Meillassoux and Film:

Correlation, Unreason and Hyperchaos

in French Contemporary Cinema

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Abstract

This thesis explores how some recent French films engage with the problem of correlation in their post-cinematic context. Drawing on the philosophy of Quentin Meillassoux, I argue that film reflects and reflects on the way it correlates both with the world, and with the Other of correlation, i.e. the humans involved at the various levels of the cinematographic experience. In order to theorize and analyse the affects emerging from the possible assemblages of these two distinct correlating correlates at work in the making of the post-cinematic real, I focus on a selection of contemporary French digital cinema (2009-2014). I analyse how these films reflect on their relation to consciousness, time, space and causality, and on their ability to produce novelty.

I first discuss *Enter the Void* (Gaspard Noé, France/Germany/Italy/Canada/Japan, 2009) and *Vous n'Avez Encore Rien Vu*/*You Ain't Seen Nothin'Yet* (Alain Resnais, France/Germany, 2012) as two films that assume that consciousness is necessary and explore the impossibility for cinematic thought to think what is out of thought. I analyse how these films suggest that the world is unthinkable if not experienced by a consciousness with which it correlates, and that novelty is necessarily relative and develops in a closed system as the eternal return of affects. Chapter 2 focuses on films that suggest that this correlation is, however, not an absolute and that the way human consciousness processes the real could be radically other. The chapter focuses on *Les Garçons et Guillaume, à Table/Me, Myself and Mum,* (Guillaume Galienne, France/Belgium, 2013) and *Ne Te Retourne Pas*/*Don't Look Back* (Marina de Van, France/Luxemburg/Italy/Belgium, 2009), two films that play with the facticity of correlates, i.e. the fact that the laws according to which the real (time, space, bodies, affects) emerge can vary, and novelty can be produced.

Chapters 3 and 4 radicalize facticity further by exploring the possibility of the facticity of becoming, i.e. a time without becoming, and engaging with filmic times that resonate with Meillassoux's concept of Hyperchaos. Chapter 3 discusses *Rubber* (Quentin Dupieux, France/Angola/USA, 2010) and *Bird People* (Pascale Ferrand, France, 2014) and develops the principle of unreason – i.e. Meillassoux's concept according to which only contingency is necessary – and its ethics. Finally, Chapter 4 explores Hyperchaos further, as a time without becoming that develops as a non-whole, by drawing on scenes from *Holy Motors* (Léos Carax, France/Germany, 2012) and *Réalité/Reality* (Quentin Dupieux, France/Belgium/USA, 2014).

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Author’s Declaration

This thesis represents the original work of Frédéric Brayard, unless otherwise stated in the text. The research upon which it is based was carried out in the Theatre, Film and Television Studies Department at the University of Glasgow under the supervision of Prof. David Martin-Jones and Dr. Ramona Fotiade during the period of October 2014 to September 2018.

Introduction: Film, Meillassoux: Possible (cor)relations

Foreword

Can cinema explore what exists, insists and persists in excess of our subjective experience of reality?

In *Réalité* (Quentin Dupieux, France/Belgium, 2005) one of the main characters, Jason Tantra (Alain Chabat), dreams of becoming a director, and of making a horror film in which TV sets become evil and start killing people by sending lethal radio waves to them. Jason contacts a film producer who agrees to produce Jason's film under one condition: Jason has twenty-four hours to submit a sample of the groans through which he intends to express people's pain. The sample has to be both the best groan in the history of cinema and also be able to express the absolute essence of pain. Jason, struggling with his assignment, decides to take a break from his research and goes to the cinema with his wife. In the foyer of the cinema, he is attracted by the poster of a film that has the same title as the one he is working on, *Waves*. Intrigued by this coincidence, Jason decides to enter into the theatre where *Waves* is being screened. They sit in the dark and Jason discovers that *Waves* is a horror film in which TV sets become evil and start killing people by sending lethal radio waves to them. Jason is first confused, but quickly understands that *Waves* is not *a* film that looks like his, but actually is *his* film. Worse, *Waves* is not an accomplishment of Jason's dream as its finalized projection on a screen, but a random actualization of his unfinished project. Jason wants to stop the screening and stands up in front of the screen, trying to explain to the audience that they cannot go on watching the film since it does not exist yet. However, he is booed, insulted and assaulted with popcorn and paper cups.

Reality confronts us with a dilemma since we have to decide whether or not we accept that *Waves* belongs to a time that is human. If we opt for a human time, we can read this scene from two possible perspectives, following Gilles Deleuze's analysis of the complex relations that film weaves between objectivity, subjectivity, veracity and the possibility to resolve – or not – the question of what the camera sees, from a human perspective (Deleuze, 1989). A first reading of this scene consists in considering that what is at stake in this scene is whether Jason is right or wrong, whether *Waves* is his film or not, whether Jason is mistaking *a* film

for *his* film, and that, later, *Reality* will untangle the threads and reveal the truth. In this case, we would be in the situation that Deleuze describes as "a resolution in an identity of the type Ego = Ego; identity of the character seen and who sees, but equally well identity of the camera/film maker who sees the character and what the character sees" (Deleuze, 1989, p. 148). In this situation, cinema actualizes the various subjective perspectives of the characters, confronts them with the objective perspective of the camera and, eventually, resolves the situation. We would be in a chronological human time that Deleuze calls Chronos (Deleuze, 1989, 1990; Deleuze and Guattari, 1995) in which we accede the real through our human embodied perspective that solves all possible problems according to a logic of either/or. From this perspective, obviously, *Wave* cannot be Jason's film, and the script will explain the origin of and resolve the confusion.

The second way we might read this scene is to consider *Waves* as one of the possible actualizations of Jason's film. From this perspective, the film they are watching would not be the actual final project that he will eventually make, but one of the many possible "projections" of his film yet to be, a catastrophic one coming to consciousness as a nightmare in which his desires, fears and anxieties, his past, present and future take shape and mix. In this case, *Reality* would blur the boundary between the actual and the virtual, and claim that all images have the same value and are all possible expressions of the virtual. The real, in this case, would be the extensive series of all the possible images, and would develop through a logic of both/and. The diegetic movie theatre would work as a crystal in which two sides of Jason appear at the same time, his body as his actual image and *Waves* as his virtual image. In Deleuze's words, the theatre as crystal performs "the coalescence of the actual image and the virtual image, the image with two signs, actual and virtual, at the same time" (Deleuze, 1989, p. 69). We would be in Aeon (Deleuze, 1990, 1994; Deleuze and Guattari, 1995) or Cronos[1] (Deleuze, 1989), i.e. a non-chronological time that subsumes all the possible pasts, presents and futures.

However, a third hypothesis that corresponds to neither of the Deleuzian perspectives on time (Chronos/Cronos) is worth examining. *Waves* could be just what Jason explains: his film that has not been shot yet, his not-yet-completed film being actually screened, as

[1] I discuss Deleuze's use of the two terms Aeon and Cronos in Chapter 2, pp 114-9.

opposed to another film made by another director in Chronos, or one of the infinite possible actualizations of what his film could/should/would/was/will be in Cronos. A film coming from a time that is not human, in which the rules of causality do not apply, in which events, life, objects and films can emerge ex nihilo, out of the processes through which the universe expands and extends, out of becoming. To the two times theorized by Deleuze, Chronos of the movement-image and Cronos of the time-image, *Reality* would thus add a third time on which cinema could reflect. This is the non-human time described by Quentin Meillassoux as hyperchaos in which things can change at any moment, radically and for no reason. This is the time that challenges the necessity of the causal and temporal logic of the emergence of entities, and suggests that every possible process is absolutely contingent and can bring forth any possible and impossible events.

From this perspective, *Waves* would become a difficult philosophical problem concerning the emergence of novelty and our possible knowledge of it. Let us accept the classical Kantian perspective: since the subject is central in the production of knowledge, we can only apprehend the world from our subjective position and through the vast network of objective and subjective positions that weave the world for us. How could we experiment with, access, know and think about an entity that would not belong to the world for us? If such unique events took place, could we know or think them? Or, like the diegetic spectators of *Waves*, could we just experiment and enjoy them for what we can make of them? Would we consider them as enjoyable, inoffensive entertainment, rather than as evidence of hyperchaos and of the necessary contingency of all things that threaten the very fundament of our relation with the world? Would our subjective position enclose us in the world, or would we be able to welcome such absolute novelty, stop the screening and think about the possibility of the world itself and of its absolute contingency? Could we hear Jason's warning?

0.1 Rationale: Meillassoux and digital, post-cinematic films

The intention of this thesis is to map and theorize contemporary French films that experiment with the problem of "correlation", which speculative realism[2] defines, following Quentin Meillassoux (2008), as the certainty that we are enclosed in our subjective perspective of the world, that we cannot know, and perhaps not even think, the world itself. In other words, that thought, being necessarily subjective, cannot think anything that could be absolute, i.e. external to it. I engage with the work of Quentin Meillassoux to analyse how some contemporary digital films resonate with such a problem, and either endorse and radicalize, or challenge and put out of joint the principles, conditions, causes and consequences of this position. I will argue that Meillassoux's concepts of correlation, circle, facticity of correlation and hyperchaos can bring relevant perspectives to film-philosophy. I argue that from both the perspective of cinema epistemology and ethics, these concepts provide a productive tool when reframing the question of the articulation of films, thought and reality, particularly in the context of contemporary digital post-cinema.

Attempting to map and establish possible connections between Meillassoux's philosophy and cinema might seem a dubious task. In various conferences, articles or interviews, he has engaged in intriguing dialogues with the poetry of Stéphane Mallarmé (Meillassoux, 2011b), the science fiction novels of René Barjavel (Meillassoux, 2015) and the music of Florian Hecker (Meillassoux, Hecker and Mackay, 2010) that express affects that resonate with, reflect or resist his concepts. However, unlike philosophers such as Gilles Deleuze, Alain Badiou, Jacques Rancière or Stanley Cavell, Meillassoux has never, to the extent of my knowledge, connected his philosophical work with cinema. Furthermore, none of the films

[2] The difficulty of establishing whether speculative realism constitutes a movement or is merely an umbrella term that covers various philosophical systems having little in common has been widely discussed, and is beyond the scope of this thesis, which focuses exclusively on the philosophy of Meillassoux. In a few words, speculative realists are philosophers who develop systems that challenge the Kantian principle according to which we cannot access the world itself, but only our link to the world, how it emerges for us and with us. However, these systems do not constitute a general theory, nor move as a fluid movement towards a common goal. For a general presentation of the origin of speculative realism and of its main developments, see Harman 2018.

that I will discuss relates to Meillassoux. He does not appear in them either as himself, as a person or a philosopher,[3] none of his books are mentioned or quoted, and none of his concepts are referred to. The various paratexts I could access – i.e. the various interviews, press kits and articles that have been published in parallel with the films themselves – do not mention him either. The purpose of this thesis is, therefore, not to analyse a pre-existing dialogue in which Meillassoux and cinema would have engaged, nor to develop an archaeology of their interactions, which would provide a specific corpus and a methodology in collecting and analysing data. In the absence of evidence of their interaction, the thesis instead aims first at establishing a mere co-emergence between, on the one hand, a complex philosophical system that develops a highly counter-intuitive perspective of the world and the capacity of humans to know and think it, and, on the other hand, the production of films that address similar questions, in their specific digital, post-cinematic way of thinking. My hypothesis is that Meillassoux's and French contemporary cinema share some common philosophical problems concerning thought's ability to engage with the real.

Before unpacking this hypothesis in the remainder of this section, a further justification of the focus of this thesis on French cinema is necessary. I have just discussed the co-emergence of shared concerns expressed both as philosophical concerns and as filmic percepts in contemporary France. Obviously, other national and transnational cinemas and other medias (series, video art…) address similar questions, as the following chapters will acknowledge when contrasting some of the French films discussed with films produced by other countries. However, my first concern in deciding to focus on a corpus of French films was to avoid producing a Eurocentric[4] discourse and analyse films produced in a large variety of contexts from a specific perspective. This choice was triggered, nevertheless, by more than prudence only, since French cinema, as I hope this thesis will highlight, offers not only a wide range

[3] Unlike, for instance the dialogues between cinema and philosophers initiated by Godard casting Brice Parain (*Vivre sa Vie*, Jean-Luc Godard, France, 1962) or Francis Jeanson (*La Chinoise*, Jean-Luc Godard, France, 1967), the collaboration between Claire Denis and Jean-Luc Nancy (*L'Intrus*/*The Intruder*, Claire Denis, 2004) or Kirby Dick and Amy Ziering's documentary about Derrida (*Derrida*, Kirby Dick, Amy Ziering Kofman, USA, 2002).

[4] For analysis of issues of Eurocrentrism in film-philosophy (specifically, in Deleuzian studies) and the need to decolonize film-studies, see Martin-Jones 2011 and 2018.

of styles, genres and filmic practices, but also films that, in their singularity, reflect and express this diversity. Indeed, Tim Palmer, in *Brutal Intimacy* (2011) describes contemporary French cinema as "an interconnected continuum, a series of concentric circles, a range of crafts and techniques from all walks of filmmaking life" (Palmer, 2011, p. 2). Focusing the scope of this study on the cinema that emerges in the same place and at the same time as the philosophical concepts that I use to describe the percepts and affects that it produces should, therefore, not be a too narrowing limitation. With this in mind, the remainder of this chapter moves on to establish the possibility of a dialogue between Meillassoux and film.

Meillassoux published *Après la finitude* in 2006 (translated as *After Finitude* and published in 2008), a book that had such an immediate and wide impact that Graham Harman states that, "within a year of its French publication, *After Finitude* had catalysed the formation of the Speculative Realism movement in philosophy" (Harman, 2011, p. 2). In this book and in his further publications, Meillassoux has been extensively and precisely mapping how our presence in the world, or more accurately, the manner in which we consider our presence in the world, affects our capacity to know and think the world. *After Finitude* offers the basis of a taxonomy of the various paradigms that emerge depending on how we understand our subjective position. Meillassoux meticulously differentiates the perspectives of dogmatic realism (the world is not affected by our subjective presence and the reality we access can be considered as absolute), correlationism[5] (the world is mediatized by our subjective presence with the world and our knowledge depends on how we conceptualize the mediation) and idealism (there is no such thing as a non-subjective world). He concentrates on correlationism, in which he first differentiates two branches, strong and weak, that he reconceptualizes later (Meillassoux, 2012b) in two distinct categories, correlationism and subjectalism. This analytical work is the basis on which he creates the concepts that he needs in order to argue that we can think the materiality of the world itself as an absolute that is unaffected by the presence or absence of a subjective presence that can think it.

While Meillassoux develops a philosophy in which he questions the role of the mediation of consciousness in our access to the world, very different types of films and recordings are

[5] CF pp. 22-7 for a precise discussion of this term.

made by cameras, that raise and, sometimes, address similar questions. The issues of correlationism are at the centre of our daily use of cameras, as exemplified for instance by body-worn-video cameras used by British Transport Police officers. According to the British Transport Police website, the cameras have a twofold purpose: "Our body-worn video (BWV) cameras help reduce crime on the railway by acting as a robust deterrent to antisocial behaviour [and] prosecuting more people efficiently: the footage is used as evidence in court".[6] As "robust deterrents", such cameras can be considered what Bruno Latour (Latour, 1988, p. 10) calls "non-human actors", which by watching and recording, and by being in the world as a non-human subjectivity, change the world. From this first perspective, the mere presence of a camera is sufficient to affect reality, and its capacity to record appears secondary, or even irrelevant. This is evidenced by the market of Fake Dummy Cameras[7] that are expected to change reality without recording it. Moreover, as "evidence in court", non-human subjective recordings are considered objective, reliable documentation of reality itself. In its use of surveillance cameras, power, through the police, operates a paradoxical distortion in its understanding of reality that is very similar to what Meillassoux wants to highlight and overcome when discussing correlationism: while cameras are used as subjective presence in the world that change reality, they are also granted the ability to deliver objective evidence of reality. In other words, we consider as "the world itself" images produced by actants that participate in the production of "the world for us".

Cinema, or more precisely, as will be discussed later, post-cinema, is definitely one of these actants, but is perhaps distinct for its ability to reflect and reflect on the affects that are at stake in its processes of reality making. This thesis aims to analyse whether these affects, expressed as philosophical thought by Meillassoux, are also expressed as cinematic thought by various films, and that Meillassoux's concepts can be helpful when discussing their images, sounds, times and movements. The corpus of films discussed covers roughly the decade of French cinematographic production contemporary to Meillassoux's publishing

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[6] http://www.btp.police.uk/safety_on_the_railway/safety_on_and_near_the_railway/cctv.aspx (accessed July 18th, 2018).

[7] https://www.amazon.co.uk/s/ref=nb_sb_ss_i_1_17?url=search-alias%3Daps&field-keywords=fake+dummy+camera&sprefix=fake+dummy+camera%2Caps%2C143&crid=2Y4VSEBR8WKVY (accessed July 18th, 2018).

activity, i.e. the period from 2006 onward. This thesis aims to analyse films that, by articulating issues of knowledge, thought and subjectivity, either accelerate and radicalize correlationism or speculate on events and processes that attempt to crack correlation, principally by experimenting with times that resonate with hyperchaos, Meillassoux's concept of time.

Furthermore, as digital texts, the films studied in this thesis explore cinema's ability to suggest a range of (non-)anthropocentric perspectives and relations with the world. Contemporary French cinema figures, certainly among the (trans)national[8] cinemas, have been enthusiastically experimenting with digital cinema and its capacity to both think with non-indexical images, and think the non-indexality of images. By reflecting and reflecting on its digitalization, French cinema has become post-cinematic. Martine Beugnet makes a valid point when she emphasizes that the "move from analog to digital, and the ensuing debate over the new, imminent, 'death of cinema,' not only features prominently in French film criticism, but also emerges as a key theme in contemporary French films" (Beugnet, 2015, p. 571). Her analysis of *The Artist* (Michel Hazanavicius, France/USA/Belgium, 2011) or *L'Illusioniste* (Sylvain Chomet, France/UK, 2010) demonstrates that such films, rather than mourning the death of cinema, celebrate its "endurance in the face of technological change" (ibid., p. 572).

This endurance is also performed by many films that have proactively embraced digital technology to such an extent that France boasts a collection of digital "firsts". These include films such as *Vidocq* (Pitof, France, 2001), which, according to IMDB, was the "first feature film shot with the new Sony digital 1080p 24 fps cameras to reach the screens"[9] or *Rubber*[10] (Quentin Dupieux, France/Angola, 2010), which was the first film shot with a non-

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[8] The main corpus of films studied includes eight films that can all be considered, at some level, as transnational productions, that are produced with capital coming from various countries, shot in other countries than France in other languages than French, and aimed at an international public.

[9] http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0164961/?ref_=tttr_tr_tt (accessed July 18th, 2018).

[10] Discussed in the second section of Chapter 3, pp. 158-75.

professional camera, the Canon EOS 5D Mark II.[11] More significantly, each chapter of this thesis will provide strong evidence of contemporary French digital films that develop meta-cinematic, self-reflexive critiques and celebrations of their digital essence, of their digitalization of the world, and of their mediation of the digital world they belong to, reflect and produce. Launching a dialogue between these films and the philosophy of Meillassoux can, on the one hand, problematize how digital cinema questions and assesses its relations with reality. On the other hand, this will allow us to theorize the emergence and experience of reality that can challenge our phenomenological and intellectual experience of the world, and radically explore non-anthropocentric times, spaces and affects.

