

## **Film-Philosophy Conference 2011**

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### **An Immense Clip: Film, Philosophy and the Proximate Violence of Becoming**

#### *Abstract*

Three conditions of becoming-image weave their way through this analysis in a consideration of violence as an ethical imperative with respect to the experimental sensate cinema of French filmmaker Philippe Grandrieux, in particular, his second feature *La Vie Nouvelle* (2002). The weave of *movement*, *rest* and *proximity* tighten, in suggesting violence as an ethical moment in our becoming-image. This paradoxical critique of an ethics of violence eventually finds an arresting moment in proximity of the image-experience through its ontological montage structure as that continuous passage of our existence as proximate beings. With a critique of telecommunication and networked information technologies as those delivery systems for pain at a distance, we locate in Grandrieux something arresting that testifies to the impossibility of being elsewhere. All image encounters today, given *their* excessive presence, testify without alibi, without elsewhere as reference point, to the perpetuation of us as being in a middle (*milieu*) of an “immense clip” without end or establishment. Becoming imperceptible in the becoming-image of our material sensate being incepts three moments of *imperceptibility*: Deleuze and Guattari’s *shadow-plane* as chaos that envelopes us all for future possible people and earth; Grandrieux’s mutant-style productive of perpetual *darkness*; and Maurice Blanchot’s riveting thought on the artwork as that testimony to a without exit of our being in what he describes as *le mourir* or the “other night.” Together they weave something akin to a poetics of darkness on the thought of image and image of thought.

## **An Immense Clip: Film, Philosophy and the Proximate Violence of Becoming**

We are not responsible for the victims but responsible before them.  
(Deleuze & Guattari, 1991: 108)

*Movement: An affect of "Slow Cinema"*

Becoming is to emit particles that take on certain relations of movement and rest because they enter into a particular zone of proximity. (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987: 272)

As Nietzsche succeeded in making us understand, thought is creation, not will to truth. But if ... there is no will to truth, this is because thought constitutes a simple "possibility" of thinking without yet defining a thinker "capable" of it and able to say "I": what violence must be exerted on thought for us to become capable of thinking: what violence of an infinite movement that, at the same time, takes from us our power to say "I"? (Deleuze & Guattari, 1991: 54-5).

In 2009 at the Auckland International Film Festival, *Un Lac*, a work by French filmmaker Philippe Grandrieux, was entered into the Festival catalogue under a title "*Slow Cinema*." I wondered what characterised cinema as *slow*: in relation to what? Presumably this category inferred other cinematic encounters outside of this category. Festivals are not necessarily today sites for risky, avant-garde, experimental work and discourses around their genre formations are, perhaps, to be treated likewise. *Slow Cinema* is for those 'true' cinephiles who are *too* slow to realise that experimental filmmaking of the *Grandrieux* type is not the main staple of contemporary film festivals.<sup>1</sup> *Slow Cinema* suggests a pulverisation of narrative to a limit whereby plot hangs only by the barest trace of orthodox understanding. Subsequent to the Festival I located an earlier film by Grandrieux, *La Vie Nouvelle, The New Life*. It is this film I want to discuss in a context that aligns with the thinking of Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari. Initially, though, I will say something about this film, made by a director who, like Deleuze, turned to the philosopher Spinoza. Indeed, we might otherwise have named his film: "Pure Immanence: A Life." We encounter only twenty-four lines of spoken dialogue by five 'characters' in the entirety of this 102 minute feature:

"Is this a joke" (Boyan)

“Kosovo” (Seymour)  
 “No. Okay” (Mélania)  
 “I don’t know what is going on?”(Seymour)  
 “Go?” (Mélania)  
 “No. Stay” (Seymour)  
 “Take off clothes” (French Customer)  
 “un, deux, trois, quatre, cinq, six, sept, huit, neuf” (French Customer)  
 “\$5, American” (Seymour)  
 “Don’t go” (Roscoe)  
 “Fuck-off” (Seymour)  
 “It’s no good” (Roscoe)  
 “Hey take me to the girl – Mélania” (Seymour)  
 “You look worried” (Boyan)  
 “I never bring worry into your house” (Roscoe)  
 “I want to buy the girl” (Seymour)  
 “Not possible, I need her” (Boyan’s side-kick)  
 “Tell him I want the girl” (Seymour)  
 “Ok” (Boyan’s mafioso side-kick)  
 “I Can’t” (Seymour)  
 “I show you the girls” (Boyan)  
 “I’m looking for a special girl” (Seymour)  
 “All the girls are special. Come” (Boyan)  
 “Shut up .... Shut up ... shut up .... SHUT UP ... SHUT UP ... SHUT UP (Seymour)

