduction," *Deleuze and Feminist Theory*, 7, 12; a similar claim is made by Buchanan in his introduction to *A Deleuzian Century?*
- [49] Colebrook, "Introduction," *Deleuze and Feminist Theory*, 12.
- [50] D. N. Rodowick, *Gilles Deleuze's Time Machine* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997) 10.
- [51] Rodowick, *Gilles Deleuze's Time Machine*, 10.
- [52] Rodowick, *Gilles Deleuze's Time Machine*, 10.
- [53] Butler, *Gender Trouble*, 178.
- [54] Butler, *Gender Trouble*, 179.
- [55] Colebrook, "A Grammar of Becoming," 118.
- [56] Colebrook, "A Grammar of Becoming," 131.
- [57] Patricia Ticineto Clough, *Autoaffection: Unconscious Thought in the Age of Teletechnology* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000) 120.
- [58] Butler, *Gender Trouble*, 178-9.
- [59] Butler, *Gender Trouble*, 179.
- [60] Colebrook, "A Grammar of Becoming," 127.
- [61] Butler, *Gender Trouble*, 179.
- [62] Colebrook, *Gilles Deleuze*, 33.
- [63] Butler, *Gender Trouble*, xi.
- [64] Deleuze, *Cinema 2: The Time-Image*, 47.

- [65] Rajchman 84.
- [66] Colebrook, *Gilles Deleuze*, 53.
- [67] Butler, *Gender Trouble*, 179.
- [68] Deleuze, *Cinema 2: The Time-Image*, 192.
- [69] Deleuze, *Cinema 2: The Time-Image*, 192.
- [70] Deleuze, *Cinema 2: The Time-Image*, 192.
- [71] Rodowick, *Gilles Deleuze's Time Machine*, 13-14.
- [72] Deleuze, *Cinema 2: The Time-Image*, 203.
- [73] See Sandoval, *Methodology of the Oppressed*, Chapter 7.
- [74] Ticineto Clough 119.
- [75] Deleuze, *The Time-Image*, 187.
- [76] Butler, "Imitation and Gender Insubordination," in *Inside/Out: Lesbian Theories, Gay Theories*, ed. Diana Fuss (New York: Routledge, 1991) 28.
- [77] Colebrook, *Gilles Deleuze*, 37.
- [78] Deleuze, *Cinema 2: The Time-Image*, 201.
- [79] See *Volatile Bodies*, Chapter 7, for discussion of the concerns with this concept.
- [80] Grosz, *Volatile Bodies*, 180.
- [81] Rajchman 92.
- [82] Butler, *Gender Trouble*, viii.
- [83] Butler, *Gender Trouble*, xv, emphasis added.
- [84] A move Butler herself has made in her later works, though in no way as far as Deleuze.
- [85] Butler, *Gender Trouble*, 177, emphasis added.
- [86] For example, films that affect a direct image of time can simply be perceived as yet another (boring) art film, cliché in its own right by this point, and/or not be watched at all. Most Deleuzian film theorists use "us" and "one" to discuss a given film's effect, eliding one of the most important tenets of film theory, the multiple and often contradictory possibilities of reading/ reception.
- [87] Butler, *Gender Trouble*, 177.
- [88] Grosz, *Volatile Bodies*, 4.
- [89] Grosz, *Volatile Bodies*, 4.
- [90] Grosz, *Volatile Bodies*, 4. Deleuze's privileging of thought over affect, albeit thought arrives only via affect, is an example of this. However, structuralist and psychoanalytic film theory reflects this bias in the frequent, and somewhat similar, call for a cinema of the Symbolic, in defense against the cinematic apparatus' enforcement of the Imaginary relation.

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