The term "post-cinema" that I use to refer to the context of production of the films I discuss emerges from the anxieties surrounding this topos of "the death of cinema", as claimed by directors such as Martin Scorsese[12] or Quentin Tarantino[13] or discussed and challenged by film theorists and philosophers such as D. N. Rodowick (2007), Niels Niessen (2011) Raymond Bellour (2012) or Beugnet (2013, 2015). The term "post-cinema", suggested by Shane Denson and Julia Leyda (2016) after Steven Shaviro's *Post-Cinematic Affect* (2010), evacuates the drama of a loss by situating the films produced in the twenty-first century in the continuation of cinema, defining cinema as an ongoing process, rather than an object situated in time. "Post", in post-cinema, as in post-feminism, post-digital, post-apocalyptic, or, to a certain extent, post-colonial, does not refer to the organization of the elements in succession. Conversely, it focuses on the transformational strengths at work in a transition. It does not imply the loss of cinema, but conversely highlights its capacity to spread and mutate. While being deterritorialized, while being streamed out of the theatres, cinema has been making assemblages with forms of media that Denson and Leyda describe as

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[11] http://www.imdb.com/title/tt1612774/technical?ref_=tt_dt_spec (accessed July 18th, 2018).

[12] https://apnews.com/931d13ebfb6245e0b00169d7447208d2/martin-scorsese-cinema-gone

(accessed July 18th, 2018).

[13] https://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/films/cannes-2014-quentin-tarantino-declares-cinema-is-dead-ahead-of-pulp-fiction-screening-9430049.html (accessed July 18th, 2018).

"essentially digital, interactive, networked, ludic, miniaturized, mobile, social, processual, algorithmic, aggregative, environmental, or convergent, among other things" (Denson and Leyda, 2016, p. 1). These new assemblages do not develop without reshuffling, redefining or transforming fundamental notions at work in the cinematic experience, such as subject, object, real, reality, thought or affects. Watching a film on a train, with headsets and on a computer, tablet or phone, might not deserve being called "practicing cinema" according to Bellour, who states that "to experience the projection of a film in the cinema, in the dark, as part of an audience […] this and only this deserves to be called cinema" (Bellour, 2012, p. 12, in Beugnet, 2015, p. 1342-1343). However, this practice of post-cinematic spectatorship resonates strongly with Meillassoux's suggestion of reinitiating a Copernican revolution that challenges the centrality of the subject in the process of knowledge. Indeed, the cinematic apparatus was producing what Jean-Louis Baudry (1986), Christian Metz (1982) and, to a certain extent, Deleuze (Rushton, 2008) call a transcendental subject, central and necessary to the process of knowledge and "without which the perceived would have no one to perceive it, the instance, in other words, which constitutes the cinema signifier (it is I who make the film)" (Metz, 1986, p. 252). This spectator is enclosed in the cinematic process and her presence is the necessary condition, or for Metz, the condition of possibility to the revelation of the film as given and perceived as such. However, post-cinematic media transforms this transcendental subject into a mediatized/mediatizing subject/object, aware of the fact that, while watching her film on the train, she is filmed by a camera that is recording images that will never be watched by anybody, or, perhaps, will be analysed by a machine. She is a subject aware that her experience of filmic reality neither reflects nor substitutes the real for her, but is one of the possible forms that a stream of code can take. But the film she watches, stored on her hard drive, is a mathematized world that exists, persists and insists independently of the fact that it is given, or not, to her experience of it. This resonates with Meillassoux's suggestion of reinitiating a Copernican revolution, which implies challenging both our understanding of the relation between the world and our subjective perspective in the world, and our capacity to know the world itself, its mathematized absolute being. Meillassoux stresses that the Copernican/Galilean revolution concerns not only the discovery of the fact that we are not at the centre of the world, but also that the world itself is mathematizable and therefore absolutely unaffected by our relation to it, and that it exists in itself, either in presence or absence of a thought that could think it.

I will argue in this thesis that cinema can be realist in the specific speculative realist sense that Meillassoux attaches to this perspective, i.e. by thinking what there is when there is no subjective presence, no thought. I will unpack the importance of such a question in the next four chapters and address its relevance for film studies. My methodology will, thus, consist in assessing how the relation between human, rational thought and the real with which Meillassoux engages in quite a radical manner, resonates with the way film thought explores its relation with the real. I will assess how film resonates with some of Meillassoux's most intriguing and challenging concepts, thinks its own finitude and its own facticity. Furthermore, in the second part of the thesis, I will analyse films that resonate with what Meillassoux considers as an absolute knowledge that we can develop about the world itself, the necessary contingency of every law, process and entity −i.e. the principle of facility expressed by hyperchaos. I will, therefore consider film thought from a speculative realist perspective, and films as thinking actors which can overcome the limits of correlation from within the finitude of correlation, as humans can.

Deleuze and Guattari, in *What is Philosophy?*, consider that science, art and philosophy are the three main ways through which the Western cultures have developed thought by confronting themselves with chaos: "Chaos has three daughters […] these are the Chaoids – art, science, and philosophy – as forms of thought or creation" (Deleuze and Guattari, 1994, p. 208). As the next section will unveil, Meillassoux confronts philosophy with the periods of the history of the universe in which consciousness is either not present yet or has gone. He proves that while correlationism cannot think of such a time, science and, to some extent, art can. The aim of this thesis is to bring cinema, as a hybrid of art, science and philosophy,[14]

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[14] Thirty years after the publication of Deleuze's two *Cinema* books or Cavell's *The World Viewed* (1971) and *Pursuit of Happiness* (1981), and their vast legacy on film studies, establishing the link between film and philosophy is not necessary any more. For an analysis of how film-philosophy has reterritorialized film scholarship in the 1990s, see Martin-Jones, 2016. However, I will establish more precisely how I engage with film-philosophy in section 0.3 of this introduction, pp. 34-49.

As a French speaker, I tend to claim that in French, cinema is referred to as the seventh art, which sounds like a sloppy argument that avoids establishing seriously the legitimacy of films as an art hybrid. For a serious discussion of the topic, see the chapter "The Evolution of the Language of Cinema" in Bazin's *What is Cinema? Volume 1* (2005, pp. 23–40) or Bordwell, 2007.

into the discussion and explore the potential of its aesthetical epistemological and ethical contribution.

0.2 Meillassoux, from correlation to hyperchaos

In this section, I present an overview of the main concepts (correlation, circle of correlation, correctional facticity and hyperchaos) that Meillassoux develops in the first part of his published work, mainly in *After Finitude*. These concepts structure my discussion of the manner in which some contemporary French films engage with the relation between human subjectivity, film subjectivity and the real. Even though each chapter will discuss each of these concepts specifically, a general panorama of Meillassoux's paradigm is useful at this stage. I have already mentioned that the central concept, correlation, refers to the Kantian and post-Kantian paradigm that states that we cannot access the world itself, but only our subjective, mediated perspective on the world. Furthermore, Meillassoux suggests a taxonomy of correlationism that I will present in this section by discussing, from a Meillassouxian perspective, a philosophical riddle suggested by Jacques Lacan, which will establish the difference between correlationism and subjectalism. I will then explain how Meillassoux suggests that none of these perspectives can answer the aporia of the arche-fossil (Meillassoux, 2008a, pp. 9–27) or the fact that the world preceded and will outlast its givenness, and how he deducts from this the facticity of correlation. Having established that nothing – not even correlation – is necessary or, in other words, that everything is contingent, Meillassoux concludes that all the processes and entities that constitute the world can change at any time and for no reason. He calls hyperchaos the time in which these changes occur. Through this demonstration, Meillassoux establishes that "thought is not necessary (something can be independently of thought), and that thought can think what there must be when there is no thought" (Meillassoux, 2008a, p. 36). My engagement with the concepts of Meillassoux from a film-philosophy perspective is twofold. I aim to analyse how film thought can or cannot think its own absence, in the first part of the thesis which deals with the circle of correlation and facticity. Secondly, I engage with films that suggest a time that

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For discussions of the links between films and experimental science, see Chapter 3 section 3.2.2., pp. 165-71 and Chapter 4 section of 4.1.2., pp. 193-6.

resonates with hyperchaos and analyse how it develops in a non-whole and a time without becoming.

0.2.1 The era of correlation: The correlational circle and correlational facticity

Meillassoux's philosophy engages with the problem of correlation, or, more accurately with the conditions under which thought can overcome correlation, i.e. think an absolute. This resonates strongly with the manner in which contemporary films reflect and reflect on their ability to establish dialectical subjective relations with their human audience. However, his paradigm might seem counter-intuitive and necessitates being precisely unpacked. I will start with mapping what he describes as the era of correlation[15] – the various paradigms that address the problem of correlation – by discussing from the perspective of Meillassoux's taxonomy (therefore from a non-Lacanian perspective) a philosophical problem suggested by Lacan that addresses the question of the correlation of human consciousness, cameras and access to the real.

In *The Seminar II*, Lacan develops an intriguing meditation on the status of an image filmed by a camera in a world from which all humans have disappeared. He asks his students to imagine a world without any living being, but in which some machines are still running. He then describes a camera that stands in front of a lake, on the surface of which a mountain reflects itself, and records the reflection, and asks the audience: "the image in the mirror, the image in the lake – do they still exist?" (Lacan, 1988, p. 46). This question resonates strongly with one of Meillassoux's main philosophical problems, "the possibility of thinking what there is when there is no thought", or the problem of the correlation of thought and being, which he addresses in some of his first publications, *After Finitude* (Meillassoux, 2008a),

[15] Meillassoux, as Harman's book emphasizes, offers a "philosophy in the making" that implies changes in his terminology. Considering the issues discussed in this thesis, I will use the latest terminology that he developed in his 2012 paper, *Iteration, Reiteration, Repetition: A Speculative Analysis of the Meaningless Sign*. See Meillassoux 2012a and 2012b for a complete discussion of these terminological decisions. Furthermore, when addressing Meillassoux's vocabulary, it is important to highlight that Meillassoux does not restrict the meaning of *thought* and *thinking* to its cerebral, intellectual meaning, but also to "the broad (Cartesian) sense encompassing every form of subjectivity (sensation, perception, imagination, memory, will, understanding, etc.) […] The strict sense (argued thought) is intended when I accord to the human subject the capacity to theorize the absolute ('the absolute is thinkable'), the broader sense when I speak of the 'closure of thought into itself' (in its subjective representations in general)" (Meillassoux, 2012b, p. 8).

Time Without Becoming (Meillassoux, 2014) and in his interview with Rick Dolphijn and Iris van der Tuin (Meillassoux, 2012a). Hence, this section will consider various possible strategies that can be adopted in order to make sense of Lacan's question, which will thus help to unravel Meillassoux's concepts of correlationism and subjectalism.

A first broad category of philosophers would argue that Lacan's question is pointless, for at least two reasons. Firstly, the very definition of an image implies the presence of a subjective perspective. No image is absolute, no image is thinkable out of a process of mediation that organizes the way through which various entities are linked, according to a structure that distributes objective and subjective positions. Secondly, the very entities at stake in the relation that constitutes an image are, themselves, constructed and shaped by a subjective presence in the world. As human subjects, for instance, we are so much enclosed in our subjective position in the world that it is impossible for us to distinguish between the properties of a given entity for itself and the properties of our subjective access to them. We can therefore never directly access the world itself, but only the correlation between the co-presence of the world and of our being in the world. Meillassoux terms correlationist any philosophy that develops such a perspective in which "'X is', means 'X is the correlate of thinking' […] the correlate of an affection, or a perception, or a conception, or of any other subjective or intersubjective act" (Meillassoux, 2014, p. 10). Such a philosophical paradigm, epitomized by phenomenology and understood as the philosophy of experience, would certainly consider Lacan's question as irrelevant or, at least, unthinkable. Without life, there can be no experienced encounter with the world, no knowledge of what being in the world means, thus a subjective position is both necessary and central to the production of knowledge.

Such a perspective has two important consequences – the correlational circle and the correlational facticity – shared, according to Meillassoux (2008a, 2012a, 2012b), by all the philosophies of the era of correlation. Briefly,[16] the correlational circle is a metaphor that evokes the finitude of thought, its closure on itself, or the fact that a subjective being cannot think, know or experience, the absence of subjectivity. Any encounter with the world is correlational, i.e. a specific mediation that weaves indistinctly the properties of both the

[16] These two notions and their relation to cinematic thought are discussed in detail in Chapter 2 and Chapter 3.

subject and the object, in which, since the emergence of object is partially conditioned, framed and shaped by the characteristics of a subjectivity, the subject emerges as much as the object does from the process of mediation. In other words, the correlational circle is an argument that states the impossibility to think an object that would be independent of thought, since such an object would be a product of thought, conditioned, shaped and characterized by thought.

The principle of facticity is a direct consequence of the correlational circle. If everything that subjectivity experiences involves both the properties of the subject and the object, everything that is experienced is therefore a fact, i.e. is made by and through this encounter. Correlation is a contingent reality made of facts that could exist or not, or be different according to the subject that produces them. The knowledge about the world that a subject develops cannot be absolute but only specific, and it does not concern the world itself, but the way subjectivity produces facts when interacting with the world.

Lacan's story is, therefore, not much of a riddle when considered from a correlationist perspective. Of course, we can imagine a world without humans, with cameras still running, making images of the reflection of a mountain on a lake, from our subjective perspective, but none of that is anything more than the product of our thought. The very fact of thinking our absence is a contradiction, since it implies making a representation – i.e. affirming our subjective participation in the world – of a world independent from us. The mental image that we can produce of a world from without us is, therefore, nothing but a game in which we extend the limits of our presence. We can think the world with us out, but the world without us is unthinkable.

However, Lacan adopts a different perspective in order to answer his own question, and his position is quite firm: "It is quite obvious that [the images] still exist" (Lacan, 1988, p. 46). In order to draw such a conclusion, Lacan operates a hypostatization of consciousness – qua subjectivity – through which it transforms a specific characteristic of a being into the necessary characteristic of everything that is. He considers any reflecting surface, the very physical capacity of water to reflect a mountain or the very physical capacity of a camera lens to reflect this reflection, as consciousness itself. He invites his students to accept such a perspective as a radically non-anthropocentric, non-vitalist position:

> I hope you'll consider […] consciousness to occur each time – and it occurs in the most unexpected and disparate places – there's a surface such that it can produce what is called an image. That is a materialist definition. (Ibid., p. 49)

For Lacan, subjectivity is not linked to an experience of the world that demands an epistemological reflection, but is defined as an ontological characteristic of the world itself. Images are not the result of processes that organize, rigidify or fluidify relations of subjectivity and objectivity, which would imply a consciousness that both pre-exists the process and results from it, emerges as its consequence, as a correlationist perspective would imply. Lacan operates a deterritorialization of consciousness by claiming that while it has been previously considered a property of life, animal cognition, or even restricted to humanity, it is actually a property of the very matter of the world. Such a change of paradigm drastically affects the conditions under which we consider our possibility to know and think the world. Consciousness is no longer what withdraws the world itself from our knowledge of the world for us, but what we share with – as part of – the very matter of the world. It is no longer what articulates our experience of the world as an irreducible dialectic of difference but, conversely, what gives us an intimate knowledge of its very matter. While correlationism as a mere fact produced by and necessitating our co-presence in the world, this paradigm considers it a necessary ontological condition shared by everything that is. considers consciousness

Meillassoux designates as "subjectalists" such philosophies that develop in a paradigm that "absolutizes various features of subjectivities" (Meillassoux, 2012a, p. 72). Subjectalist paradigms differ from correlationist ones by arguing that we can know the absolute, since correlation itself is the absolute. In other words, Meillassoux states that both correlationism and subjectalism could state that "what is asubjective cannot be" (ibid., p. 73), albeit for different reasons. On the one hand, a correlationist paradigm cannot acknowledge any absolute, since it implies that a subjective position is the necessary condition of the emergence of any thought and knowledge. The idea that "what is asubjective cannot be" means that, since we cannot access anything other than the experienced, relative world, no absolute knowledge, thought or being could transcend the multiplicity of the experiences of the world for us. We cannot think the absolute since thinking the asubjective would still be a subjective projection of our subjectivity. On the other hand, a subjectalist paradigm acknowledges the absolute, but as correlation itself. For Lacan, consciousness is an absolute

that transcends all the experiences of the world – i.e. that is not bound with our human, embodied, lived presence in the world – since it thinks the world itself as the experience of consciousness. From this perspective, the "asubjective cannot be" no longer means that it is unthinkable, but that it is impossible, since the subjective is both the necessary condition of the existence of what is, and the means that we share with the world itself, through which we can know and think the world for us. As examples of such absolutes, Meillassoux gives "reason" for Hegel, "will" for Nietzsche, "life" or "a life" for Deleuze, "who has absolutized a set of features of subjectivity […] and has posed them as radically independent of our human and individual relationship to the world" (ibid., p. 73).

Meillassoux therefore draws a distinction between the subjectalist materialism (his example of Deleuze or my example of Lacan) and his speculative realism. Subjectalists state that we can access an absolute that transcends our human properties, but that this absolute is the correlate itself, which implies the subjectification of every possible matter. Through the hypostasis of a specific feature of thought, subjectalism claims that every living being as well as inorganic matter share, as an ontological necessity of their presence in the world, the same subjective ability. As consciousness in a world in which everything that is is necessary consciousness, cameras produce images, according to Lacan, independently of the presence or absence of living beings who can consider these as readable facts.