There is nothing more that needs to be said—there was nothing more said—everything is given here, fully without distance, a kind of *poetic* economy that evokes sensation through fragmenting any sense of a total image, total picture. Seymour, a US Soldier gone AWOL has the ‘most’ to *say* with his total of eleven lines. Twenty-four lines of dialogue are ‘threadbare’ for any feature-length film conventions. Even the rule of twenty-four frames of image a second is abandoned for the sake of something more intense with an opening scene slowed down to eight frames per second as we encounter something close to image-perturbation. His work aims for a vitality as blinding as facing the sun. The great thing for an actor involved with Grandrieux is the simple fact that a strong memory for lines is not of the highest order. *Memory* whatsoever is something that is not held in high regard in the making processes of his work. It is *forgetting* that Grandrieux desires for us as an intense relation. While researching into sensate and emotional potentiality for the film does occur, remembering, as a pre-figuring or predetermining process is relinquished for a liquid becoming-other in the physical making of the work. In surrender to the *physicality* that a scene demands, Grandrieux relinquishes all understanding of what might have been planned-for or pre-given in terms of content. His filmmaking is essentially haptic experiential encounter with a scene: “the moment it when becomes possible to shoot is the moment I am no longer a slave to order, to some necessity ... an entire affective framework, must be engaged” (Brenez, 2002: 6)

This would account for something called *slow*, among the deeply affecting aesthetic shock of images and sounds ‘jammed’ together to create an intensely urgent visceral encounter. Ramond Bellour describes *La Vie Nouvelle* as an “immense clip.”<sup>2</sup> This ‘clip’ becomes one unrelenting vast image capture that, on the one hand, could be described as *slow* given that film is an entity—unlike the photograph—that moves

through a series and sequencing of multiple frames. And, on the other hand, in order to hold to a description such as an ‘immense clip’, something unbelievably captivating exists. What artwork approaching immobile stasis could possibly hold us for 102 minutes? What makes this work absolutely arresting? Is it something alien to our intellect in the mutating blocks of pure sounds and images—bodily gestures, sounds emitted from un- or dis-locatable animals, humans, land or city scapes, music, screams, muted tones, discordant syncopations, blinding light and dark, alien scapes and sounds, formlessness, folding bodies (fore, back, middle grounds)—so many confused ‘formal’ aesthetics that fuse in compositional allure?

*Suspension: Who are we now?*

[CLIP: OPENING/CLOSING OF *LA VIE NOUVELLE*- 5 MINS]

“The fact is that, in Europe, the post-war period has greatly increased the situations which we no longer know how to react to, in spaces which we no longer know how to describe. These were ‘any spaces whatever’, deserted but inhabited, disused warehouses, waste ground, cities in the course of demolition or reconstruction. And in these any-spaces-whatever a new race of characters was stirring, kind of mutant: they saw rather than acted, they were seers.” (Deleuze, 1989: xi)

*La Vie Nouvelle* witnesses these ‘any spaces whatever’ — a new life, a new species emerges in the shadow planes of the Balkan conflict at the end of the last millennium—mutant-seers of a world in ruination who we do recognise through the immense and suspended encounter of what, in turn, *these* characters are witnessing. We witness what they witness as something incommensurable: a watching without knowing. What is this radical abyss trying to do? An opening sequence (we cannot recognise it as an ‘establishing’ shot) surveys astonishment on old peasant faces. They appear to be witnessing *something* that they have never imagined before. They are seers of a future that remains unrecognisable. A ‘state’ mutating before them turns into something that it is not. If seers open and close Grandrieux’s mutant work, they are, perhaps, like Deleuze’s seers, those who act to liberate the present for the future: “freeing life wherever it is imprisoned” as the present becomes unrecognisable to them (Deleuze, 1991: 171). The ‘any spaces whatever’ have little to do with lived experience but rather transpose us through altered-eyes into the imperceptible becoming that is *a life*, pure immanence, abyssal. The *arche* and *telos* of *La Vie Nouvelle* encounter the “without alibi” of Grandrieux’s art—peasant faces giving us nothing in terms of reference to an outside or elsewhere; rather, testifying to what is unbearable.<sup>3</sup> If for Deleuze and Guattari art as pure *percept* and *affect* having little to do with memory and perception, it is more poignantly because art is that expression of trauma beyond the lived and everyday, making bearable through pure sensation a becoming-not-what-we-know and a beyond more than-we-can-bear (Deleuze and Guattari, 1991: 172-4). This ‘beyond the bearable’ is Grandrieux’s challenge to us.