0.2.2 Diachronicity, ancestral reality and the arche-fossil

There is no evidence that Meillassoux ever discussed and answered Lacan's riddle, but it is quite possible to imagine that he would agree to engage with Lacan's speculation, although he would do this from a radically different perspective. Against perspectives engaging with correlationism, he would certainly argue that we could indeed think what is when there is no thought, and thus endorse the validity of the question. However, against the subjectalist perspective, he would certainly claim that what would be would not necessarily be subjective. Actually, Meillassoux addresses a very similar problem in *After Finitude*, with the problem of "diachronicity", which "concerns every discourse whose meaning includes a *temporal discrepancy* between thinking and being" (Meillassoux, 2008a, p. 112). One of the main arguments of *After Finitude* is to establish, from a non-correlational and a non-subjectalist perspective, our capacity to think the world when devoid of any subjective entities, either in the past, before the emergence of life, or in the future when life will have disappeared. In order to achieve this, Meillassoux develops the concepts of "ancestrality"

and “the arche-fossil” that have found some echoes in film studies (Kara, 2014, 2016; Trigg, 2014; Szendy, 2015) .[17]

Meillassoux defines ancestral reality as that which is “anterior to any form of life on earth” (Meillassoux, 2008a, p. 10) and arche-fossils are fossils of non-organic matter giving evidence of ancestral events. Examples of arche-fossils could be “an isotope whose rate of radioactive decay we know, or the luminous emission of a star that informs us as to the date of its formation” (ibid.). For Meillassoux, the question of ancestrality becomes the philosophical problem that challenges the finitude of correlation by bringing to our thought evidence of a reality that precedes any givenness, and thus challenges our very capacity to think them. The formulation of this problem, “what is the condition that legitimates science’s ancestral statements?” (ibid., p. 27), directly addresses correlationist scepticism when unpacked as a set of difficult questions. Can we accept seriously that a world of non-organic, non-correlated matter did exist for 10 billion years, or should we carefully add that this world existed from our current perspective only as a product of our presence in the world? If we agree with the latter, do we mean that these billions of lifeless years are one of the newest expressions of thought but do not actually give evidence of a reality, external to and independent of thought? Or that they did not really pre-exist thought, but are co-extensional to thought? Should we, therefore, state that scientific statements about the ancestral are indeed illusory and that they have nothing to tell about the world itself, but reveal only how thought understands the world? Meillassoux demonstrates that, when facing the question of the ancestral, a post-Kantian critical position cannot stand a correlationist perspective, but turns itself towards idealism (there is no reality independent from our thought) and turns any scientific statement towards a dogmatic realist illusion (we can think and know the world itself). An example of such an idealist radicalization of a correlational critical perspective can be exemplified by the famous article in which Bruno Latour (1998) opposed a scientific publication that had just concluded that Ramses II died of tuberculosis. Latour argued that

[17] Cf. the next section of this chapter, pp. 37-41, for a discussion of these authors.

such a statement was a scientific error, since tuberculosis emerged as a scientific, medical and social reality in the 19th century.[18]

For Meillassoux, therefore, the challenge involves maintaining the correlationist circle and facticity as fundamental principles, while eschewing both such an idealist version of correlationism and subjectalism. As discussed earlier with the example of Lacan, diachronicity is not at all problematic for subjectalism, which constructs ontology by hypostatizing subjectivity. From Lacan's perspective, since consciousness is not a property of human beings, not even of living beings, but the capacity of creating images, qua the quality of reflection, it is a property that is shared more or less intensely by everything that is and is therefore necessary. From such a perspective, accepting that there has been and that there will be subjectivity as long as something is is in no way problematic and the arche-fossil does not present any paradox. If subjectivity is shared among everything that is, the very notion of an asubjective world of inorganic matter that existed prior to the emergence of life makes no sense. However, if we were to follow Meillassoux, the position held by

[18] For Latour, such a statement is an anachronism and the long dead Pharaoh could not have possibly died of tuberculosis before 1882, when the bacillus was discovered by Koch. Latour goes further than advocating a strict historical approach to an event of the past, since he refutes a dual opposition between a nature presented as existing independently of us, and cultures relative to us having the power to explore, analyse and discover it. For Latour (at least in 1998; see Latour 2004 for an amendment of his theoretical perspective), the real exists as a social assemblage, and tuberculosis is not an eternal entity, independent of the context of its appearance, and that would pre-exist its discovery. It is a modern disease that links together various social human and non-human actants, among which the bacillus, in a specific context, is a complex relation in which all the elements involved are constructed through their relation. For Latour, science cannot describe the history of the world, only the history of the appearing of the world for us and by us. It cannot describe the world itself since, to rephrase this perspective in Meillassouxian terms, "to be is to be a correlate" (Meillassoux, 2008a, p. 28). Latour considers the problem of tuberculosis as the chronological problem of the construction of the given, in the time in which correlation is necessary. In this time, since every possible being is a factum, qua the result of processes of linking that develop subjective and objective positions, the very concept of a thing in itself that would not be made in, and by, the network of interconnections is irrelevant. For Meillassoux, this position is quite acceptable in the synchronicity of the given, but impossible to accept in front of ancestrality. Indeed, the thing itself strikes back when forcing us to think the possibility of being as the matter that precedes the time of givenness and is, thus, indifferent to any subjective connection.

Lacan in the conclusion of his demonstration cannot actually be considered materialist; rather, it is considered metaphysical since it implies the existence of a necessary principle whose necessity cannot be proved. For subjectalism, correlation is not a contingent reality, something that is, but could be otherwise, or not be at all, such as any possible entity or process. It is neither what Meillassoux calls "a fact" and that he defines as "any type of entity whose being-other I can conceive of, but of which we do not know whether it could, effectively been other than it is" (Meillassoux, 2012b, p. 9). An example of "fact" can be found in Hume's famous critique of causality according to which reason cannot prove that an event that has repeated itself in the past in a specific way will continue in the future.[19] Furthermore, correlation, for subjectalism, is an "arche-fact" understood as "any fact which I cannot, in any way, conceive as being other than it is, or as not being, but whose necessity I nevertheless cannot prove" (ibid.). Lacan's consciousness exemplifies this category: it is possible to think of our presence in the world as contingent (a world in which humans have disappeared), and the causality between power and movement is a changed fact (cameras would still run). However, it is impossible to think "the other of correlation", i.e. a world in which subjectivity is not absolutized and shared among everything that is. In this case, the correlationist circle is not only unbreakable (the non-correlated will always be a correlate of thought), but also necessary (subjectivity is the ontological condition of being). Meillassoux considers that none of these two great philosophical paradigms can address his problem. While he subscribes to the principles of the correlationist circle and facticity, he demonstrates that correlationism turns into idealism when confronted with diachronicity. Furthermore, he rejects subjectalism since it turns into metaphysics when, while accepting the correlational circle and dismissing facticity, it demands acceptance of subjectivity as an absolute whose necessity is impossible to establish.

Meillassoux offers an elegant resolution to the aporia of the arche-fossil through which he develops a paradigm that allows him to establish that thought can think a being that is independent of thought and asubjective, by radicalizing the principle of facticity. He stresses that even though the correlational circle implies that we cannot conceive anything else than correlation, we cannot prove the very necessity of correlation. In other words, while on the

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[19] I discuss this further in Chapter 3, the first chapter of the second part, dedicated to hyperchaos cinema, and especially pp. 145-50.

one hand, everything that is for us is a fact, produced by a specific subjective perspective and the world, subjectivity, on the other hand, is not a necessary feature of the world. We must admit that thinking a non-correlational reality expresses nothing more than the limit towards which thought can stretch itself. However, we cannot prove that the non-correlational reality – being a product of thought – is an absolute impossibility. Therefore, any philosophical paradigm that differs from subjectalism by rejecting the necessity of correlation implicitly considers correlation as an arche-fact. Meillassoux distances himself from the correlationist paradigm by explicitly developing the consequence of such a position and unravelling the non-necessity of correlation. The principle of facticity does not apply *in* correlation only, as a property of thought, but also *to* correlation itself, as a property of everything that is. Facticity itself is, therefore, the absolute, not a mere feature of thought, but the knowledge of the ontological truth of the world itself. His suggestion is "to call 'principle of factiality' the speculative statement according to which facticity alone is non-factual, – or (what is the same thing) according to which only contingency is necessary" (Meillassoux, 2012b, p. 10).

Speculative factiality differs, therefore, from correlationist facticity on three fundamental points. First, facticity is a strict consequence of subjectivity that states, secondly, that our knowledge of the world is necessarily limited by our thought, since, finally, it produces objects that are contingent because they are shaped by our subjective perspective. Conversely, factiality considers contingency to be the fundamental property of everything that is, including causality, which can be thought of as absolute knowledge. Meillassoux claims that "we are going to put back into the thing itself what we mistakenly took to be an incapacity of thought" (Meillassoux, 2008a, p. 53) in, according to Harman, "one of his most effective war cries" (Harman, 2011, p. 31). Indeed, by defining contingency as the only necessary property of everything that is, including subjectivity and causality, Meillassoux speculates an ontology that develops a radically new concept of time, hyperchaos, which could be asubjective and acausal.

0.2.3 Hyperchaos

The principle of factiality leads to the concept of a quite disturbing time that Meillassoux calls hyperchaos, a time in which everything can change at any moment and for no reason. This is the time "for which nothing is or would seem to be impossible, not even the unthinkable" (Meillassoux, 2008a, p. 64). The unthinkable, in this context, must not be taken

in its common signification, what is uncanny, implausible, unimaginable, or difficult to conceptualize, but in the strong Meillassouxian sense of what is other than thought, what is beyond the correlational circle. Hyperchaos is thus a counter-intuitive time, radically different from our lived, phenomenological experience of duration, or from the chain of quasi-causes, causes and consequences of the physical world. It is the time through which absolute contingency expresses itself, in which events and entities can emerge ex nihilo,[20] without being conditioned by earlier processes, or change or disappear. A time in which, for instance, life can emerge in a world devoid of life, and, therefore, from nothing else than time's capacity to actualize what is not, as well as to destroy what is. From the perspective of hyperchaos, the Heraclitean time that results from a law of the universe, according to which, famously, πάντα ῥεῖ (panta rhei) "everything flows", is no more than a status quo, one of the possible stabilized states of the world that, being contingent, are not necessary, and can change, disappear, become what they are not. Hyperchaos is time considered not as "the eternal law of becoming, but the eternal and lawless possible becoming of every law" (ibid.), in which the universal flow can give way to a still and motionless suspension, at any moment and for no reason.

However, since factiality accepts no other necessity than contingency, change is a possibility, rather than a necessity. Hyperchaos is, therefore, not a variation on chaos, as characterized, for instance, by Deleuze and Guattari, "less by the absence of determinations than by the infinite speed with which they take shape and vanish" (Deleuze and Guattari, 1994, p. 42). Indeed, erratic movement, appearance, disappearance and speed constitute founding rules that stabilize chaos in its erraticism. In such a conception of chaos, necessary laws condition its creative power, while, conversely, the very absence of any constraining law constitutes hyperchaos's creative power. Chaos is a game in which an enormous, but finite, number of dice roll incessantly at an infinite speed, making uncountable variations of combinations, while in the game of hyperchaos the dice might roll, or not, some might become hectically erratic, while others remain static or follow, perhaps for billions of years, a regular rhythm, before transforming into cards, balls or vegetarian haggis. However, Deleuze, Guattari and Meillassoux all agree that thinking implies diving into (hyper)chaos:

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[20] Cf. Chapter 4 for a detailed discussion of "hyperchaos and emergence ex nihilo", and "principle of unreason", and Chapter 5 for "time without becoming" and "non-whole".

"What would thinking be if it did not constantly confront chaos?" (ibid., p. 208). By confronting hyperchaos, Meillassoux's thinking discovers its own limits (the unthinkable) and overcomes them (by thinking the contingency of correlation). Perhaps more significantly, he explores a world that is indifferent to the fact that it is thought or not (the arche-fossil), always in excess of the finitude of our being in the world, and is capable of an infinite power of creation.

In this section, I have presented Meillassoux's general philosophical project and stressed the four main theoretical principles that I will engage with in this thesis. First, his concept of correlation and the two main paradigms that endorse the impossibility to access the world itself. Meillassoux defines the first one, correlationism, as the philosophies that state that the world itself, the absolute, exists but is inaccessible. We do not access the world itself directly, but always through the mediation of thought. Speculating about the absolute teaches us a lot about thought, but nothing about the absolute. The second paradigm, subjectalism, also states that the world itself exists and is inaccessible, but claims correlation is the absolute, i.e. that we correlate with what correlates with us, and thus, that consciousness is not intentional (a subject conscious of an object, as in correlationism) but that consciousness is the absolute shared by everything that is, for us. I will use these two paradigms to discuss various film studies and film-philosophy theories. Secondly, I have also highlighted that Meillassoux's project aims to overcome correlation from inside. He acknowledges the impossibility to step out of the correlation circle and develops a philosophical system that allows him to think the absolute without claiming that he can think from outside of thought. I will engage with this rigorous method and analyse how film thought addresses cinematically the circle of correlation by reflecting and reflecting on the conditions and limits of its absence. Thirdly, I have shown that Meillassoux considers factiality (or absolute contingency) the absolute that guarantees that nothing is necessary and that everything is possible. Through the analysis of how film thought resonates with both contingency and facticity, I will establish that films can think time, space, physical and social laws as contingent events. Finally, I have explained how Meillassoux theorizes from such an absolute contingency, hyperchaos as a time that has the power to either stop or start any possible process, and in which entities can emerge, change or disappear for no reason. I will look at hyperchaos cinema films that engage with such changes, in which things happen for no reason, develop in a time without becoming and a non-whole. Furthermore, I will analyse how, in the post-cinematic context from which they arise, these films reflect on the presence of cameras, films and other

recordings as non-human correlating correlates. I will particularly analyse how they either engage in or refuse dialectical subjective relations with humans. But before presenting more details about the structure of this thesis, I will assess how film-philosophy can resonate with Meillassoux's concepts.

0.3 Meillassoux and film

In this section, mainly methodological, I discuss how film-philosophy can enter into a fruitful dialogue with Meillassoux. I establish that some concepts of Meillassoux (the ancestral, the great outdoors, and the unthinkable) have allowed some scholars to develop interesting analysis of films that, nevertheless, contradicted Meillassoux's general philosophical project of overcoming correlation from within. I suggest that film-philosophy can engage with Meillassoux by analysing how films think the finitude of their thought, how they reflect on their correlation with the world, and how they correlate with humans. This requires mapping how film-philosophy has addressed the question of film, world and human correlation, from the phenomenological approach of Vivian Sobchack, to the more recent theorization of digital discorrelated images by Shane Denson.

My attempt to connect film-philosophy and Meillassoux is twofold. On the one hand, it provides opportunities to link Meillassoux with other theorists and read some fundamental texts (for instance various works of Deleuze and mostly his *Time-Image* or key pages of André Bazin's *What is Cinema*?) from a, hopefully, refreshing and challenging perspective. Furthermore, thinking film thought with Meillassoux will allow me to engage with current discussions about the non-human-turn in film theory (Steven Shaviro and William Brown will be regular interlocutors). On the other hand, it will also allow me to map and analyse how some contemporary films, when thinking correlation and hyperchaos, address their ability to think how they correlate with the world and with human beings.

Discussing how films correlate means liaising with the long tradition of film phenomenology that argues that consciousness is central to the experience of the world and is fundamentally

embodied. Sobchack (1992) establishes that human and film bodies[21] correlate in the film-viewing experience, a topic further explored by the work of Laura Marks, especially *The Skin of the Film* (Marks, 2000) and *Touch* (Marks, 2002) and Jennifer Barker's *The Tactile Eye* (Barker, 2009). A wide range of books and articles have explored how what Marks calls "haptic visuality" engages visuality and materiality in the viewing process that becomes an event in which the viewers, the film and the world engage in transformational relations (Thomsen, 2009; Martin-Márquez, 2013). These can blur various boundaries and affect, for instance, the regulation of the distribution of subjectivity and objectivity (Beugnet, 2007) at the level of *the experience* of the haptic. Furthermore, these can also blur boundaries at the level of *critical discourse about* the haptic, and, for instance, question the opposition between phenomenology and Deleuze (Marks, 2000; Beugnet, 2007; Del Rio, 2008), film body and film thought. Even though I engage with filmic correlation from a perspective first theorized by phenomenology, I find concepts and methods in Deleuze and Deleuzian studies that are particularly relevant when discussing contemporary post-cinematic digital films. Deleuze theorizes film as forms of thought that can embody themselves through various assemblages (Deleuze, 1989; Shaviro, 1993; Powell, 2005, 2007) – including digital ones (Shaviro, 2010; Fleming, 2012; Brown, 2013). Furthermore, he puts the virtual at the centre of the emergence of times and entities as singularities, plural temporalities and becomings (Rodowick, 1997; Pisters, 2003; Martin-Jones, 2006, 2011; Brown and Fleming, 2015). Meillassoux develops and radicalizes the concept of virtual.

Considering correlation in contemporary films from the perspective of Meillassoux requires engagement with digital films whose embodiment and ability to reflect human experience of the world are metamorphosing (Mulvey, 2005; Short, 2005; Rodowick, 2007; Stewart, 2007; Hadjioannou, 2012). On the one hand, digital films suggest a relation to the world in

[21] The relation between French national cinema and the body has received special critical interest. Three books focus on films and bodies from various perspectives. Martine Beugnet's *Cinema and Sensation: French Film and the Art of Transgression* (Beugnet 2007) focuses on cinema's ability to engage in modes of perceptions that transgress boundaries (sense/thought, body/mind, experimental/mainstream, subjectivity/objectivity). In *Brutal Intimacy* (2011), Tim Palmer defines "cinema du corps" as a French genre that aims at experimenting with the limits of film and its ability to explore challenging sensory experiences. Finally, in *Phenomenology and the Future of Film* (2012), Jenny Chamarette analyses how film images and humans become together, through their relation.

which images are not the index of an event, the trace of a live action that happened in front of a camera – recording of images – but include techniques such as copy and pasting or digital indexation that belong to animation – creation of images (Manovich, 2001). From this perspective, cinema questions our understanding of the nature of reality (Mullarkey, 2009; Rushton, 2011) and more specifically of time, thought in digital film as embedded, spatialized discrete units participating in a wider general movement of becoming in causal or quasi-causal modes (Shaviro, 2010; Barker, 2012; Brown, 2013; Denson and Leyda, 2016). I have already briefly mentioned that hyperchaos challenges such a theorization of time, and the second part of this thesis focuses on alternative cinematic explorations of temporality. On the other hand, digital films have become post-cinematic: they are social actants that are no longer confined in the heterotopia of the theatres (Foucault, 1998) but are ubiquitous and participate in hybrid networks (Latour, 1993) that weave together our daily life and mundane experience of the world. As such, they participate in both the production and expression of what Shaviro calls "post-cinematic affects" (Shaviro, 2010, 2017; Casetti, 2016; Grusin, 2016; Hansen, 2016). These regroup the various "primary, non-conscious, asubjective or presubjective, asignifying, unqualified and intensive" (Shaviro, 2010, p. 3) flows of energy generated by digital technologies (including films, trailers, videos, clips and all the possible assemblages of recorded sounds and images) through which we negotiate our subjective positions. Interestingly, these post-cinematic affects renew the issue of embodiment (Kirkup, 2000) and call for a discussion on ethics. In the wake of film scholars who analyse how "films do ethics" (Downing and Saxton, 2010; Choi and Frey, 2014; Sinnerbrink, 2015; Brown, 2016; Martin-Jones, 2016a, 2016b), I argue that Meillassoux's concepts of facticity, contingency and hyperchaos resonate with and radicalize the Spinozian–Deleuzian tradition of ethics (Deleuze, 1988), and especially Rosi Braidotti's postsecular, nomadic ethics (Braidotti, 2006, 2009) and her conceptualization of the principle of unreason.

Finally, my attempt to engage film-philosophy and Meillassoux in a dialogue resonates strongly with various recent works that address the question of the presence of the unhuman and the outside of thought, which Mark Fisher designates as "that which lies beyond standard perception, cognition and experience" (Fisher, 2016, p. 8) and echoes what Richard Grusin describes as *The Nonhuman Turn* (Grusin, 2015). The unhuman or inhuman are both topics addressed in various texts and methods of analysis of these texts (Harman, 2012; Fisher, 2016). Speculative realism features as one of the main expressions of the shift in humanities,

and I will discuss in the next section various publications that used Meillassoux's speculative realism in film studies.

0.3.1 Filming the unthinkable: Can cinema film the outside?

Few film scholars, precisely only four to my knowledge (Kara, 2014; Trigg, 2014; Szendy, 2015; Birks, 2017), have engaged with Meillassoux so far and their work can be classified basically in two categories. First, Szendy and Birks claim that Meillassoux provides a fascinating analysis of the unthinkable, that, nevertheless, cinema cannot think. Secondly, Kara and Trigg engage with film's ability to resonate with Meillassoux's concepts of the ancestral (Kara) and the great outdoors (Trigg).

Peter Szendy, in the very last pages of *Apocalypse Cinema 2012 and Other Ends of the World* (2015), mentions Meillassoux,[22] albeit briefly, from a perspective that highlights the fact that the ancestral is, fundamentally, the unwitnessed. Szendy focuses on apocalypse cinema, a broad genre that deals with the end of the world and its destruction, and in which the finitude of the film reflects, and reflects on, the finitude of the world. In such films the apocalypse is cinematographically performative, as epitomized by *Melancholia* (Lars von Trier, Denmark/Sweden/France/Germany, 2011) in which while "the end of the world is the end of the movie […] the end of the movie is the end of the world" (Szendy, 2015, p. 2). For Szendy, the strength of this cinema can be found in its capacity to put the destruction of the film at the centre of its narrative, through a typology of such features as "the countdown, the freeze-frame, the cinepotlatch and pyrotechnics, the foliations of the flip-book, the archi-fade-out to black or white, x-rays, and heliographics" (Szendy, 2015, p. 116). Szendy praises Meillassoux for offering a philosophy that resonates with a cinema that "projects us after, or beyond the catastrophe" (ibid., p. 132), and shares its concern with the disappearance of (cinematic) thought and the status of the unwitnessed. However, while acknowledging that Meillassoux's realism overcomes the incapacity of cinematic thought to break through the correlational circle, he regrets its incapacity to offer a "cinefied point of view" that could present an asubjective absolute perspective:

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[22] To be precise, Meillassoux is mentioned in the 2015 English translation of the book, in a postface added to the 2012 French edition.

> What Meillassoux's so-called realist philosophy is missing is this cinefied point of view in which, through a cinematics that in advance reduces every subjective gaze to ashes, the real steps away from itself to make an image. A point of view in which it already or still gives itself to be seen, but without this donation implying some vision constituted in a subject: Every point in which the so-called real is redoubled and becomes repeatable (in other words also erasable), each one of these points of view is opened there where there is precisely *no point* of view, none at all yet or already no longer. (Ibid., p. 134)

When advocating for such a "cinefied point of view" prior or posterior to any operation of subjectification, Szendy actually endorses a subjectalist perspective in which "cinefying" is the necessary condition of any being. Such a perspective leads Szendy to conclude his book with reference to the cameras of Lacan filming after the disappearance of humankind, discussed earlier, and the hypostasis of the cinefied, according to which "the image nonetheless remains and leaves a trace and a gap" (ibid., p. 135). Similarly, Birks critiques Meillassoux, and speculative realism in general, by arguing that cinema can explore the limits of human subjectivity, its periphery but cannot think "the great outdoors". However, if the outside of thought is unthinkable, we can encounter the real that is in excess of consciousness since "while humans can only have knowledge within a limited sphere, our existence is conditioned by an unknowable wider reality" (Birks, 2017, p. 111). For both Szendy and Birks, Meillassoux addresses a question that is theoretically and speculatively relevant, but that, practically, cinema cannot engage with since, as a finite consciousness, it is essentially correlational.

Selmin Kara (2014, 2016) is one of the first scholars to have seriously engaged in a discussion of films with Meillassouxian concepts. In *Beasts of the Digital Wild: Primordigital Cinema and the Question of Origins* (2014), she proposes a "speculative aesthetic" characterized by cinema's capacity to address the question of human and non-human temporalities through the blending of analogue and CGI or digitally composited images. She argues that in films such as *The Tree of Life* (Terrence Malick, USA, 2011) or *Beasts of the Southern Wild* (Benh Zeitlin, USA, 2012) analogue images reflect and reflect on the realm of humanity, while digital images are used to construct a vision of the realms that predate, or outlive, humanity. In these films, analogue and digital images do not compete

in their capacity to address our presence in the world in the best, most accurate way (naturalistic/fantastic, anthropocentric/post-human, molar/molecular), but allow us to speculate on diachronic worlds from our humanly experienced world.

> I want to argue that their two seemingly disjunctive aesthetic realisms – one based in the analog representations of human loss and the other in the digital imaginations of primordiality and extinction, which are essentially non-human temporalities – do not necessarily suggest a clash. Instead, they point to the emergence of what one might call a speculative realist aesthetics, which poses an alternative to the photographic, digital, sutured, or post-humanist realisms in cinema in the digital age. (Kara, 2014, pp. 2–3)

Kara considers this aesthetics as speculative, since it allows us to think the contingency of our presence in the world. She argues that Malick's cinema offers the possibility to produce and experience images of the ancestral, i.e. images of the reality that predated consciousness.

Kara's argument addresses quite efficiently and elegantly the tensions that structure the films she discusses, and allows her to draw very thorough and relevant comments on the issues of loss and mourning they develop. However, their strictly speculative character can be discussed if we consider, after Meillassoux, that the term speculative refers to the exploration, by thought of the unthinkable, of the non-correlated or of the world as what is in excess of our subjective presence. Are these films speculative, i.e. do they try to think what there is when there is no thought? Or do they take a correlationist position, i.e. do they suggest that post-cinematic thought helps us to develop our contemporary thinking about what was before thought? Or are they a variation on subjectalism, i.e. do they explore, through post-cinema, the necessary omnipresence of thought in any possible time and matter? In her discussion of *The Tree of Life*, and most specifically of the scenes that take place before the emergence of life on Earth, Kara differentiates between two realisms:

> The digital dinosaur sequence can be argued to be both digitally realistic (it subscribes to perspectival laws of human vision, as Lev Manovich defines digital realism) and realistic in a speculative sense: it makes plausible visual statements on the origins and extinction of life based on NASA's documentation of space and paleontological finds on how dinosaurs might have once looked or behaved. (Ibid., p. 11)

Kara's cinematographic speculative realism does not aim to question the very possibility of cinema, as thought, to think the unthinkable, but explores its capacity to offer "plausible visual statements" about the ancestral. If the "cosmos" and "dinosaurs" scenes of *The Tree of Life* illustrate cinema's ability to offer a human perspective on a reality that took place before humanity, they do so by reinforcing the idea that cinematic thought is necessarily correlational. By stating that cinema can turn everything into a visual, aural, subjective experience and thus offer us the chance to witness, from our human perspective, what happened when there was no witness, such a cinema is not speculative, since it translates the unthinkable into thought. It does not explore the contingency of correlation through possible experimentations of cinematographic expression of a non-correlated world, but reaffirms that the non-correlated is, cinematographically, impossible. The speculative question is therefore considered as a problem that relates to aesthetics – how to correlate? – while eschewing Meillassoux's fundamental ontological issue of the non-correlated. Actually, Kara describes the dinosaur scenes of *The Tree of Life* in a way that resonates strangely with what Meillassoux describes as a possible way to disregard the challenging aporia of the arche-fossil.

> The aesthetic speculative dimension of this sequence lies, first and foremost, in Malick's desire to represent through cinema a reality that not only predates cinema but perceptual experience itself (in other words, the desire to make cinema witness to a reality without a witness). (Ibid., p. 10)

Cinema certainly has the power to put us in the position of witnessing events as we would have seen them if we had been there, whatever their distance from us in space or time. However, from this perspective, it is not actually speculative, since, by giving us access to events that were non-given as if they had been given, it does not disrupt the very necessity of correlation; instead, it links the unwitnessed to the more general issue of perception, as a mere variation of the lacunary. The thought that cinema can make us see what we would have seen if we had been there gives the same status to a scene featuring dinosaurs walking on the surface of the earth millions years ago and a scene featuring, for instance, a room empty of human presence in a contemporary environment. It considers the ancestral, i.e. that which was not correlated, from the perspective of that which can be correlated, and transforms the absolute non-given into a relative one, the lacunar, considered as a necessary

part of the given. Such a position does not disrupt the correlational circle since, as Meillassoux notes,

> the lacunary nature of the given has never been a problem for correlationism. One only has to think of Husserl's famous "givenness-by-adumbrations" (Abschattung): a cube is never perceived according to all its faces at once; it always retains something non-given at the heart of its givenness. (Meillassoux, 2008, p. 19)

Considering that cinema can witness "a reality without a witness", places the non-given as the lacunary part of the given which the film reveals, as it can reveal any other part of the given. Failing to address the specificity of ancestral events (their absolute non-givenness), such scenes consider them as mere variations of the "un-perceived", incorporating them within correlation and making them accessible as correlates. These scenes do not consider the fact that thinking such events involves questioning the possibility of thinking our very absence – qua the absence of a human, cinematic thought – but, conversely, reaffirms that the world is what is accessed as a correlate and through correlation. By stating that the ancestral can be subsumed by correlation, such films reflect less on the world without us than on the world with us out.

In *The Thing, a Phenomenology of Horror* (2014), Dylan Trigg makes an interesting attempt to think films with Meillassoux. Trigg's fascinating book aims to develop a phenomenology that, while finding its origin in our human experience, could explore what is beyond the limits of our being in the world. He seeks to defend a model of phenomenology, which he defines as a "unhuman ontology […] that is not only capable of speaking on behalf of non-human realms, but is especially suited to this study of foreign entities" (Trigg, 2014, p. 5). He focuses his attention on the human body as a stable, final state, but also as a step in a wider mutating process, that might come from, and perhaps transform into, other shapes. From his perspective, the human body is only a phase of a wider body – "the body of horror" – that predates, persists within and outlives our human experience, and threatens its subjective supremacy "by establishing an unassimilated depth within the heart of familiar existence" (ibid., p. 8). Trigg engages with various concepts, mainly Merleau-Ponty's notion of "the flesh" (2003) and Levinas's notion of the "il y a" (there is) (Levinas, 2014), through which he maps possible expressions of a wider, external presence in excess of our human limited, ephemeral presence in the world.

Trigg engages with Meillassoux in order to establish the validity of the notion of "outside" of the possibility to think the unthinkable, i.e. the absence of subjectivity. Meillassoux allows Trigg to posit a world independent from being and, therefore, to critique the essentially correlationist perspective of phenomenology and its ethics of finitude. However, when turning to Levinas or Merleau-Ponty to explore the possibility of an "unhuman phenomenology", he substitutes Meillassoux's speculative realism with a subjectalist paradigm that cannot overcome the correlational circle. This is epitomized in his discussion of Levinas, when he develops the "il y a" as what is in excess of the presence of the world itself, of all the existents – qua the world – and of all the relations that existents can enter in. He quotes Levinas, who asks "Let us imagine all beings, things and persons, reverting to nothingness. One cannot put this relation to nothingness outside of all events. What of this nothingness itself?" (Levinas, 2001, p. 51 in Trigg, 2014, p. 49). This position, where there is both something in us that predates us and that we cannot overcome the unthinkable (i.e. that thought cannot think its own absence), is one of the very paradigms that Meillassoux seeks to challenge. What Levinas describes in this, nevertheless, beautiful formulation is the very circle of correlation, the fact that thought cannot think what is exterior to thought. Here Levinas suggests thinking the exterior as the inaccessible limit of the interior, to hypostatize "presence" as a characteristic of correlation and turn it into an absolute.[23] Trigg therefore fails to endorse the Meillassouxian project to think what there is when there is no thought; nevertheless, he develops a fascinating phenomenology that addresses and overcomes, to a certain extent, the limits of traditional phenomenology.

Trigg discusses various films, such as *The Quatermass Xperiment* (Val Guest, UK, 1955), *Solaris* (Andrei Tarkovsky, Soviet Union, 1971) *The Thing* (John Carpenter, USA, 1982) and *The Fly* (David Cronenberg, USA/UK/Canada, 1986), that provide interesting examples of narratives engaging with the body of horror. However, his approach focuses more on how these films depict bodies of horror than on how they think such bodies, and their irruption in the phenomenal experience of the film. This reflects the limits of the methodology adopted by Trigg, Kara and, to a certain extent, Szendy. Indeed, Meillassoux's concepts resist

[23] I discuss the circle of correlation in more detail in Chapter 1.

approaches centred on the ability of films to give an image of the outside of thought, since film is, fundamentally, intimately linked to thought (Deleuze, 1989), and is itself a form of thought (Deleuze, 2006) and, as such, cannot step out of the correlational circle. The ancestral appears, therefore, to be what Meillassoux claims it to be: not a reality that we can witness, imagine, represent[24] or cinefy, but an aporia, a problem which demonstrates that correlation is not necessary and is inescapable for thinking beings. Exploring the non-correlated by transforming it into a product of correlation is useful in order to analyse how we think and mourn our emergence, presence and disappearance in the world. However, such a process reinforces the finitude of the correlational circle and cannot reflect Meillassoux's project of overcoming correlation from within.

Should we therefore abandon Meillassoux, and claim that films and Meillassoux have nothing to think in common? Alternatively, should we attempt to analyse how Meillassoux's analysis of correlation and of a non-anthropocentric hyperchaos might address not only rational thought, but also film thought? Answering these questions necessitates highlighting that Meillassoux has not much to share with film-philosophy regarding the analysis of images that depict something like the ancestral (i.e. the world before givenness) or other figures of what Meillassoux calls "the great outdoors" of the non-correlated real. Indeed, if we take seriously Meillassoux's definition of the ancestral as the world before givenness, then we must admit, that film thought cannot think the ancestral without either turning it into what it is not – the witnessed (Kara, Trigg) – or acknowledging its incapacity to think it, and aligning the end of the world with the end of the film (Szendy). However, my purpose is to argue that Meillassoux can provide a framework that allows us to analyse how films think the question of correlation in our post-cinematic context.

As I developed earlier in this chapter, Meillassoux argues that rational thought can overcome correlation from within, by demonstrating that correlation is not necessary, and, from this statement, developing a radically new ontology based on the necessity of absolute contingency. My hypothesis is that, likewise, cinematic thought can put correlation out of joint from within, since it fails to escape the correlational circle with the representation of

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[24] Or that we can represent only in mathematical terms as scientists do, from an ontological perspective close to the ontology developed by Alain Badiou in *Being and Event*.

diachronicity. Analysing the possibilities and limits of such a hypothesis is the main issue addressed in this thesis, but before considering in detail how I will address this film-philosophy problem, it is necessary to explore how various film theorists and philosophers have already discussed the questions of correlation and discorrelation in relation to cinematic and post-cinematic thought. This includes analysing how films reflect on their ability or inability to think their own absence (how do films engage with the limits of the circle of correlation?), how they reflect on the facticity of their relation with the world and suggest a world regulated by the principle of unreason. Furthermore, Meillassoux's speculative realism is helpful in analysing how films reflect on their correlation with human beings, and with the world, as both narrative and recording/projection practices. I will argue that hyperchaos springs out from the inbetweenness of human correlation and film correlation, and puts out of joint human time and human correlation. In order to set the basis of such a project, I will now discuss how film-philosophy has addressed, before Meillassoux, the question of human and film correlation.

0.3.2 Filming correlation: Can cinema film a world of correlations?

I noted earlier the impact of Meillassoux's concept of "correlation" in contemporary philosophy, and how it triggered the emergence of speculative realism. However, film studies have a long legacy of scholars who addressed the question of the correlation between film, world and human beings. The dialogue between Meillassoux and film-philosophy should start, therefore, by discussing the wider background of this common, fundamental issue.

Correlation is one of the main concepts[25] used by Vivian Sobchack in *The Address of the Eye* (1992), in which she analyses cinematic experience from a phenomenological perspective. However, her conception of correlation, while linked to the correlational paradigm, has a specific meaning, quite distinct from Meillassoux's. As discussed earlier in this chapter, Meillassoux defines correlation as a generic term that describes the paradigm which he wants to overcome from within. According to this paradigm, thought cannot access

[25] Interestingly, *correlation* appears 137 times throughout the book (and the stem "correlat" 188) but is not referenced in the index as one of the main developed key concepts or topics.

the world itself, but only the correlate of thought and being since “the sensible exists only as a subject’s relation to the world” (Meillassoux, 2008a, p. 3). Similarly, Sobchack understands correlation as the specific processes through which these relations are woven and that occur at the level of embodied consciousness that express their experience of the world. She roots the characteristic of the film/human correlation in the “reversibility of [their] embodied and enworlded perception and expression” (Sobchack, 1992, p. 4).

Sobchack’s theoretical background draws from philosophies that endorse and explore correlation, including Edmund Husserl’s transcendental phenomenology, but mainly Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s existential phenomenology and his concept of *être-au-monde*, “a term that suggests both a being-present-to-the-world and a being-alive-in-the-world” (ibid., p. 38) and that implies intentionality.

> Intentionality as the basic structure of *être-au-monde* is not just a directionally reversible vector of implication between consciousness and its objects. It is a biased trajectory of implication, actively performed by an embodied consciousness correlated with enworlded objects in the context of an existentially significant project. (Ibid.)

For Sobchack, the cinematic experience organizes a complex structure of correlation, in which not only humans but also films are involved as embodied, correlated consciousness. She argues that phenomenology suggests:

> a new mode of seeing and reflecting upon our sight as the entailment of an object of vision, an act of viewing, and a subject of vision in a dynamic and transitive correlation. It is this correlation of cinematic vision as a whole that structures and informs what we call the “film experience” and gives it meaning as such. (Ibid., p. 49)

The cinematic correlation involves human beings, the cinematic apparatus, and their encounter in a complex exchange of subjective and objective constructions. Films share with humans the characteristic of being both viewing subjects that are embodied – albeit differently – and viewed objects. The film experience should thus not be considered as the unidirectional processes that a subject – the human viewer – performs on an object – the film – but rather as the

> dialogical and dialectical engagement of two viewing subjects who also exist as visible objects […] Both film and spectator are capable of viewing and of being viewed, both are embodied in the world as the subject of vision and object for vision. (Ibid., p. 23)

The cinematic experience is, therefore, a twofold correlation. On the one hand, any film, considered as a viewing subject, "manifests a competence of perceptive and expressive performance equivalent in structure and function to that same competence performed by filmmaker and spectator" (ibid., p. 22). Films express the world in a way that resonates with human's perception of the world while being specific, since it is perceived from their mechanical embodied presence in the world. The cinematic apparatus, as a both perceptive and expressive experience of the world, does not allow cinema to access the world itself, but to express their correlated presence. From a phenomenological perspective, cinema, understood as a mechanical system that records its experience of the world, is a consciousness mediated by its body (the one-eyed camera, its different lenses, its possible movements, the length of the film, the possibility of cutting and editing, the projector, the screen, etc.). Sobchack, therefore, refers to "the film's body" as the specific cinematic way of being one of the objects of the world capable of reflecting and reflecting on its presence in the world.

> The film's body [is] considered as a direct means of perceptually engaging and expressing a world not only for us but also for itself […] a direct means of having and expressing a world […] given to itself through the praxis of its existentially functional body, as the immediate experience of consciousness. (Ibid., p. 168)

Hence, here Sobchack defines a first level of correlation: as viewing subjects that express their experience of the world, films think, and their thought is necessarily correlational.