The site of “more than we can bear” would precisely reside in what is unrecognisable to us, without explanation, without an excess of knowing that circulates telecommunications as, precisely, the deliverer of pain through distance: the tele-

pathetic. Would this site, the ‘*vie nouvelle*’, the ‘new’ life, be a different *proximity* (nearing as de-distancing) from the excesses of networked newsworthy images, the tele-graphed and visioned arrivals of and from Kosovo, Sarajevo, Bosnia, Slovenia, Croatia? We are still pondering this notion. Peasant faces, accompanied by the most unrecognisable sounds, arrest us in the mutating conditions of figures that become fused with what might be considered as an unresting soundtrack that infiltrates the shadows of a known world into *their* horizons of disclosure. Mutation becomes disquietly arresting as an encounter of rest: *rest experienced as threat*. Rest carries the signifiers of threat in old, vulnerable, historically redundant faces lit up as if animals surrounded by a rapture of light, expressing the unknown before them. This *anonymous* picture is attuned to sounds that invade our frame, sounds one could only describe as *ominous*, (from the outside of an outside). This *rest*, this waiting-for, a mode of suspension, is as if they (we) are victims waiting to meet some cruel fate. Grandrieux intensifies this *suspension* through the slow down to eight fps. We wait *for* more than we can bear. In waiting we encounter something strange, something that moves beyond a threshold of ‘disturbance’ to something transformative as a resting place. We encounter *time* as that which essentially opens us to a thinking enabling mutation to occur: from what we know (as the tele-pathos of image-sound-byte economies) to what we don’t. This ‘not knowing’ transfixes us (we see it in the face of a peasant). It is proximity of and to violence—a becoming strange—in us: blocks of sensation as deterritorialization of human suffering. These blocks of material sensation happen as a time of the image different to the excessively encapsulated images of violence that we encounter as a televisual everyday. Or do they? Are we *transformed* in our seeing via a becoming-altered as our encounter with experimental cinemas such as that of Grandrieux? Perhaps, paradoxically, on some level this is the same affect as the everyday excess of images in their potentiality to form an infinite montage of unknowable (virtual or unconscious) depths intimated with Bellour’s encounter of *La Vie Nouvelle* as an “immense clip.” Key to our analysis is an understanding of the relation between time and space in a mutated filmic encounter of *La Vie Nouvelle* as respite or rest from a scene of the everyday as the *feigning* of a between: even the feign of a feign as distance (nearing, far-ing, dissimulating, the palpable distansiating of distance) from which we gain a vantage point on or for our ethical understandings of traumatic events, our *ethos*. *La Vie Nouvelle* testifies to the impossibility of such a space-time wherein human understanding separates itself from events, as an objective standpoint (equally a subjective standpoint), as in the ‘lived experience’ of receiving daily news in comfort and safety, from networked web, television, newspaper, mobile reportage. There is no cut and we are anything but proximate beings in an incessant process of becoming. Grandrieux suggests:

“My dream is to create a completely ‘Spinoza-ist’ film, built upon ethical categories: rage, joy, pride ... and essentially each of these categories would be a pure block of sensation, passing from one to the other with enormous suddenness.” (Brenez, 2002: 3)

Relations of rest to movement in *La Vie Nouvelle* yoke our becoming-ethical as a riveting experience of being’s modalities: folding, doubled, mutant in the ruination of an existence as perpetual seer of and in the “any spaces and times whatever.” Violence is not force as privilege over who or what suffers less or more: force as rule and principled order. There is no *measure* except the undisputed relation of suffering

to existence: an intensive multiplication of possibilities to be. The ethical paradox here finds currency in something mentioned earlier: “We are not responsible for the victims but responsible before them” (Deleuze and Guattari, 1991: 108). We are all ‘victims’ and, in this admission, we would possibly want to do away with ‘victim’ altogether—to make it a stranger. Responsibility *for* an “elsewhere” for the “victims” is alibi as such. It is a feigned possibility for what is impossible. If there is such a thing as ‘responsibility’ it does not reside *for* an elsewhere but rather responsibility is the *becoming-image of our watching*, only what I can possibly recognise as a ‘self,’ what is most proximate though without a subject: a life. The question of who are we in how we view, how we see and encounter what we do is crucial here. Grandrieux’s work opens us to an encounter with the image that testifies we are nothing other than becoming-image. The image is not representation. It is not representative of another elsewhere. It is the enormous suddenness of our inseparable existence: “It is a political film, on the material, not sociological state of the world ... developed on intensity rather than psychological relations” (Brenez, 2002: 6). We are simply and forever in the middle as continuous passage, without cut, without interstices. Rest and suspension, opening temporality to an opening of becoming-image, incepts our becoming pure *affect* through an overlap of planes betraying conventions of the edit point in cinema. *La Vie Nouvelle* is unrelenting as contamination of sound-as-image and darkness-as-light. This one ‘immense clip’ is always already moving, disquieting, fragile and vibrant through its enormous *suddenness*, something Adrian Martin described as “jammed together in difficult fraught intimacy” (Martin, 2004)

### *Ethics, trauma and affects*

We are addressing an ethics of violence, ethics as violence, as the proximity of a seeing that is too close for vision, showing as the darkness of Grandrieux’s sensate cinema in relation to Deleuze’s and Guattari’s conceptual field of *becoming imperceptible*. Questions arise through Deleuze and Guattari’s writing on *affect* and *percept* as conditions belonging to an artwork. Through conceptual pairing of philosophy and art, in relation to a becoming-darkness, concealed or blind, *affect and percept* incept a capacity for shifting violence initially understood as call from a distance perpetuated and experienced by others, to become something liberating: affective *violence* as affecting encounter that we relate to with *La Vie Nouvelle*. This ‘violence’ is the risking of everything in terms of comprehension and mastery, to arrive at an intense forgetting of self as though this may be a first encounter with life. Becoming other (imperceptible to oneself) arrives for Deleuze and Guattari, in part, through the ‘No’: to enter into a relationship with the negative. To philosophise is to become-minority, to become one’s other, something that *it* is not. In saying ‘No’ to what we are and become other, we open the potentiality for the other to become liberated from its terror or trauma: to become animal so that the animal can become something else (1991: 109). This ‘other’ is no-one other than this self recognised essentially in the multiplicity of its powers: an intensely proximate process of becoming as the inaugural moment of welcoming that which we are not or do not know, an ushering in of the stranger that we simply are. Terror and trauma are implicit in this transformative movement, beyond a definite fear of the not-knowing and into the sensate ‘reality’ of an indefinite ec-static existence, limited by our

physical being as ‘us’ or our body to the extended fold of something strange that tears at us to become other.

The violence of becoming strange is a transformation that does not open to melancholic loss, mood of mourning the foregone definition of an “I.” With a suddenness, moods—rage, joy, pride—become pure blocks of sensation as threshold passing from one degree of power to an other. “Imperceptibility” is vision without vision, a condition of darkness so diffuse that we see sensationally, as if a ‘dream-world’ that orders our spatio-temporal existence unlike anything we’ve *known* before, what Deleuze and Guattari recognise in potentiality as the virtual. The virtual is not something housed in a future but ex-ists as the existent’s degrees of power to become, the multiplicity of its potential unfolding and refolding, within the actuality of its (our) life. It is virtual, perhaps, as concealed imperceptibility. Some describe it as the depths of our unconscious (2007: 70). Proximate violence as a cinema of darkness or imperceptibility is a shadow that exists in all images: emergence of the image as sensory materiality of sound, movement, space, vibration, harmony, flicker, light, emotion, bodies, colour. On an *everyday* basis we encounter the double becoming of imagery as proximity and distance, proximity in distance, nearing as de-distancing. This *double* happens in a double becoming *of* distance in the excessive systems of information and networked communication that lives-on *virtually* in the proximate shadow of becoming other. The inference here is that in all telecommunication and information delivery devices (delivery of terror, excitement, violence) this daily interface installs us as proximate beings in our *eternity* of becoming-image. In speaking here of the virtual as a double becoming (becoming other to itself), we avoid an unhelpful difference—art and the everyday—in terms of images or things created by artists opposed to images or things created by information (tele)-networked-communications industries. Twisting ourselves free of such opposition, our encounter with *La Vie Nouvelle* is understood in terms of a distance and proximity inaugurating a becoming-other, a virtual enterprise that calls (us) into question as to who we are sensately: violently, fearfully, ec-statically in a world.

Ontologically this double becoming-image reveals us as futural beings, imperceptibly becoming what we are not regardless of how and where we derive our place of belonging. We ask: what happens to all the distraction, boredom, curiosity, attentiveness, violence, pleasure that we receive on a daily basis through ‘experiences’ of media? Where does it go or how does it go with us? Deleuze and Guattari describe this imperceptible (becoming) as a shadow plane that envelopes us at each stage of our becoming whereby the double of a positive knowing and a negative chaos momentarily gives rise to our future as “earth and people” (Deleuze and Guattari, 1991: 109 & 218). In this sense, this paper aims to activate a question of violence as one of ethics in the sensate response-ability we have to becoming other as future potentiality. It aims to emphasise a *new* relation of thought with the image, a new life, as though life encountered for the first time, absolute proximity as we enter into life’s material-being as refrain from melancholic loss, a melancholy that has been so productive of the useless sympathy of pain-at-a-distance (as the turning of and to another kind of violence) We are responsible *before* the victims, images, ourselves, and not *for* them. This aim infers, perhaps, a ‘choice’ or resistance around *how* we incur images. Knowing and chaos together momentarily depict a movement of envelopment in a shadow plane that is hidden. Yet it is one we *all* share. Further, the