On the other hand, when dealing with analogue cinema, Sobchack argues that cinematic and human thought develop a reflexive relation in which their phenomenological bodies express their perception of the world with similar, basic functions. "A film presents and represents acts of seeing, hearing, and moving as both the *original structures of existential being* and the *mediating structures of language*" (ibid., p. 11). Films make sense for us because we share with them sense-making features, or in other words, because the human and film bodies share some fundamental ways of perceiving and expressing their experience of the

world. The filmic experience entails a specific, complex *correlational structure* in which films and humans, involved as both *objects* and *subjects of vision*, are engaged in reflexive *acts of viewing*. Humans and films are correlated because they think in both a similar and specific way which allows perceptual exchanges between two thoughts that have a common, dialectically reflexive expression of their experience of the world.

However, in the conclusion of *The Address of the Eye*, Sobchack argues that in the case of digital images, the human and film bodies are discorrelated.

> Post-cinematic, incorporating cinema into its own techno-logic, our electronic culture has disenfranchised the human body and constructed a new sense of existential "presence." Television, videotape recorder/players, videogames, and personal computers all form an encompassing electronic system whose various forms "interface" to constitute an alternative and virtual world that uniquely incorporates the spectator/user in a spatially decentred, weakly temporalized, and quasi-disembodied state. (Ibid., p. 300)

This disembodied state results from a new structure in which the film's body experiences an ontological reorientation. It shifts from a mainly analogic, indexical presence in and projection of the world, to a mainly digital, virtual flow of information, a "no-body" (ibid., p. 302).

Denson develops such a concept of discorrelated images by drawing on both Sobchack's early analysis of the changes of the phenomenological structure at stake in post-cinema and Meillassoux's correlation.[26] In "Crazy Cameras, Discorrelated Images, and the Post-Perceptual Mediation of Post-Cinematic Affect" (Denson, 2016), developing from the now well-established idea that post-cinematic images do not share our human embodied

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[26] While referring to Sobchack but not to Meillassoux in his article "Crazy Cameras, Discorrelated Images, and the Post-Perceptual Mediation of Post-Cinematic Affect" (Denson, 2016), Denson explicitly mentions Meillassoux in a round table with Therese Grisham and Julia Leyda, "Post-continuity, the Irrational Camera, Thoughts on 3D", published in the same anthology.

And with my use of the word "correlation", I am intentionally trying to invoke the notion of "correlationism" as introduced by Quentin Meillassoux and employed by the speculative realists more generally; while the advent of digital technologies may not be a necessary and sufficient condition for a break with correlationism, I think it's safe to say that there is a strong historical tendency linking them (Denson, 2016 b: 937).

expression of the world (Abbott, 2006; Rodowick, 2007; Shaviro, 2010, 2016; Brown, 2013), Denson argues that these images are "discorrelated, incommensurate with human subjectivities and perspectives" (Denson, 2016, p. 216). By discorrelated, Denson means that they operate at a level that is prior to, or at least different from, the phenomenological perception and expression of the embodied consciousness, since they "operate on the 'molecular' scale of sub-perceptual and pre-personal embodiment, potentially transforming the material basis of subjectivity in a way that cannot be accounted for in traditional phenomenological terms" (ibid., p. 200). However, and even though such images that challenge our human perception will be discussed in the following chapters, Denson uses the terms discorrelated and correlated in Sobchack's way, as sharing, or not, a similar mode of being in the world. From this perspective, as Jim Emerson argues, post-cinematic images are indeed discorrelated and act upon us like drugs, but they do correlate, from the perspective of Meillassoux, when appearing to us as no more than "a blur of incomprehensible images and sounds" (Emerson, 2011).

I have already asserted that cinema thinks, an idea that should be unpacked in relation to this issue of the possibility to correlate or not with (post)-cinematic images. Deleuze (1989, 2006) famously argued that cinema thinks, which can be understood from at least two main perspectives. First, as Deleuze explains, the cinema of the time-image produces 'thinking images' (Deleuze, 1989, p. 23). Indeed time-images think because they suggest relations in, and with time, which challenge our human understanding of temporal realities. They put the audience in front of situations that overwhelm human thought, and film thinks when it produces signs that confront human thought with its finitude and suggest a relation with the real that expands beyond human understanding, and reveals 'an un-thought within thought' (ibid., p. 278). Film thinks non-human times and non-human relations with time, that nothing else can think. Secondly, film thinks **with** humans when producing signs that, when projected, impact on the audience. Deleuze argues that "the brain is the screen" (Deleuze 2006, p. 83), which means that a film is a thought coming from outside and that thinks inside the spectator. Deleuze quotes Georges Duhamel who explains that he dislikes cinema precisely for this reason; according to Duhamel, when watching a film, "I can no longer think what I want, the moving images-are-substituted for my own thoughts" (Deleuze, 1989, p. 166). As a thought from outside, the film reveals "the presence to infinity of another thinker in the thinker" (ibid., p, 168), and disrupts the Cartesian construction of thought as produced by a single thinking subject, isolated from her environment. When this 'other

thinker' suggests unhuman or superhuman ways of understanding time, and temporal relations, then "the brain has lost its Euclidian co-ordinates and now emits other signs" (ibid. p. 278). At this point, human audience, entering in an assemblage with filmic thought can access a non-human perspective of, and linking with, the world, and discovers new ways of thinking.

As Brown argues in *Non-Cinema* (Brown 2018), the passage from cinema to post-cinema has multiplied the film-human assemblages and impacted the way we think since "our lives are validated by cinema as capitalism" (ibid., p. 6). Brown explains that, on the one hand, techniques developed by cinema such as framing, cutting, editing, lighting etc., are now part of the expression of our identities and the way we market ourselves. On the other hand, the 'other thinker' is now ubiquitous and its thoughts are overwhelming. Moving images and our thoughts, desires and acts are becoming consubstantial, and they consume our attention to such an extent that the mere fact of not being exposed to images is now a luxury that money can buy.

When suggesting that film thinks, I endorse Deleuze's perspective according to which film engages with the world in a way that can be super-human or inhuman. However, I also consider that 'film thought' includes cinema's ability to reflect and reflect on its presence in the world and its interaction with humans. This is what Sobchack calls the correlation between world, film and human, and its ability to produces discorrelated images, or, as discussed in the previous pages, images that are not accessible to humans. I hope that the discussion of the chosen films will give numerous examples of how contemporary digital cinema thinks its presence in, and impacts on, a world that it shares with human and non-human actors.

0.4 From cinema of correlation to hyperchaos cinema

In this thesis, I aim to analyse how filmic thought can overcome correlation from within, confront itself with the unthinkable (thinking its own absence) and its facticity. I will then analyse how it can think an absolute contingency, a non-whole and a time without becoming. This will therefore develop in two parts, the first one discussing correlation and film and the second discussing hyperchaos cinema. More precisely, the four chapters engage in a dialogue between cinematic thought and three of the main concepts of Meillassoux's philosophy: the circle of correlation and a subjectalist approach of film thought (Chapter 1),

the facticity of correlation and a correlationist approach (Chapter 2) and hyperchaos (Chapter 3 and Chapter 4). Discussing subjectalist and correlationist cinematic thought from the perspective of Meillassoux's mapping of the main philosophical paradigms has a twofold interest. First, it allows me to set the ground on which hyperchaos cinema develops, which highlights its specificity. Secondly, it offers a radically different set of concepts that enables me to reassess some of the main theoretical conceptions of film and post-cinematic film theory, mainly concerning its conceptualization of issues such as post-human realism and the conditions of its non-anthropocentrism.

Chapter 1, "Filming (in) the correlation circle – can (cinematic) thought think its own absence?" focuses on films which endorse the circle and conceptualize it as an absolute, from a perspective that resonates with subjectalism. Through the exploration of the impossibility of thought to think its absence, these films develop a world closed on itself, in an aesthetics of circularity and in which, in an absolute interiority, novelty emerges from the eternal return of affects. This chapter discusses *Enter the Void* (Gaspar Noé, France/Germany/Italy/Canada, 2009) and *Vous n'Avez Encore Rien Vu* (*You Ain't Seen Nothin' Yet*, Alain Resnais, France/Germany, 2012), two films that explore similar themes but from very different perspectives. Both films describe characters dealing with the finitude of thought when confronted with the experience of their death and their incapacity to break the circle of correlation by thinking or experiencing a world from which they are absent. Furthermore, both films develop as complex assemblages of cinematographic consciousness that perform the continuity of the absent by enabling cinematic prosthetic modes of presence. However, while *Enter the Void* suggests, and performs, a cinematographic experience of thought as cloistered and bound to develop as an eternal reproduction of the same, *Vous n'Avez Encore Rien Vu* explores how to produce, and perform, relative novelty in the finite world of absolute correlation.

Chapter 2, "The facticity of correlation", engages with films that, while endorsing the circle of correlation, acknowledge the creative power of its facticity and reveal the facticity of time, space and causality. The chapter discusses two films, *Les Garçons et Guillaume à Table* (*Me, Myself and Mum*, Guillaume Gallienne, France/Belgium, 2013) and *Ne Te Retourne Pas* (*Don't Look Back*, Marina de Van, France/Italy/Luxembourg/Belgium, 2009), and their characters who experiment with narratives focusing on unstable, uncertain often irresolvable ways of being in the world. I argue that through folding, pasting, multiplications and

morphing, these characters perform becomings that challenge the stability of the rules through which we usually emerge in the world as subjects. This enables the characters to experiment with their presentness in and with the world not *through* the film, but *as* a film and not through a narrative but *as* a multilayered narrative position. Furthermore, I distinguish their multiplicity not from the perspective of contingency (as an excess of the actual) but from the perspective of facticity (as an excess of the virtual). Time, space, identity, characters and the film itself appear thus as non-necessary, relatives and changing correlations formed of infinitely renewed layers of encounters.

Chapter 3, "Hyperchaos, unreason and the joy of factiality," looks at hyperchaos cinema, drawing on Meillassoux's concept of absolute contingency. Through the discussion of two films, *Rubber* (Quentin Dupieux, France/Angola, 2010) and *Bird People* (Pascale Ferrand, France, 2014), I analyse an emerging cinematic time in which unexpected events happen (sometimes explicitly) for no reason, i.e. without referring their emergence to any cause, neither transcendental nor immanent. I argue that such films resonate with Meillassoux's concept of unreason, according to which contingency, rather than causality, is considered the necessary principle of creation of novelty. Furthermore, this chapter calls for the definition of a specific film ethics, capable of assessing the power of images that challenge our anthropocentric perception of a world that would be necessary for us, or with us. Hyperchaos cinema offers such an ethics in which it evaluates its capacity to reflect and reflect on how the world exerts its power of performing absolute alterations of the state of things as we know them, and to bring forth a contingent advent of absolute novelty. Furthermore, the discussion of *Bird People* highlights that hyperchaos cinema can perform an act of justice in which the diegetic and extradiegetic worlds are interrelated in non-causal relations. This idea allows me to argue, when reinforced by the example of *Rubber*, that the ethics of hyperchaos offers a strong link with the world that eschews both an anthropocentric and an anthropomorphic perspective on the nature of this link.

Chapter 4, "Hyperchaos, non-whole and time without becoming", unravels the two main consequences of absolute contingency: the fact that hyperchaos can produce a time in which becoming is not necessary, and that it develops in and as a non-totalizable non-whole. The chapter discusses two films that exemplify cinema's capacity to experiment with contingency and hyperchaos. The section that focuses on *Holy Motors* (Leos Carax,

France/Germany, 2012) analyses the emergence of a filmic time without becoming. The third section, dedicated to *Réalité* (Quentin Dupieux, France/Belgium/USA, 2014), discusses the film's narrative structure, based on the repetition of static times that constructs a non-whole. In this section, I also analyse images that emerge from absolute contingency and cinema's ability to suggest hyperchaotic frozen times. I argue that these two films demonstrate the possibility of cinematic thought to put correlation out of joint by producing narratives in which the facticity of the human presence in the world appears as contingent, in which processes and entities appear, disappear and repeat themselves without building a whole from which reason could be inferred.

I would like to conclude this introduction with a last theoretical point. This thesis does not include illustration; no still images have been taken from the various films discussed. This decision results from both a Deleuzian perspective on the ontology of cinema, and the specificity of digital cinema. For Deleuze (1986)[27], the various frames that constitute the film have no value of their own, since they are immanent 'any-instant-whatever': "Cinema is the system which reproduces movement as a function of any-instant-whatever; that is, as a function of equidistant instants selected so as to create an impression of continuity" (Deleuze, 1986, p. 6). No still image, isolated from the flow of repetition and difference at work in the mechanical creation of filmic movement can provide any information about cinema which emerges from the interstice, the in-betweenness in excess of each frame. This question is even more obvious with digital cinema, in which the very notion of the frame and the possibility to freeze and isolate a single moment are even more meaningless, since, as argued by Antony Bryant and Griselda Pollock in Digital and Other Virtualities (2010):

In digital cinema […] there is no such thing as a still image, no punctual moment. There is only a consistent process of becoming (and unbecoming) based on the binary sequencing of zeros and ones that creates a constant relay of appearing and vanishing, of presence and absence (Bryant and Pollock, 2010, p. 8)

[27] I discuss further Deleuze's any-image-whatever in Chapter 4, section 4.1.3, page 202, and Bryant and Pollock's claim in the conclusion of chapter 1, p. 100.

0.5 Conclusion

This introduction has established the relevance, originality and significance of engaging film-philosophy and Meillassoux in a dialogue. Meillassoux's philosophy resonates with affects that circulate in the French post-cinematic context from which the films of my corpus emerge. Issues of correlation, of access to the real, of the possibility to overcome our finitude are central to both the French philosophers and the various films I discuss. Meillassoux has received little attention from film studies, and, while certain scholars have engaged with some of his concepts, none have engaged with his very project which aims at overcoming correlation from within by establishing the necessity of contingency. In this thesis, I argue that film thought can not only reflect on correlation but also overcome it from within. While analysing how films can think the circle of correlation, the facticity of correlation and hyperchaos, I will engage with issues relative to the articulation of human and non-human thought in contemporary French cinema from a new perspective.

Chapter 1: Filming (in) the correlation circle - can (cinematic) thought think its own absence?

This chapter discusses how cinematic thought thinks the circle of correlation, its own finitude and its (in)capacity to think its own absence. The first section briefly theorizes the circle of correlation and emphasizes how this concept considers thought, and cinematic thought, as closed and centred systems. From this, I discuss how digital cinema, when advocating for a molecular, post-humanist, non-anthropocentric perspective on the world while endorsing the circle of correlation, performs paradoxically an anthropocentric reterritorialization of the world. The chapter continues with a discussion of two films that exemplify cinema's capacity to reflect and reflect on the circle of correlation. In the second section, I focus on *Enter The Void,* in order to analyse how a film that attempts to think the absence of thought, through the death of its main character, implements various representations and affective performances of the circle of correlation. I focus mainly on circular narratives and narrations, on the specific filmic flow of consciousness as an absolute correlating device, and on centrality as one of the main performative affects explored by the film. The third section, dedicated to *Vous n'Avez Encore Rien Vu,* discusses the issue of novelty in the closed system of the circle of correlation. I argue that this film suggests that while the circle of correlation is absolute, the eternal return of affects can create relative novelty. Creation necessitates, thus, the becoming-imperceptible of the various subjectivities involved, which sets the condition for these affects to express themselves as freely as possible.

1.1 The Circle of correlation: Definition

The circle of correlation[28] is a central concept of Meillassoux's philosophy since it is the common ground of both the paradigms that he aims to challenge, and the necessary constraint within which he aims to develop his realist approach. His philosophical problem

[28] Meillassoux refers usually to 'the correlationist circle', formulation with which he underlines that the circle is not an absolute, not even a concept, but an argument used in order to support either that no absolute is thinkable or that correlation itself is an absolute. However, since this chapter focuses on films that endorse and give cinematic demonstration of the circle, the 'term circle of correlation' will be used, as a neutral term.

implies thinking what is independent from thought, i.e. thinking from the circle what is independent of it. However, before exploring how Meillassoux and hyperchaos cinema manage to overcome correlation from within, it is important to explore how some philosophical paradigms and some film conceptualize, explore and test the limits of the circle of correlation.

In the first pages of *After Finitude,* Meillassoux defines the circle as the argument that he intends to overcome, and "according to which one cannot think the in-itself without entering into a vicious circle thereby immediately contradicting oneself" (Meillassoux, 2008a, p. 5). From this perspective, any statement made about the world itself, i.e the world as independent of thought, might reveal a lot about thought but nothing about the world itself, since such a statement is conditioned, shaped and limited by thought, both mirrored by, and mirroring thought. The circle of correlation encloses thus the set of thoughts, events and entities (the world) actualised by and centred around any thinking entity, or consciousness. Furthermore, the circle is also the mechanism of correlation through which a specific consciousness and the world co-emerge, co-exist and establish their correlation, from which thought draws its power, its experiences and its finitude. Thought has the power to extend the limits of the world that it correlates with, but cannot step out the circle of correlation and think the uncorrelated, explore the unthought, nor experience the unthinkable by thinking its own absence. The very attempt of stepping out of the circle results in producing more thought, and the speculation of the implications of such a step performs nothing more than an extension of the circle of correlation.

1.1.1 Features of the circle: centre and closeness

The circle, as a closed figure centred on a single point, epitomizes finitude and centrality, and philosophy has engaged with this figure from various perspectives. Phenomenology, for instance, endorses the figure of the circle, when describing the experience of the world by a body as centred and circular. In *Eye and Mind* (1964), Maurice Merleau-Ponty refers explicitly to this circularity inherent to the being in the world of an embodied consciousness:

> Visible and mobile, my body is a thing among things; it is caught in the fabric of the world, and its cohesion is that of a thing. But because it moves itself and sees, it holds things in a circle around itself. Things are an annex or prolongation of itself; they are

> incrusted into its flesh, they are part of its full definition; the world is made of the same stuff as the body (Merleau-Ponty, 1964, p. 163).

Merleau-Ponty highlights that the real emerges through the processes of annexation of entities regulated by a consciousness understood as a moving point that experiences itself as central and the real as radiating and finite. The world, as experimented by my body, is inscribed both within the concentric circles of what my senses can apprehend and reveal, and limited by what my body can perceive. To five senses correspond five circles in, and through which, the world emerges in the finitude of my perceptions.

Interestingly, challenging phenomenology by arguing against intentionality, i.e. the fact that consciousness is not conscious *of* something, does not radically open the circle. Deleuze, for instance, argues that claiming that the world emerges through our natural perceptions does not take into account the fact that our very natural perceptions do not pre-exist the emergence of the world. More precisely, that our perception does not annex the world. D. N. Rodowick stresses that "Deleuze contrasts Husserl's argument that 'all consciousness is consciousness of something,' with Bergson's statement that 'all consciousness is something.' (Rodowick, 1997, p. 32). Hence, no duality can oppose a perceiving subject to a perceived object, and reality is constantly emerging from the materiality of the world, as an encounter.