aim here is to affect an *all sharing through* violence as a sensate condition for going beyond the self into a becoming what we are not, as pure immanence—material so violent that all that exists is the proximity of that which we can never escape—except through death—sheer matter hinged to matter.

*La Vie Nouvelle* is that *nowhere* to escape the being of individual matter (body, self, thing) except through fusion with other matter (other bodies, things). Proximity inaugurates urgency, yet paradoxically affects relief. The shadow plane of a future for Deleuze and Guattari as our double-becoming (both and together: negative chaos and positive knowing) is attuned to Maurice Blanchot's imperceptible *le mourir* (or 'other night') as a *stronger night than death* through the sheer facticity of being riveted to existence without an exit. There will always be a future in the *not knowing* reality of death. Death is an exit but we never live this exit. We live the unremitting and proximate being of our becoming without escape from *this* fact of being this body, this life. The darkness other than death is our riveted-life without knowing an exit. We are living in the dark. It is darkness that when 'pathologically' related manifests as a violence at a distance. Perhaps these are extremes, such as genetic experimentation for the eternal life or faith's conceptual framings of an after-life, to the everyday idealism for eternal youth propagated in the image-factories of advertising, mainstream cinema, television, medicine, fashion, exchange value upon exchange value. At a distance we sit in the illusion that we have some kind of control over this facticity. In terms of the artwork, Blanchot gives this without-exit-origin (darkness, *le mourir*) as the artist's experience of the impossible experience to control one's death.<sup>4</sup> Without knowing where, when or how we exit life, we are left without exit, riveted to existence, to our bodies with which, into which, we are born. Yet, for Blanchot, Deleuze and Guattari, there is another *breath* that makes this incessant proximity bearable in the name of the artwork. In our not knowing we *know* otherwise that a future exists (now, in the artwork as possibility of a life). The work itself breathes not *for* us but breathes us. Blocks of sensation (*percept* and *affect*) breathe us.<sup>5</sup> Where intensities accumulate through *lived* trauma, violence, ecstasy, boredom, melancholy, artists as seers or sensation-agents free life wherever it is imprisoned and shatter lived perceptions so that we, in our encounter with the work, become sensation (*percept*, *affect*) existing for that moment as "too alive to be liveable or lived" (Deleuze and Guattari, 1991: 171).

We seem to be making a distinction between artist and the everyday when we explicitly wanted to avoid this difference, this distinction, as if art is redemptive of a sullied existence, as if *La Vie Nouvelle* has a rarefied and effete sensibility that countermands all of the tele-technologies of mass communication. Rather we are saying, from the point of view of the existent and existence, as the degrees of power of virtual becoming and that existent's actuality, sensate encounter is violent becoming-image in a more-or-less approximation. But seeing is not indifferent to this difference: the seer, the becoming visible of a concealing darkness. We ask: What Art? What Everyday? Deleuze and Guattari stake a claim on the difference of *affect* to affection, and *percept* to perception, in a becoming art as pure sensation. Their difference lies in the *without-reference-point* to an object, ex-sisting as pure sensation where separation is not in question (Deleuze and Guattari, 1991: 166, 171). *Art* as pure sensation forgets us as subjects, resisting the present or what we might develop as an alibi (an elsewhere). Pure sensation is without alibi, without story, justification

or argument to substantiate meaning. It becomes the expression of trauma beyond the lived, so that it becomes bearable not as a form of resemblance or reflection but as pure immanence. We aim for a new territory-as-ethics for a future thought: art, philosophy, animal, earth, people. It is an ethics of proximity for a future virtually *knowable*, which is to say, actual in one's resistance to certain kinds of image encounter: refrain from entering into their systems of exchange as information-communication-networks that perpetuate a discourse on being responsible for the victim, rather than responsibility *before* them. We aim for a poetics of darkness.<sup>6</sup> Here the attempt is to free ourselves from an economy of reflection in the becoming sensation of the too alive. What we have recalled earlier as a living in the dark through Blanchot's imperceptible *le mourir* (or 'other night') is a stronger night than death through the sheer facticity of being riveted to existence without an exit. The ontological structure of the moving-image as montage approximates us in a middle (*milieu*) without exit. This is the arresting (and attesting) work of Grandrieux in his suspension of logical narrative, psychological mapping, conscious beginnings, *denouement* and ends, or recognisable separations between fore, middle and backgrounds that materialises a 'reality' 'based' on sensate experience.