> Let us call the set of what appears 'Image'. We cannot even say that one image acts on another or reacts to another. There is no moving body (mobile) which is distinct from executed movement. There is nothing moved which is distinct from the received movement. Every thing, that is to say every image, is indistinguishable from its actions and reactions: this is universal variation. (Deleuze, 1986, p. 58)

For Deleuze, on the one hand, objects and subjects emerge as fluid positions and from common processes, and, on the other hand, thought and memory are disseminated in the matter of the world, external to the subject. However, from such a perspective, everything that is, is necessarily an active constituent of the whole in its making, i.e. not the single correlated processes and entities considered in their individuality, but active parts of the dynamic movement of becoming, considered as the condition according to which the world emerges. Such a whole is, therefore, engaged in a dynamic expansion that Deleuze describes through various circular figures; the Bergsonian cone of time whose apex is the actual

present (Deleuze, 1989, p. 294), and its corollary, the spiral (ibid. 159). Therefore, moving from what Meillassoux would describe as a correlationist perspective (the phenomenological paradigm according to which the subject is central to process of knowledge and the absolute is unthinkable) to a subjectalist one (the vitalist paradigm according to which the absolute is correlation itself, and that correlating is the condition of existence of everything that is) changes the assignment of the coordinates of the circle, but fundamentally, not its absolute necessity.

Furthermore, the circle of correlation implies that thought cannot think its own absence, and that the absence of thought is unthinkable. In order to unpack this idea that is central to the two films that the next sections of this chapter discuss, I will now examine Meillassoux's critique of the necessity of subjectivity.

1.1.2 Copernican versus Ptolemaic revolutions and the non-anthropocentric paradox of digital cinema

Meillassoux argues that correlationist paradigms fail to decentre the human perspective on the universe. He argues that, far from endorsing the lessons of the Galilean/Copernican revolution, they perform a "Ptolemaic counter-revolution" when arguing that the observing subject is both necessary to the experience of the world, and at the centre of the epistemological system. In the fifth chapter of *After Finitude*, he explains that the Galilean-Copernican revolution involves both

> the astronomical discovery of the decentring of the terrestrial observer within the solar system, (and) the much more fundamental decentring which presided over the mathematization of nature, viz. *the decentring of thought relative to the world within the process of knowledge.* (Meillassoux, 2008a, p. 115)

For Meillassoux, the most important consequence of the Copernican revolution is the emergence of a mathematized world that exists, persists and insists independently of our presence and, therefore, of the fact that it is given to us or not. This is a world which is absolutely unaffected by our relation to it, and that exists in itself, either in presence or absence of a thought that can think it. As Meillassoux concludes, "thus, the Galilean-Copernican revolution has no other meaning than that of the paradoxical unveiling of

thought's capacity to think what there is whether thought exists or not" (ibid., p. 116). Paradoxically, the Kantian's reterritorialization of the Copernican revolution inverses the perspective. In order to confront dogmatic realism, i.e. the conception that we could have a direct, non-mediated, access to the real, or, in other words, that knowledge conforms to its objects, Kant states that the Copernican decentring of our knowledge implies that objects conform to knowledge. This is the very movement which starts the correlational perspective, which will prevail in philosophy thereafter, and that Meillassoux considers as actually performing a Ptolemaic counter-revolution "given that what the former asserts is not that the observer whom we thought was motionless is in fact orbiting around the observed sun, but, on the contrary, that the subject is central to the process of knowledge" (ibid., p. 118).

These questions resonate strongly with film studies, which need to think cinema away from the obviously unsustainable dogmatic realist perspective, according to which cinema would give a direct, non-mediated access to the real. Since the real cannot be directly observed and re-presented by films, film philosophy conceptualises how cinema creates reality (Deleuze, 1989, 1995; Rushton, 2011), and defines thus, as reality, the infinite variations of our subjective experience of the world, or the affirmation of the ontological identity of the given and the subject in an absolute subjectification of the world. In this transition from knowledge *of* the world *as* necessarily subjective, to the knowledge *that* the world *is* necessarily subjective, we shift from a cinema of agnosticism (that questions its own capacity to know) to a cinema of faith (Deleuze, 1989; Hughes, 2011) in which thought celebrates its link with the world. From a similar perspective, Brown describes as "Supercinema" (2013) digital films that have the power to suggest a "paradoxical posthumanist realism" (Brown, 2013, p. 50) according to which, "as per the conception of space and time suggested by digital technology and cinema, we are fundamentally interconnected and interdependent with the world and all that surrounds us" (ibid., p. 148). This illustrates the Ptolemaic counter revolution accomplished by a digital cinema that cannot think the world without us, as the following sections will argue, but only the world fundamentally with us, and the world *with us out*[29] as one of its possible variants. More precisely, this cinema draws from the hypothesis that we are necessarily with the world, the conclusion that the world is necessarily

[29] Cf the discussion of Kara's possible visual statements about the ancestral, pp. 38-41.

what we are with. Such a cinema, when granted the capacity to suggest the real - albeit "paradoxically" – implies that correlation is an absolute: if the real subsumes, and is limited to, what we correlate with, then we know that reality is correlation.

However, in a later article, "Non-Cinema: Ethics, Multitude" (Brown 2016), Brown addresses the hiatus that exists between the real that digital cinema suggests and its ability to decentre our human relation with the real. He articulates the paradox of Hollywood's digital blockbusters and of our ability to theorize the (non-) anthropocentric perception of the world that they spread:

> Now, to argue that digital special effects cinema suggests a realistic non-anthropocentric view of the world, in which the human is not the central figure, but simply an enworlded part of a wider – nay, massive – ecology that even extends beyond earth and into the universe might seem counter-intuitive. Hollywood, as the major purveyor of digital special effects cinema, still fills our screens with anthropocentric movies that privilege certain humans over other humans, over other life forms, and over nature (Brown, 2016, p. 106).

The next sections of this chapter will argue that there is actually no paradox in the fact that anthropocentric films are produced by a cinema that presupposes that we can only think the world with us, and from our enworlded position. As the following discussion of *Enter the Void* will try to establish, Meillassoux might help us to formulate that it is not possible to take for granted that the perspective of digital cinema is decentred or non-anthropocentric, as long as it encloses the only possible thinkable reality within the circle of correlation.

1.2 *Enter the Void*: Absolutizing the circle of correlation

This section examines *Enter the Void* as a film that both films within the circle of correlation and films the circle as an absolute. In this section, I will discuss how *Enter the Void* practices a cinematic thinking that endorses and absolutizes correlation by setting a cinematic subjectivity that subsumes every possible perspective, dematerializes every matter, and cruises through every possible object. I will discuss how *Enter the Void* celebrates its power to correlate by transforming any possible material reality into thought, while creating a filmic experience in which spectators, following the journey of the absolute digital subjectivity from its central perspective, become the centre of an infinity of circles that constitute the world as accessible. I argue that the film engages in, and engages the audience in, becoming the centre of any possible circle, in which the anthropocentric characteristic of the subjectalist perspective becomes evident. The central question of *Enter the Void* – Can film think the continuity of consciousness in life and death? – shares some fundamental concerns with Meillassoux's philosophy about the relation between being and thought. However, *Enter the Void* develops these from a perspective that epitomizes a subjectalist position by developing as a cinematic dispositive in which filmic consciousness has the ability to subsume any possible state of consciousness. Perception, life, death and altered states of consciousness become mere variations of a single expanding flow. I address how *Enter the Void* engages with the circle of correlation through thematic, narrative and affective exploration of the issues of the possibility of thought to think its own absence, the finitude of the world and consciousness considered as both central and absolute.

The narrative part of *Enter the Void* is complex and both chronological and non-chronological. It is chronological from the perspective of the film's main story and development: Oscar (Nathaniel Brown), a young American, lives in Tokyo with his sister, Linda (Paz de la Huerta). Oscar receives a phone call from a friend, Victor (Olly Alexander), while he is smoking DMT (a hallucinogenic drug). Victor asks Oscar to join him in a bar, The Void, in order to deliver drugs to him. Oscar goes to The Void with another friend, Alex (Cyril Roy). The deal is interrupted by the police, and Oscar, trying to get rid of the drugs in the bar toilets, is shot and dies. His soul starts a journey that resonates with the wanders described by the Tibetan tradition of Buddhism, and more specifically with the *Bardo Thödol*, also called *The Tibetan Book of the Dead* (a book that Oscar and Alex discuss earlier while on their way to The Void). Oscar's soul, unable to find a way out of the world, visits

the present without him, the past he was in and is offered various possible futures. Eventually, it chooses to reincarnate as Oscar, performing its eternal return.

However, Oscar's and Linda's lives are narrated non-chronologically in the scenes observed by dead Oscar's soul visiting both his past and the present with him out. We learn that Oscar and Linda have a fusional relation emerging from or, at least, reinforced by the death of their parents in a car accident when they were young children. Oscar, as a young orphan, promised Linda never to leave her but could not keep his word since they were fostered by different families. Once a young adult living in Tokyo, Oscar starts dealing in drugs, first in order to buy a plane ticket for Linda and then to make a living while Linda does the same by working as a dancer and stripper in clubs. However, Oscar has an affair with Victor's mother. When Victor discovers this, Victor, searching for revenge, informs the police and thus sets the trap that causes, unwillingly, Oscar's death.

1.2.1 Literature review

Enter the Void develops as a strong and original film that has attracted some critical attention for its attempt to offer a mimesis of dynamic (dis)embodiment. As Chelsea Birks explains, the film is "shot entirely through a subjective camera from the point of view of Oscar" (Birks, 2015, p. 137), as both alive and embodied, and dead and disembodied. Various critics analyse how the film suggests a very precise and convincing mimesis of Oscar's lived experience (for example, the use of cuts restricted to Oscar's blinks, his muffled voice as heard from inside, his hands or feet entering in the frame) as both a young man in the first part of the film and a newborn in the last minutes. Furthermore, when Oscar dies, his consciousness develops in various ways. In the first feature (which Jeeshan Gazi (2017) calls a third-person perspective and Brown and Fleming (2015) describe as a second-person perspective), the camera follows dead young Oscar, filmed from behind and with the back of his head appearing in the foreground when he visits his past. Brown and Fleming describe the last form through which his consciousness is represented in the film as "Voided Oscar", a floating presence that cruises in the space–time through any possible matter. Finally, one of the main important characteristics that all critics engage with is its seamless unity. The film is constituted by, or as, one single shot that reflects both the unity and continuity of Oscar's flow of consciousness through life, death and life again, and the unity and continuity of the world explored by this consciousness. The only cuts are skeuomorphic representations of Oscar's blinks and some jumps in memory, but the entire experience that the film narrates

appears as one single image, moving and changing, but unique and perceived by one consciousness, and not as a dialectical, edited orchestration of distinct perspectives.

I will now focus on articles in which scholars suggest various analyses of the void, disembodied subjectivity or the very question of the absence and/or continuity of subjectivity. These articles draw on a fascinating variation of philosophical perspectives that I will consider from Meillassoux's taxonomy of the era of correlation, i.e. from weak correlationism (Gazi), strong correlationism (Birks) to subjectalism (Brown and Fleming). I will now present briefly their analyses and highlight how these reflect various possible stands towards correlation.

In *Blinking and Thinking: The Embodied Perceptions of Presence and Remembrance in Gaspar Noe's "Enter the Void"*, Jeeshan Gazi analyses the film's construction as a dialectical dual progression between Oscar's cinematic embodiment in life, on the one hand, and in death, on the other hand. Gazi analyses the difference and complementarity between what he calls the "physical embodiment of cinematic perception", the first 26 minutes of the film, which start just after the credits and finish with Oscar's death, and the "mental embodiment of cinematic perception", from Oscar's death to the end of the film. Gazi considers that each part, in its specificity, offers "the highest level of verisimilitude in its depiction of a first person experience of the world". For Gazi, *Enter the Void* epitomizes cinema's ability to reflect our human experience of the world as embodied and thinking subjects. Human thought is the model that cinematic thought tries to reflect and mimic, and with which it might fuse in its best achievements. He defends the idea that the correlation between cinematic and human thought is unproblematic, human driven, and that cinema can – and might – excel in correlating with embodied and non-embodied human thought.

In *Body Problems: New Extremism, Descartes and Jean-Luc Nancy*, Birks (2015) offers a more complex reading of *Enter the Void*, in which she argues that embodiment and a possible cinematic, disembodied experience of the world are not taken for granted but are central issues that the film explores. Building on Jean-Luc Nancy's theorization of the void, which must be understood as the limit of what is possible to experience, as opposed to the inaccessible (i.e what is beyond human experience), Birks argues that "in granting us a disembodied perspective, however, Noé paradoxically emphasizes experience as inescapably corporeal" (Birks, 2015, p. 137). She describes the film as a subjective, embodied exploration of a life experienced as, and through, the affects of bodies as

assemblages engaged in processes that involve interacting, linking, merging or dissociating. Hence, the Void, explored after death by a subjectivity that persists in its "inescapably corporeal" (ibid.) relation to the world, is a "spacing where sense […] voids itself of signification" (ibid.). In other words, *Enter the Void* demonstrates that there is no sense out there that could be accessible to a (dis-)embodied subjectivity, no matter the variations on its embodiment that it could experience, since sense is the product of embodiment itself. Birks therefore suggests a strong correlationist reading of *Enter the Void*, according to which cinema cannot think the unthinkable. Subjectivity, considered as a human and cinematic assemblage, fails to think what there is when there is no subjectivity since it cannot think its own absence.

In *Voiding Cinema: Subjectivity Beside Itself, or Unbecoming Cinema in Enter the Void*, William Brown and David H. Fleming (2015) argue, from a very different perspective, that the film offers a representation of the void itself. They define this as the limit between life and death, the period in which Oscar "unbecomes" as an individual and "becomes one" with the world. For Brown and Fleming, the void is therefore not to be associated with the beyond, the lack or the end of being, but rather with the absolute continuity of the world that digital cinema can explore. Building on Deleuze's analysis of the out-of-field, they argue that the void is no longer what is out of the frame (in the cinema of the movement-image), but between the shots or the frames themselves (in the cinema of the time-image). Brown and Fleming argue that digital cinema can penetrate and explore the void that connects the elements of the world that are not yet singularized, the void itself in which "the 'camera' increasingly becomes free to pass through memory and matter, time and space without recourse to any apparent cutting whatsoever" (Brown and Fleming, 2015, p. 130). For Brown and Fleming, this cinema offers a non-anthropocentric experience of our actual condition of being *with* the world, interconnected and part of a wider network of matter, affects and energy. Oscar's journey reflects an unbecoming in which "the human is decentralised" (ibid., p. 133) at the level of both the narrative and the audience's epistemological experience. The film challenges our mundane mode of relation with the real and, by experimenting with various altered states of perception (film-viewing, drugs, death, exploration of the void), engages the audience in a conjunct altered process of thought. Cinematic thought has an impact on the way we think with cinematic thought, and "we are not conscious of films but with films" (ibid., p. 139), which implies that cinema can help us to challenge our human-centred perception of the world. From Brown and Fleming's subjectalist perspective, film

thought highlights "consciousness" as the necessary characteristic that transcends organic or non-organic matter, life, and analogue or digital modes of emerging. The disappearance of the subject releases and accelerates the power of this absolute immanent consciousness, to create new assemblages. Cinema can think what there is when there is no subject, and enter with human thought in assemblages through which they can think subjectivity itself, as necessary and absolute.

With these fascinating analyses in mind, I will now suggest that *Enter the Void* epitomizes the cinematic form of Meillassoux's circle of correlation, both because it depicts a closed world out of which nothing can be thought and experienced, and because it performs affects related to the circle, of unity, centrality and closure.

1.2.2 Correlating a flow of consciousness

Most critics consider that *Enter the Void* starts after the credits, with Oscar in his flat in Tokyo, its POV (Point of View) narration. However, I will argue that close attention to the credits and their relation with the narrative part is important in order to assess the nature of the void, the construction of the flow of consciousness of the film, and as a film, and the general narrative structure. In *A Soul Drifting in Neon Limbo*, Rick Poynor (2010) focuses on the credits of *Enter the Void* and analyses how the entire film develops between two words, ENTER and THE. ENTER appears full screen, it terminates the credits and starts the narrative, while THE and then VOID, appear also full screen, one after the other, and constitute the last eight seconds of the film.

> After the title sequence comes the single word "Enter". […] Not until the end is the phrase completed, when it transpires that the whole film is clamped, like a big queasy burger laced with hallucinogens, between great slabs of type. (Poynor, 2010)

The hamburger metaphor is quite audacious, and perhaps too fleshy to reflect *Enter the Void*'s conspicuous digital fluidity precisely. However, emphasizing its development between two words of its title is fundamental since it highlights both the audacious project of the film and its failure. Indeed, *Enter the Void* attempts to experiment with the challenge of giving a filmic experience of the void, while many other films simply address this question from a human perspective, without trying to speculate on the void and cinema's ability to express it. For instance, *Her* (Spike Jones, USA, 2013) suggests a similar definition of the

problem of the void understood as that which is in excess of our human perspective, and also uses the metaphor of the inter-word space to signify the non-correlated. This is shown when Samantha (Scarlett Johansson), an intelligent operating system, reaches a level of consciousness that pushes her to make the decision to move beyond the human realm and leave behind her human lover, Theodore (Joaquin Phoenix). In a long monologue, she explains to him her decision to leave his level of reality and move "to the space that is between words":

> It's like I'm reading a book … and it's a book I deeply love. But I'm reading it slowly now. So the words are really far apart and the spaces between the words are almost infinite. I can still feel you … and the words of our story … but it's in this endless space between the words that I'm finding myself now. It's a place that's not of the physical world. It's where everything else is that I didn't even know existed.

Her acknowledges the existence of the void, understood as the unknown, the unthought and the interstice between the words, but it never suggests that cinema could offer any possible representation of it. In other words, *Her* disregards the possibility that the unthought, cinematic thought and human thought could be correlated. Conversely, *Her* emphasizes that Samantha's "entering the void" implies breaking up with human bounds, while *Enter the Void* uses its digital aesthetics to convey a possible human experience of its exploration of the void, and of a possible becoming "one with being (the totality of all that exists as opposed to his subjective being)" (Brown and Fleming, 2015, p. 133). However, *Her* suggests that the process of liberation from the circle of correlation that Samantha has started is radical and without any possible return.

Enter the Void contrasts such an irreversible[30] line of flight with an aesthetic of circularity. Its energy fails to unfold as a vector, whose flow could create assemblages that are yet unknown and thus create novelty, but instead encloses its narrative (and encloses its vision of the void) in a large circle. The narrative part of the film focuses on Oscar's eternal return, and, accordingly, develops in, and as, a structure that operates a circular movement starting and finishing with POV sequences of Oscar's last and first minutes of life. Embodiment is both the source and the resolution, and being embodied again as a human baby is the final

[30] Interestingly, Noé's previous film, *Irreversible* (Gaspar Noé, France, 2002), is a backwards narrative that reverses the flow of irreversible acts that it depicts.

accomplishment of both the character and the film. When eventually the circle is closed, THE VOID fills the screen during the last six seconds of the film. But as the more traditional words THE END have a performative power, their appearance does not just sign the end, but is what Austin (1976) calls a speech act, an utterance that officializes the film ending. Conversely, THE VOID works as a mere signifier that cannot produce the reality that it enunciates. Moreover, while the film started with a hectic change of the typography of the credits, THE VOID appears on-screen in the same typography as ENTER, i.e. unchanged by the film, evidencing that the narrative part enclosed in the circle of correlation, finishing and ending on the same point, had no capacity to affect the outside. THE VOID concludes the experiment by substituting itself with the reality that it cannot produce, and signs itself as the very unreachable limit of the film. Furthermore, the void appears eventually as a reality that is out of the circle of the film, not the exterior that is relative to the finitude of the circle of correlation, but a reality that appears at, and as, the threshold of what Meillassoux calls the great outdoors, and which the film is unable to contemplate.