*Moving toward the middle: The world as trance*

"Becoming is the concept itself. It is born in History, and falls back into it, but is not of it. In itself it has neither beginning or end only a milieu. (Deleuze and Guattari, 1991: 110)

According to Deleuze and Guattari in *What is Philosophy?* (1991: 101), the *birthplace* of philosophy occurred in the *middle* as a Greek milieu of thought grounded in ungroundedness. Their image of thought as a middle 'home' of philosophy inaugurates the becoming-thought of ground-as-stranger; unpossessed, indeterminate, imperceptible and without 'home' where concepts were not yet possessions and contemplation of them existed as pure immanence, a home 'possessed' by strangeness. It is precisely our lack of Greek knowing in their becoming other "to the figures of the East" (101) that we find ourselves as strange and beginning again (in the middle) in a milieu of philosophising difference as the future-to-become for a "new earth, a new people" (109 & 218). At the heart of their conceptual thinking on pure immanence as milieu, we recognise milieu's expression as movement from territorialisation to deterritorialization to reterritorialization.<sup>7</sup> Deterritorializing as a mode of becoming recognizes *cuts* as entities in territory's forgetting of it-self. Here past, present and future encompass another species and intercepts "without territories forming" (184). Deleuze and Guattari suggest in presenting sensation as a *question* that this *cut* in relation to forgetting arrives only through a *middle ground* as that ground which deterritorializes predetermined or propositional experiments and does not bring with it an end or awareness.<sup>8</sup> *La Vie Nouvelle* is that immense clip that, in our consideration of the excesses of image-production in relation to our existence as proximate-beings, folds thought *without a cut* as a world before us, eternally sensate. Grandrieux conceives his work as something that embraces a forgetting "to avoid at all costs is a simple execution of what you've pre-planned" (Brenez, 2002: 6) and further, rejects memory as the road to melancholy: "there is no melancholic temptation, nothing is truly lost, everything is available immediately ..." (Brenez,

2002: 5). In the context of sensate experience, Deleuze and Guattari parallel this rejection of memory in the embrace of vitality. “Even if the material lasts for a few seconds it will give sensation the power to exist and be preserved in itself in the eternity that co-exists with this short duration” (Deleuze and Guattari, 1991: 166). Here percept and affect are preserved in themselves as a temporality of eternity, as the material passes absolutely into sensation. As material-beings we pass-into-sensation as we become blocks of material substance in our encounter of the work of art. Percepts and affects owe nothing to those who experience or have experienced them. They are simply not that interested in a self (Deleuze and Guattari, 1991: 168). Sensation’s indifference to us has no interest in our lived experience as memory creatures: “Memory I hate you” (ibid). Becoming imperceptible through sensation conditions a loss of ego-self correlative with an opening to intensities, embraces, withdrawals, distensions: more alive than lived.

*Aliveness* intercepts the sudden and overwhelming encounter of Grandrieux’s instantiation of our fate as proximate-beings, as Blanchot’s fate of existence, through the skin or material existence that rivets us to our world. Yet, this riveted fate transforms us through an experience alien to being trapped. This ec-static opening is the one of pure immanence in the sensate transformation of becoming-other, becoming strange to ourselves. Grandrieux’s work is full of vitality in the available immediacy of the image: “no melancholy ... the film was made under the sign of enormous health, vital energy, the blazing sun. That surpasses desire, it is even more archaic and formative ...” (Brenez, 2002: 5). *La Vie Nouvelle* is a movement-trace-structure of dance. If anything, this film could be considered a *choreographic* enterprise that profiles the work of experimental poets/performers known as *Etant Donnés* and their electronic house music that fuses with primal screams of ecstatic proportions, mutating dancing bodies into ‘formless’ flesh, light, throbbing, flattened, stretched, lost or found from one frame to another. Dance is a liberating or vitalist possibility for Grandrieux, as we witness the central character *Mélania* become closer and closer to something we would describe (for some degrading trajectory) as becoming-animal. We locate in her transformation to bare(ly) life, another life full of potentiality proximate to the ethical thought of Deleuze and Guattari in their consideration of *shame* as the most powerful motif in the pursuit of philosophy: “thought itself is sometimes closer to an animal that dies than to a living, even democratic, human being” (Deleuze and Guattari, 1991: 108). Their challenge is that we become animal, experience this life in order to liberate animals from what we have commanded for them (including the bare life existence of being human).

[CLIP: BOYAN & MELANIA DANCE – 5 MINUTES)

For Grandrieux, shame is transformed into *shaman*. Blanchot’s *other night* turns to Grandrieux’s middle as dance becomes trance. Trance-state is not a knowable exit but rather a transformation of becoming other as in a shamanic whirl we encounter through both the camera work and actions of Boyan’s and Mélania’s dance reminiscent of a dervish, as Brenez suggests in her interview with Grandrieux. He suggests: “It’s a vibrant presence. My perception of the film was physical and intimate, like for a shaman. I just had to be a conductor for the flux, the music, the rhythms – the body exists to transmit all this” (Brenez, 2002: 5). This body, her body, spinning, against a camera’s whirl, conducts us into an uncanny perceptual spatio-

temporal world that confounds symbolic points of reference. Martin suggests: “she dances to get out of herself” (Martin, 2004). We recognise in this “getting out of herself” a relation of movement and rest, imperceptibility and riveted states of being. All the signifiers of degradation are there: *sex trafficking, drugs, prostitution, poverty, mafia, crime, discrimination, woman-as-objectified-adulterated-flesh*. Mélanie has nothing to live for and everything to gain for getting out of herself. We are *there* with her in total abject proximity. So where is the vitality that Grandrieux suggests? Where is the ethical moment in a violence of proximity? It is in our becoming-violent in the implicit encounter before the image, becoming closer to an animal existence. We do not liberate her, an *elsewhere*, at a distance. We liberate *her* as becoming other of becoming-image, absolutely proximate to *this* existent, so that she (us, me), for future people and earth, becomes liberated. Grandrieux’s work testifies to the lack of choice that we have should we become-sensate in the encounter of his work as there is only proximity, jammed together in ‘difficult fraught intimacy’ of an immense clip empty of an interstitial elsewhere as escape. Is becoming-sensate itself a choice and a refusal? Its refusal is nothing short of refusing that understanding of a future so emphasised in *What is Philosophy?* And what future is that? A passing whereby we are transformed by an incalculable image testimony of us as proximate beings in incessant passage, thrown in the midst (*milieu*) as only ever threshold-existence fastened to a stronger night than death through the sheer facticity of being riveted to existence without an exit.

### *Postscript*

#### *PLANE CRASH:*

*Art, Philosophy and the Proximate Violence of Becoming [An Immense Clip]*

A plane-becomes-building shocking a world even those acclimatised to the conceptual frame of a Virilionean flight. CNN, as in a traumatic process of involuntary memory, repeats *ad infinitum* its exploding image into what becomes the logic of warfare. Clouding our vision, however, is a suspension of disbelief not in this reality but in that idealised through the excessive territory of Hollywood’s blockbuster. What is more disconcerting is the voluntary remembered process of our becoming-sensationalism. We are all implicated here in a violence of turning away as we turn toward more. Perhaps, an ethics of such television news reportage, like telepathy, prefers its pain to exist at a distance.

### *Notes*

1. This is the first time Philippe Grandrieux’s work has been shown in a cinema (festival) in New Zealand. In another film festival context in France, Nicole Brenez writes about his work’s reception in these terms: “Even for those who had been passionate about Philippe Grandrieux’s previous feature, *Sombre, La Vie Nouvelle* represented

an aesthetic shock, a qualitative leap, both deeply affecting and thought-provoking. ... Only two journals defended the film: *Les Inroductibles* and *Trafic*. In France, a land held, since Denis Diderot (not to go further in time), as one of great critical tradition, and a country with a great love of cinema, this phenomenon is becoming ever more conspicuous and worrying: one after the other, important films get crushed against the wall of conventions and neglect. (Brenez 2005: 11 as referenced in Beugnet, *Cinema and Sensation*: 2007:31)

2. Raymond Bellour quoted in (2004) A. Martin *Dance Girl Dance—Philippe Grandrieux's La Vie Nouvelle (The New Life, 2002)*, <http://www.kinoeye.org/04/03/martin03.php/> (retrieved 29/12/2009).