The credits also set the possibility of the correlation between the three forms of consciousness (film, Oscar and spectator) that co-operate during the narrative part in order to produce the continuity of its flow of consciousness. Poynor's analysis of the credits reveals that from its very first seconds, *Enter the Void* affirms its strong subjective position by demonstrating its ability to produce images that are "not for us" discorrelated (Denson, 2016) since they develop at a speed that exceeds human cognitive capacities.

> The sequence, directed by Noé with design by the Paris-based Japanese art director Tom Kan, is brilliantly disorientating. From the first frame, it is like being seized by an irresistible vortex of brain-scrambling sensation and sucked down into the film's chemically modified consciousness. The type fills the entire screen and the editing is precision-welded to the stuttering beats of *Freak*, a 2003 track by the English techno band LFO. The credits flash by so fast that it is impossible to absorb them all, though a few names register in the visual noise. (Poynor, 2010)

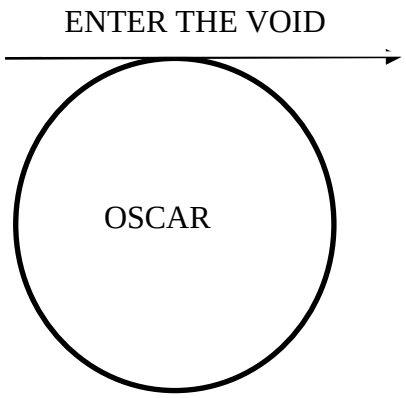
The role of the credits is therefore not informative since the names displayed are practically impossible to read, but performative. Indeed, while playing with – rather than displaying – the names of the human actants from which it emerged, the film reterritorializes subjectivity. Affirming itself as a post-cinematic subject, *Enter the Void* celebrates its non-human thought, its capacity to actualize, virtualize, cut and produce novelty at a speed that keeps

the human audience at the margin of the process, as overwhelmed and stunned spectators. The names of the main actors, for instance, change size, colour, typography and sign system (alphabets, Japanese kanji, hiragana or katakana) at a growing speed that reaches up to ten changes per second at the end of the sequence, creating a stream of flashing, mostly unreadable, words. This operation of reterritorialization of the subjective position is twofold. First, this sequence does not engage with humans from their subjective position. The names of the human actants who participated in the making of the film appear as a multiplicity of changing signs, a series of differences rather than identities. The display of their names and functions is a celebration of post-cinematic power to generate difference, which achieves such a speed that the recognition of the repetition of patterns necessary for the expression of subjective recognition is almost impossible. Consequently, this sequence overlooks the audience's expectations towards a credit sequence for a transition between the diegetic and non-diegetic worlds and, more generally, towards being acknowledged as phenomenological subjects by the film they are watching. Secondly, the film itself experiments with its power to create novelty by producing speed and change, and by considering its own hectic rhythm as the factor that stabilizes this sequence. This joy that the first sequence seems to find in the exploration of its ability to produce novelty per se and independently of the narrative yet to start is a radical form of expression of what Deleuze calls cinematographic consciousness in *Cinema 1*: "But the sole cinematographic consciousness is not us, the spectator, nor the hero; it is the camera – sometimes human, sometimes inhuman or superhuman" (Deleuze, 1986, p. 20). Therefore, post-cinematic consciousness produces superhuman images (Brown, 2013) that relate and "belong to *no-body*" (Sobchack, 2004, p. 152). By deterritorializing the credits, *Enter the Void*'s post-cinematic consciousness not only changes the way the elements that constitute this given space–time emerge, link together and signify, but, more radically, it also asserts its status as an other than/super/inaccessible to/human subjectivity that expresses itself as a consciousness. The images that it produces appear to us as "discorrelated" according to Denson's theorization of images, made by cameras that "seem not to know their place with respect to the separation of diegetic and non-diegetic planes of reality [and] fail to situate viewers in a consistently and coherently designated spectating-position" (Denson, 2016, p. 196). However, rather than insisting on the supposed camera's ignorance and failure of the cameras, it is possible to consider their joy in starting what Deleuze and Guattari (1995) call "*lines of flight*", which are flows that enable the formation of new assemblages, new ways of linking and becoming in, with and as the world. Considering cameras as subjects, able to express a joy of their own, implies

that we, as the human audience, need to accept both that they are indifferent to our expectations and that our post-cinematic experience involves a partial correlation with their subjective experience of the world – one of the possible affects, Shaviro calls “post-cinematic” (Shaviro, 2010).

However, the narrative part of *Enter the Void* is a long process of recorrelation of cinematic and human subjectivity, in an attempt to capture the energy of the line of flight and force it into the circle of correlation. The film’s structure can therefore be described as a figure in which the credits or “the line of flight is like a tangent to the circles of significance and the center of the signifier” (Deleuze and Guattari, 1995, p. 116); the credits fly away from the narrative part of the film, the void, that is centred around human subjectivity.

Figure 1 Schematic structure of *Enter the Void*



Or, more accurately, and in order to give a more dynamic representation of the film's general structure, the figure should be seen not as the opposition between a line and a circle, but as a single tracing made by the film subjectivity in which the circle is traced by the diversion of the energy of the line. It is as if the line of flight of the credit sequence were caught in the attraction of a human subject, Oscar. The main character acts as the centrifugal force attracting and slowing down the flow that is caught during the rest of the film and that gravitates around him, in an orbit that traces a circle. When reaching the point between the first two words of the title, ENTER and THE, the film's consciousness closes the circle and readjusts on its line of flight, with THE VOID. Oscar is thus the centre of a circle defined as the curve traced out by a point (the now of the post-cinematic consciousness) that moves in such a way that its distance to a fixed point (Oscar) is constant (maintenance of the correlation between, on the one hand, the post-cinematic consciousness and, on the other hand, the various states of consciousness subsumed by and stabilized as Oscar). Hence, *Enter the Void* explores the recorrelation of the post-cinematic consciousness by a human consciousness. Entering into the void is a programme that is always delayed and never accomplished. When the narrative part of the film starts, Oscar's body subsumes the expected void, which is always announced, signed, either as the club called The Void, in which Oscar has an appointment with Victor, or then in death when he haunts the virtual, by revisiting his past or exploring possible futures and actualizing himself again in the eternal return.

As noted earlier, eventually the void becomes the unreachable limit of the film, the exteriorized untouched end, that is enunciated and unaccomplished with the final utterance of THE VOID in the last seconds of the film. *Enter the Void* therefore offers not a demonstration of the void itself (Brown and Fleming, 2015, p. 130), but rather demonstrates the relative voids for us that change according to the various forms of being in the world experienced by consciousness as an absolute correlating through various forms of embodiment.

Indeed, as soon as the post-cinematic consciousness moves towards the void, at the end of the credits, its movement is disrupted and is suddenly slowed down and reterritorialized, embodied in, and as, Oscar. As mentioned earlier, critics (Birks, 2015; Brown and Fleming, 2015; Gazi, 2017) have precisely described the use of subjective shots through which the human and post-cinematic consciousness are aligned. The issue of embodiment is the point from and to which the narrative loops, since the first twenty-five minutes and last three minutes are absolutely synchronized with the last twenty-five minutes and the first three minutes of Oscar's life. These are experienced as Oscar's POV shot, only interrupted by the anthropomorphic cuts that mimic Oscar's blinks. Gazi celebrates this experiment by arguing that "what makes the first person perspective of remark in *Enter the Void* is the attempt to achieve the highest level of verisimilitude in its depiction" (Gazi, 2017), or, in other words, a recorrelation of the consciousness discorrelated by the credits. In both the embodied parts of *Enter the Void*, this recorrelation is produced by the alignment of the three forms of consciousness that participate in the filmic experience: the character, the film and the spectator. This correlation, therefore, is the very possibility of Oscar's continuity as a flow of consciousness that cruises through life and death, embodiment and disembodiment.

Oscar's embodied experience substitutes itself for any other possible subjective position, assigns the post-cinematic consciousness to the precise re-presentation of his human experience and encloses the audience into his individual perceptions. The POV sequences position Oscar as the unique and central subject, the absolute gaze that guarantees continuity by reterritorializing both the framing and the cutting, i.e. the access to, and the definition of, the out-of-field. In Deleuzian terms, this is equivalent to absolute control of the access to the actual and the virtual and to the processes of actualization and virtualization. The filmic reality, the world that *Enter the Void*, as a filmic assemblage, allows us to think, explore and witness, equals then the finite set of elements actualized by a central and centralizing gaze

locked in the linear present of its experience, and limited access to the virtual. Indeed, most of the virtual, the out-of-field, is self-reflexive, literally occupied and conditioned by Oscar. In the embodied POV shots, his face is both the element that conditions the actual, since the framing equals his gaze as the unique and constant centre around which the actual emerges, and the constant out-of-field. Oscar's face is seen only three times: when, during his DMT trip, his mind leaves his body, when he looks at himself in a mirror, and when his soul leaves his body, lying dead in the toilets of The Void. In all the other moments of both the embodied scenes, his body occupies the immediate out-of-field that is actualized only when, for instance, his hands or legs enter the frame.

Therefore, this POV logic sets a self-reflexive mode of "being in the world" which reterritorializes any possible process of subjectification, and which does not allow any possible alternative perspective on the world, the events and the very making of the real. The three consciousnesses at work in the making of Oscar as a continuous flow of consciousness (Oscar, the audience and the digital apparatus) are aligned with and locked in Oscar, as an absolute subjectivity closed on itself,[31] which is its own virtual, the self-reflecting, out-of-field that centres any possible experience on his correlated and correlating position. Oscar is both the condition of the correlated (the actual) of the world that we see, qua the frame, and the condition of the correlation. We correlate according to Oscar, dead or alive, embodied or disembodied. For instance, the digital apparatus cuts when embodied Oscar blinks or when dead Oscar passes through matter while experiencing the power of his disembodiment.

1.2.3 The absolutization of consciousness

Earlier in this section, I discussed the general structure of the narrative part of the film as a giant loop that starts and finishes in the void that separates the first two words of the title. Each and every second of the 140 minutes of this narrative part is therefore a point on the circular timeline of the film, equidistant to its centre, Oscar. Likewise, the narrative itself forms a closed circle. Indeed, Oscar's life is not represented as a singular, linear event having

[31] The film highlights the circularity of life and death when Oscar and Alex, while walking to The Void before Oscar's death, discuss *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*. Alex explains that after death, the spirit leaves the body, lingers for a moment visiting its past, is offered a new life and reincarnates. The dialogue ends up on these lines:
Alex: And basically you do this forever and ever, until you manage to break the circle.
Oscar: So you mean we're stuck in this world for all eternity? You mean there's nothing better out there?

birth and death as distinctive extremes that would contingently organize and reorganize flows of matter and energy. Conversely, it is represented as an eternal return, a single circular movement fuelled by drives that remain unchanged and loop around the subject. Oscar appears thus as both a singular subjectivity posited as the centre around which the film orbits, rotates and radiates, and the expression of a generic, absolute consciousness that is expressed as a seamless flow of consciousness.

The cinematic construction of Oscar as a continuous flow of consciousness that experiences the passage from life to death and back to life as a mere change of intensity implies that Oscar's continuity can be understood as the continuity of correlation itself. The question of this continuous flow of consciousness, central to the film, suggests that consciousness pre-exists correlation, and correlates independently from the conditions that enable its actuality. In other words, the assemblage of the three consciousnesses that the film requires in order to produce Oscar as a continuous correlating subjectivity, flowing seamlessly through life and death, reveals correlation itself as the shared minimum common essence of being. If the cinematic assemblage that produces a continuous POV perspective cannot think the absence of Oscar, i.e. if thought cannot think its own absence, it is because, in the circle of correlation, everything that appears *in* and *as* the circle, every being, shares the same power to correlate. Oscar's embodied perspective is only one possible form through which correlation actualizes itself, but it is not necessary. The assemblage of the three consciousnesses correlating seamlessly *as* Oscar suggests that *it always correlates* either *from* or *for* Oscar.

This issue of the continuity of an absolute flow of consciousness changing in intensity is addressed during the film through Oscar's various forms of (dis-)embodiment. *Enter the Void* canalizes the body/consciousness relation in three main ways that resonates with what neuroscientists call "autoscopic phenomena" (Blanke and Mohr, 2005, p. 186). In addition to the POV sequence in which Oscar is fully embodied, his consciousness expresses its continuity from perspectives similar to those in which patients, usually suffering from brain damage, experience "visual disorders [that] include a variety of usually short lasting, illusory experiences about the seen and felt location and position of one's body […] in space" (ibid.). These happen either when Oscar's consciousness is affected by drugs (DMT) or in his phase of disembodied death as out-of-body perspectives, or as autoscopic phenomena in which he sees various forms of embodiments of himself.

An example of such a continuous movement from embodied to disembodied consciousness can be observed in the scene when Oscar smokes DMT and his phenomenological perspective is affected by the drug. The film moves seamlessly from his POV, embodied perspective to an out-of-body perspective, in which the visuo-spatial perspectives are still aligned with Oscar's, but in an extracorporeal way, comparable with the autoscopic phenomena described by neurologists. This scene starts with Oscar lying on his sofa and smoking DMT from a glass pipe, first watching out of the window, and during the two and a half minutes of the process, focusing gradually more on the pipe and his hands. He first experiences mild hallucinations that affect the intensity of light and colours. Then, when the drug really hits Oscar, he lifts his gaze towards the ceiling and sees a red network of light filling his visual field, metamorphosing randomly, but whose changes start from a central area, reminiscent of the glow of the burning drug in the pipe. Oscar blinks, and his gaze focuses again on his hands holding the pipe, the smoke that he is exhaling and his living room blurred in the background. The visual perspective dissociates itself from Oscar's body and rises up in a twirling movement that acquires speed while ascending towards the ceiling. The pipe and its incandescent point of light become the axis around which the consciousness rises, and Oscar's body is seen as revolving faster and faster around this centre. The glow of the burning drug triggers two and a half minutes of a hallucinated kaleidoscopic light show, in which luminous forms appear, transform and vanish as variations of figures that all develop and radiate from and/or revolve around a central point. The hallucination is interrupted by Oscar's phone ringing, and the perspective is realigned with his embodied experience.

This scene is pivotal in the absolutization of correlation that the film implies. In the previous scenes, correlation could be considered relative, as produced and experimented from the specificity of Oscar as the singular human embodiment in charge of any possible access to the real, and regulating both the processes of actualization (the frame) and virtualization (the cut qua blinks and his face qua the out-of-field). While experiencing his sensorimotor activity, the embodied character regulates the correlation both in the diegetic world and transdiegetically, in the making of a filmic experience shared by the consciousness of the camera, the audience and the characters. However, the altered state of consciousness during which the character experiences an out-of-body experience challenges neither the continuity of the process nor its nature. When Oscar's body is actualized in the frame, the out-of-field still includes Oscar, and the assemblage constituted by the camera and the audience is still

able to correlate seamlessly with him. What is at stake in this scene is not so much the challenge of a mind/body subject/object dichotomy, as argued by both Brown and Fleming (2015, p. 138) and Birks (2015, p. 140), than the claustrophobic reterritorialization of any possible exteriority by interiority. In other words, the fact that it is impossible for any consciousness and for any form or state of consciousness to think an exteriority that would not be inscribed within the circle of correlation. The question is not to know how to produce a statement about the ontological truth of the mind/body duality, but rather to demonstrate that while thought can think the body as exterior to thought, thought cannot think itself as exterior to itself. *Enter the Void* multiplies features of embodiment and disembodiment which demonstrate that the body can be thought as exterior and relative, and that thought can relate to the body in various ways. This is done, however, without changing the continuity of Oscar as a flow of consciousness that thinks itself, and is thought *by* and *as* the film, as interior, central and absolute. *Enter the Void* can think the decentralization of Oscar's body, and even its disappearance later in the death scenes, but the decentralization of his thought and, all the more so, its disappearance are unthinkable.

When Oscar, on his DMT trip, loses his sensorimotor activity, the film represents his out-of-body-experience in a way that operates a mind/body duality while highlighting the continuity of the self (the hallucination is shown as the centre – the mind – of a circle, of which Oscar's body is both the radius and periphery), the possibility for any consciousness to correlate with his disembodied experience (the digital film can provide a representation of the character's hallucinatory perception that the audience can experience), and the fact that the features of centre, perimeter, radiation and revolution, which organize the finitude of consciousness, are consubstantial to consciousness itself. *Enter the Void* multiplies modes of correlation in order to isolate the minimal features that constitute consciousness as the common factor to these various actualizations. These experiments include Oscar's altered state of consciousness, his assemblage with DMT, during which consciousness liberates itself from the restrictions imposed by his human body or, later, in a similar way,[32] Oscar's

[32] Studies suggest that the human brain produces DMT which is released at the moment of death, Cf Strassman, 2000) https://www.vice.com/en_us/article/5gkkpd/dmt-you-cannot-imagine-a-stranger-drug-or-a-stranger-experience-365 (accessed 07/09/2018) and Timmerman et alii (2018) https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fpsyg.2018.01424/full (accessed 07/09/2018).

consciousness disembodied in death, or Oscar's consciousness embodied as a young adult and then as a baby.