3. Jacques Derrida's *without alibi* correspondence to Deleuze and Guattari's pure immanence and the immediacy without memory of Grandrieux's work. The testimony of without delay is the full encounter of what cannot witness as ever having witnessed before. In this sense it does not exist before the immediate. Derrida suggests, "Let us be attentive to this: although "alibi" means literally an *alleged* "elsewhere" in space, it extends beyond either topology or geography. "Without alibi" can mean *without delay*, without waiting. As an *allegation*, an alibi can *defer/differ* in time. Referring back in this way, which an allegation always does, it can save itself by invoking another time ("I wasn't *there at the moment* of the crime" or "I was *already no longer there*" or "I was intending to go *there at another moment, later*," "I wasn't thinking of it *at that moment*")." (xvi)

4. Maurice, Blanchot. "The Gaze of Orpheus," in *The Station Hill Blanchot Reader, Fiction & Literary Essays*, trans. by Lydia Davis, Paul Auster & Robert Lambertson (Barrytown: Station Hill, 1999) p. 441. Henceforth cited as GO.

5. In *What is Philosophy?* Deleuze & Guattari suggest that art *knows* this chaos well and its *knowing* could be expressed as a framing of the immense shadow of non-thinking-thought that is unable to say what it has witnessed (in present thought). It is a *knowing* without alibi. While artists themselves are those who have lived experiences their art has little to do with memory, perception and the affective. Rather artists transition what is lived to the alive, "the artist is a seer, a becomer ... a shadow" (171). They take up residence in the shadow plane as a rejection of who they are for the future, "freeing life wherever it is imprisoned." Art becomes the expression of trauma beyond the lived and everyday so that it becomes bearable not as some form of resemblance but as pure sensation that drives us to become-not-what-we-know and beyond more than-we-can-bear. Here Deleuze and Guattari seem to locate the complex yet most proximate (asymmetrical) frame or point of view on the coincidence of art and philosophy as a heightened activity, a kind of athleticism monumentalised through reaching the 'sacred source' of percepts: "an affective athleticism of becoming that reveals only forces that are not its own ... In this respect artists are like philosophers. What little health they possess is often too fragile, not because of their illness or neurosis but because they have seen something in life that is too much for anyone, too much for themselves, and that has put on them the quiet mark of death. But this something is also the source or breath that supports them through the illness of the lived (what Nietzsche called health [art as medicine])" (Deleuze and Guattari, 1991: 172-3)

6. According to Blanchot "The everyday escapes. This is its definition. We cannot help but miss it if we seek it through knowledge, for it belongs to a region where there is still nothing to know, just as it is prior to all relation insofar as it has always already been said, even while remaining unformulated, that is to say, not yet information" (Blanchot, 1987: 15). Blanchot's everyday contests truth and thus the world of the Law, Government, the University, the sensible and the rational, of depths and meditations, for it designates, "a region or a level of speech where the determinations true or false, like the opposition yes and no, do not apply – it being before what affirms it and yet incessantly reconstituting itself beyond all that negates it." (16). How does the everyday escape? "The everyday breaks down structures and undoes forms, even while ceaselessly regathering itself behind the form whose ruin it has insensibly brought about." (17). "Nothing happens" in the everyday, neither rest, nor moment for reflection. Indeed, contemplation makes the everyday vanish. The everyday wholly occupies and absorbs so there can be no aesthetic judgement or distance. There can be no re-presentation of the everyday. No, appearance of it, no presentation, and further nothing that would give it ideality as in the Being before becoming of appearance, image, copies. If for Kant, art was that which had no purpose "and purposiveness without purpose i.e. interested in the beautiful but not its ends" — this begins to suggest that we were affected in the first instance — "experiencing" that aims at the suspension of how it could be useful. It is the usefulness of art practices in its relation to the everyday that I want to particularly engage, paying "attention" to "attention," something that each writer raised as a question in relation to the affect of the artwork.

7. See "Treatise on Nomadology:—The War Machine," (pp. 351-423) and "Of the Refrain" (pp.310-350) in Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* Vol II.

8. Awareness is something that is formed after sensation's cessation. In doubling concepts (philosophy) and sensation (art), becoming-imperceptible would be a partial task of this writing, a writing small in gesture as it touches blurred edges of a territory expressing itself as something proximate to a double belonging: a threshold moment where planes (art, philosophy) interfere—interference is passing from one to the other—becoming other, a zone of non-determination or imperceptibility—non-other than for a future (people, earth). It is a movement of the negative, this interference: in order to become it must 'enter into a relationship with the No that concerns it' (218). Deleuze and Guattari evoke a shadow plane that envelops us at each stage of our becoming where the double of a positive knowing and a negative chaos momentarily give rise to our future (218). Each moment is a movement enveloped in a shadow plane that is hidden yet one we *all* share, the share in a future that is not for us to possess. Rather, this interference, perhaps, affects now a little enthusiasm and *drunkenness* for a new thought-sensation as contemplation (212), as art and philosophy deterritorialize us. We are becoming another-species that is difficult to qualify (as science would not quite have it).

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