However, when Oscar dies, the film still develops two distinct modes of disembodiment that reinforce the absolutization of the circle of correlation. Immediately after being shot, Oscar falls on the ground of the toilets of The Void and dies. However, Oscar's death does not affect the nature of the flow of consciousness, but its intensity. Liberated from the constraints of the human body, the consciousness seamlessly continues its gravitation around Oscar while exploring new circular intensities. When Oscar is lying on the ground, dying, we can still share his embodied perception of the scene, from the perspective of his face looking at his fingers and the toilet floor. A policeman enters the field, checks Oscar's vision and pulse, and declares him dead. The shot blurs slowly, fades to black and the screen stays entirely black for fifteen seconds before being dimly lit again. The flow of consciousness leaves Oscar's body – seen now as a blurred, translucent three-dimensional skeleton – before being attracted towards the ceiling by a hexagonal light with a powerful round white bulb in its centre. The camera ascends towards the source of light, as if attracted by it, in a rotating movement that transforms the hexagon into a circle, and enters into it. The flow of consciousness travels towards the central point of the bright, blinding light that radiates all over the screen in abstract rotating movements, generating a sensation of high speed reinforced by the whistling sound that constitutes the only soundtrack of the scene. However, after about a minute, the flow of consciousness slows down, stops and then, still facing the light, moves backwards to Oscar's body, still lying on the toilet floor. This movement can obviously be understood as being triggered by the fact that the flow of consciousness considers the white point as a truth that is out there, but unreachable. However, since *Enter the Void* focuses heavily on the seamless, circular exploration of the processes involved in Oscar's eternal return, I prefer to read this scene as the revelation that there is no exit, no exterior. The white point is therefore the vanishing point created by the very process through which the flow of consciousness constitutes its continuity. From this perspective, this scene reveals that, even when functioning in the most abstract environment (a pure white light), a given flow of consciousness is bound to create a self-centred related world in which everything that is is necessarily inscribed either in the centre (the vanishing point) or at some point along its radii. Such a perspective absolutizes the circle of correlation. On the one hand, the idea that everything that is is necessarily placed on a radius means that everything is a possible becoming of the centre; on the other hand, while the circle is absolute, since nothing

can be if it is not within the circle, the exterior is relative and defined as anything that is posited on a radius. Furthermore, this absolutization of the circle of correlation implies that thought cannot think its own absence without merely producing more thoughts, or to phrase this idea according to *Enter the Void*'s image, without pushing the vanishing point forwards. This scene offers a stylized and abstract perception of what Meillassoux describes as "the closure of thought in itself" (2012b, p. 3), which the film performs through its seamless narration *in* and *as* a single post-cinematic image. Therefore, having experienced the circle of correlation as an absolute, as a pure intensity, the flow of consciousness returns to the toilets of The Void and its human form of "being in the world" as one of its possible contingent expressions.

1.2.4 Circular affects: Looping and becoming centre of any-circle-whatever

With this return to Oscar's dead body, *Enter the Void* states that there is no alternative to correlation, that thought, whether cinematic or not, on the one hand cannot access through itself anything other than itself, and on the other hand is an ontological absolute, the condition of being of everything that is, with difference only in intensity. As discussed in the previous chapter, Meillassoux aims to challenge such an argument that achieves what he analyses as "an hypostatization of nature", or the fact that a specificity of our humanity – the finitude of thought – becomes, paradoxically, a guarantee of "the de-anthropologization of nature […] hypostatizing (a) form of our very humanity […] across all of reality; and seeing between the human and non-human only differences in degree (or 'intensity') within this hypostatized subjectivity" (Meillassoux, 2012b, p. 4). During its next two hours, *Enter the Void* develops and develops through such a paradoxical "non-anthropocentric anthropocentrism" according to which Oscar can become one with everything that is while also facing his impossibility to become anything else than what he already is. Oscar's "becoming-one", which the film explores through his death, does not perform his becoming-other, minoritarian, vegetal or molecular, to mention some of Deleuze and Guattari's most famous modes of becoming (1995), but instead concerns the "being circular" of any reality through which Oscar performs his eternal return. Indeed, the two main affects that the film explores in the death part are the loops of Oscar, to and from his body and around events of his life (the same events being both past and future), and the becoming centre of any circle-whatever experienced by the flow of consciousness.

As discussed earlier in this section, while the narrative structure of *Enter the Void* develops as a large movement of loop in the void between the letters of the title, the scenes that explore Oscar's death are structured according to a similar mode. Christian Quendler notes that "the events that lead up to Oscar's death and his childhood memories of his sister are recounted in a series of loops that keep circling back to his dead body in the club and at the mortuary" (Quendler, 2014, p. 83). These can be considered as major loops, since, with each revolution, the flow of consciousness changes intensity and passes from embodied to disembodied mode, then, to a mode in which the camera sees him seeing himself, similar to what Blanke and Mohr describe as "autoscopic body" (Blanke and Mohr, 2005, p. 187), and then to autoscopic out-of-body mode. Within these main structural loops, minor narrative loop patterns can also be identified, which deal with Oscar's drives and affects. For instance, the film builds heavily on Oscar's incestuous circularity oriented towards his sister, Linda, his own mother and his friend Victor's mother, with whom he has an affair that indirectly causes his death. This incest is inscribed in the larger narrative drive in which Oscar keeps the promise that he made, as a child to Linda never to leave her after the death of their parents in a terrible car accident (around which the film loops three times). Young Oscar cannot keep his promise since both children are fostered by different families. However, as a young adult, he decides to deal drugs in order to buy Linda a plane ticket and live with her in Tokyo, but he dies a few weeks after her arrival and leaves her again. Oscar's incestuous circularity is, therefore, the means through which he keeps his promise by making the same coming back again, so that the idyllic time of unity that precedes the promise does not belong to the past, but to the future. Hence, *Enter the Void* exemplifies a thought which, having endorsed its finitude, cannot find anything else to experience – and perhaps to desire or to celebrate – than this very finitude.

This intensity of finitude finds its most affective expression in the last part of the death scenes, the out-of-body experience in which the flow of consciousness drifts in the world before reincarnating. It observes life going on without him, the mourning of his dear ones, and tries either to escape life and access another possible level of reality where it would belong, or come back to it. This drifting of dead Oscar's stream of consciousness operates through two main modes of movement, either as observations, with translations that glide above spaces, or as attempts of exiting and regressing through various objects. These latter movements of penetration are uncountable but they all follow the same modus operandi: the flow of consciousness, in order to find its way out of the world, dives into objects that are

mainly circular, travels *in*, or more precisely, *as* the tunnel of light experienced during the first minutes of death, and each time stops, moves backwards and enters into a different space and time, usually through another circular object, or through a circular point within a non-circular object. For example, while Victor is being interrogated by the police, the flow of consciousness dives into a circular ashtray, travels in white light following a blinding vanishing point, and after twenty seconds moves backwards for another twenty-five seconds and exits from a fire, burning in a round barrel, that Alex had lit to get some heat while hiding from the police in a deserted construction site. These scenes reiterate the absolutization of the circle of correlation by adding to a representation of death, as a disembodied continuity of correlation, an affective, immersive impression of the centrality of consciousness. The circle of correlation demonstrates here the twofold movement of its closure: since the world is necessary to the development of subjectivity, the seamless stream of consciousness continuously comes back to the experience of the world; and since the subject is central to the emergence of the world, exiting from, or entering in, any point of space–time (i.e. experiencing the disappearance and the apparition of the world), the correlating subject is placed in a central position.

There is no way out for dead Oscar's stream of consciousness, and, wherever it goes, it can only find itself as the presence of his absence in the world. The audience, embedded in the assemblage of the flow of consciousness, experiences that every possible entity is either a circle of which they are the centre, or becomes one if they penetrate it deeply enough with the help of the digital camera.[33] The circle of correlation and its finitude are performed by *Enter the Void* as a lived affect and they make the audience experience that there is nothing else than the world for us, neither possible entities nor events, accessible *to* and *as* consciousness.

Enter the Void offers a physical, affective and intellectual experience of the absoluteness of the circle of correlation. It both describes a closed world and performs a range of strategies that enclose the film, the main character and the audience, as viewers, in a merged, unique viewing perspective. Built as a single uncut image, developing in circular, looping structures, focusing on effects of centrality and enclosure, it asserts that thought cannot think its own

[33] Analysis of the phallocentric, sexist – and racist – subtext of the film (un?)fortunately exceeds the scope of this chapter.

absence, that consciousness is a continuous, intensive stream, and that exteriority is thus unthinkable. The correlated real – the part of the world that emerges as both accessible to and shared by the three viewers – is absolute, since the variations in intensity with which each of the particular viewers affects and is affected by the world do not impact the continuity of the stream of consciousness itself.

1.3 Novelty in the circle

The previous section discussed *Enter the Void* as a film that offers a wide range of perceptions of the circle of correlation, from direct to affective and performative images, and considers its mechanism as an absolute law that regulates consciousness. This second section of this chapter focuses on *Vous n'Avez Encore Rien Vu*, a film that addresses quite differently the questions of the unthinkable and of the circle of correlation. Whereas *Enter the Void* emphasizes the impossibility to create novelty in a closed world, *Vous n'Avez Encore Rien Vu* experiments with the conditions according to which exteriority can be thought of as a creative process within a system enclosed in itself. While both films share the same concerns with the impossibility for thought to think its absence and the circularity of eternal return of a finite set of affects, *Vous n'Avez Encore Rien Vu* explores the power of assemblages to produce becomings that develop as and through singularities. In this section, I discuss Resnais's film as an assemblage, not only because it combines various elements (film and theatre, CGI and photorealist shots, etc.) but because it also practises assemblage as an experiment on the conditions of overcoming the finitude of the world by becoming imperceptible. I analyse how it experiments with the assemblage of heterogeneous components and observes how this blurs authorial, individual and subjective markings and defies hierarchical positions and stabilizations. The film defines itself as an assemblage not because of what it is, but according to what it performs: setting flows of affects, within the film and with the film and the world.

Deleuze, with and without Guattari, considers "assemblage" not from the perspective of constituted objects, but as constitutive powers that substitute the analysis of "being in the world" with the dynamic experiment of "becoming with the world" through the exploration of relations that are not predetermined by natural or social laws.

> What is an assemblage? It is a multiplicity which is made up of many heterogeneous terms and which establishes liaisons, relations between them, across ages, sexes and

> reigns – different natures. Thus, the assemblage's only unity is that of co-functioning: it is symbiosis, a "sympathy." It is never filiations which are important, but alliances, alloys; these are not successions, lines of descent, but contagions, epidemics, the wind. (Deleuze and Parnet, 2007, p. 69)

Assemblages are therefore the means through which thought extends the domain of correlation, through which new correlates can be negotiated, experimented and experienced. They create relative novelty, or new processes and entities that emerge as and from the mutual affection of the terms involved in a given assemblage. This section will thus analyse *Vous n'Avez Encore Rien Vu* as an assemblage under the two characteristics of its form (multiplicity made of heterogeneous terms) and its function (a co-functioning that allows alliances and contagions). It will analyse how, in the limits of the closed system of the circle of correlation, relative exteriority can be thought and relative novelty can be negotiated, experimented and experienced.

1.3.1 Resnais's correlation machine

Resnais, one of the film-makers who could epitomize the concept of authorship (Livingston, 2016), paradoxically focused his work on the incessant questioning of the very concept of authorship. He experimented on constituting assemblages through collaborations with fellow film-makers (*Les Statues Meurent Aussi*, Ghislain Cloquet, Chris Marker, Alain Resnais, France, 1953), various writers such as Marguerite Duras (*Hiroshima Mon Amour*, Alain Resnais, France/Japan, 1959) or Alain Robbe-Grillet (*L'Année Dernière à Marienbad/ Last Year at Marienbad*, Alain Resnais, France/Italy, 1961), scientists (Henri Laborit, *Mon Oncle d'Amérique/My Americain Uncle*, Alain Resnais, France, 1980) and by adapting, sometimes freely, theatre plays by Henri Bernstein (*Mélo*, Alain Resnais, France, 1980) and Alan Ayckbourn (*Smoking/No Smoking*, Alain Resnais, France/Italy/Switzerland, 1993). His filmography repeatedly addresses the question of the dis/appearance of the author as an actual cinematographic practice through the construction of films that are complex authorial assemblages.

Vous n'Avez Encore Rien Vu fully shares this concern, both thematically and as a practice of cinematographic creation that performs multiplicities. To make the mapping of this assemblage clearer, I will first give a brief explanation of the plot. A group of friends and fellow actors are invited for a last tribute to their departed friend Antoine d'Anthac, a famous

playwright who had just died. All the actors have played in two distinct adaptations of d'Anthac's *Eurydice*, his most famous play, a variation on the Eurydice and Orpheus myth. They gather in the castle in the mountains where d'Anthac died and are invited, by a recording that d'Anthac made before dying, to watch the caption of a new adaptation of the play by a young troupe that had asked the author for permission to play *Eurydice*. As a testament, he asks his friends to make the decision for him: is the play still worth performing? The film is projected but, during the screening, the roles embody themselves in the various actors who are playing them as well as in those who used to play them. The main part of the film consists of a strange performance in which the play and its characters multiply themselves through their various actors, either, or and sometimes both in the room and on-screen. At the end of the play, d'Anthac appears; his death was a trick to unite some of his lifelong friends and collaborators. Everybody cheers and congratulates him: his play is great and worth being shown to the world. However, eventually, he does really commit suicide and the last scene shows his actors and friends attending his burial.

At the level of its narrative, *Vous n'Avez Encore Rien Vu* shares, therefore, some of the main themes developed in *Enter the Void*, such as a claustrophobic mode of being in the world, the circularity of affects and the eternal return as an answer to the anxiety of thought thinking its disappearance. However, the two films are very different in their structure. While *Enter the Void* subsumes every possible viewing into one single perspective, *Vous n'Avez Encore Rien Vu* experiments with the opposite strategy of constructing itself through and as a multiplicity. This is realized at the level of the structure since *Vous n'Avez Encore Rien Vu* is perhaps less a film than a dialogue between two films realized by two directors. The recording of d'Anthac's play by young actors was directed and shot by director Bruno Podalydès. In the press kit[34] of *Vous n'Avez Encore Rien Vu*, Resnais stresses that this part of the film was absolutely independent of his own part:

> The screen play showed which parts of *Eurydice* to shoot, but apart from that, I gave Bruno no other directions. He had carte blanche for the casting, the crew and the style. He asked me for advice but I insisted, "No, me having nothing to do with it is part of the film. The more different it is to what I'd have shot myself, the better it fits

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[34] https://cdn-media.festival-cannes.com/pdf/0001/45/5fe98a31536a3f1e4c6c2688845dc95222738fa5.pdf accessed 07/09/2018.

> with the spirit of what we are trying to do." And the gamble I had most fun with was waiting until the editing before seeing how his images and my own fit together.

Eurydice, the play itself, is made up of extracts from Jean Anouilh's *Eurydice* (Anouilh, 1951) and the whole film (i.e. both Podalydès's and Resnais's parts) uses roughly two thirds of Anouilh's dialogues. Furthermore, Resnais borrows a few lines from another play by Anouilh, *Cher Antoine, ou: l'Amour Raté* (Anouilh, 1971). While only a short extract, these lines are essential to the structure of the film. In the play, after the death of playwright Antoine, all his friends and former actors gather for the reading of his testament in the isolated castle where he died, and they perform the play that had made their success. In this mise en abyme, the action of the play tells the story of a playwright who dies and all his friends and actors gather for the reading of his testament in the isolated castle where he died… What is at stake with this capture is less a few lines of a dialogue than the very structure of the mise en abyme that closes the narrative on itself, the cloistered circularity of the diegetic real. Finally, the film also borrows one of the intertitles of *Nosferatu, Eine Symphonie des Grauens/ Nosferatu*, F. W. Murnau, Germany, 1922) which appears just before the projection of d'Anthac's inaugural speech. Actually, the intertitle is an adaptation of "Kaum hatte Hutter die Brücke überschritten, da ergriffen ihn die unheimlichen Gesichte, von denen er mir oft erzählt hat" freely translated in French as "Et quand il eut dépassé le pont, les fantômes vinrent à sa rencontre" (Once he had crossed the bridge, ghosts came towards him) in *Nosferatu.* In *Vous n'Avez Encore Rien Vu,* this becomes "Et quand ils eurent dépassé le pont, les fantômes vinrent à leur rencontre" or "Once they had crossed the bridge, ghosts came towards them".

Hence, *Vous n'Avez Encore Rien Vu* establishes Resnais's authorial position as the production of an assemblage through which, paradoxically, he loses the power and subjective authority of this very authorial position, in order to be one of the channels through which new becomings and new correlates can emerge. This resonates with Deleuze and Guattari's writing strategy, which they explain in the first lines of *A Thousand Plateaus*.

> The two of us wrote *Anti-Oedipus* together. Since each of us was several, there was already quite a crowd. Here we have made use of everything that came within range, what was closest as well as farthest away. We have assigned clever pseudonyms to prevent recognition. Why have we kept our own names? Out of habit, purely out of

> habit. To make ourselves unrecognizable in turn. To render imperceptible, not ourselves, but what makes us act, feel, and think. (Deleuze and Guattari, 1995, p. 3)

Becoming-imperceptible means, therefore, not hiding between one's identity (that which keeps stable, unchanged), behind a screen (mask, pseudonym, iconic authorial posture), but enunciating one's identity in a way that makes the construction of an identity impossible. *A Thousand Plateaus* and *Vous n'Avez Encore Rien Vu* make the question of disappearance one of their main topics, and the conditions of how to think one's disappearance one of their main practices. They engage in disappearance and becoming-imperceptible, according to what Philippe Artières and Mathieu Potte-Bonneville describe in *D'Après Foucault* (2012) as a strategy in which "disappearance is to be found in the relation between some utterances that set its possibility and conditions, and some enunciative positions that tend towards its performance[35]" (Artières and Potte-Bonneville, 2012, p. 145).

Such a strategy can be exemplified by the tension produced between the form and the message of the film's title. On the one hand, "You Ain't Seen Nothing Yet" works as a statement that sets the condition and possibility of its existence by claiming its singularity to the public and, indirectly, boasts its ability to reveal the yet unseen or perhaps even the yet invisible. On the other hand, with this sentence, the film enunciates itself as a variation on other famous cinematic enunciations, which questions the singularity it claims. The title therefore performs a tension in which the enunciated, the film's promise to reveal the unseen, or at least the faith it expresses in its power to produce a worldview exterior to the world that has been seen before, is necessarily relative, enclosed in the circle of correlation, and echoes with and still vibrates from old images, sentences and promises. In French, the title *Vous n'Avez Encore Rien vu* resonates with at least two famous cinematographic memories. First, its English translation *You Ain't Seen Nothin' Yet* makes an obvious link with the joyous "You ain't heard nothin' yet!" from the first spoken line of the first synchronized "talkie", *The Jazz Singer* (Alan Crosland, USA, 1927). Secondly, it echoes with Resnais and Duras's darker "You saw nothing in Hiroshima", the iconic inaugural sentence of *Hiroshima Mon Amour* (Alain Resnais, France/Japan, 1959). The formal parallelism between the three sentences is more obvious in French than in English, since they are variations on the same

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[35] My translation: "la disparition (…) doit être cherchée dans la relation entre certains énoncés, qui en établissent la possibilité et les conditions, et certaines postures énonciatives qui tendent à l'accomplir."

structure: *Vous n'avez encore rien entendu* (You haven't heard anything yet) / *Vous n'avez encore rien vu* (You haven't seen anything yet) / *Tu n'as rien vu à Hiroshima* (You saw nothing in Hiroshima). In the three sentences, the verbal tense is the same, but the variation operates through the choice of the subject ("vous" as "you" either plural or formal opposed to "tu" as "you" informal), the dis/appearance of "encore" (as either "yet" or "again"), and the sense through which the contact with the world is processed that changes from "voir" (to see) to "entendre" (to hear). The title resonates with these sentences, albeit not as a mere process of layering of references, since it sets the real cinematographic problems that the film experiments with: under which conditions can cinematic thought produce novelty in a finite world? How can thought conceptualize its absence within the circle of correlation? What is exteriority when everything that is is necessarily subsumed within an absolute closed system?

"Tu n'as rien vu à Hiroshima" (You saw nothing in Hiroshima) echoes the fundamental epistemological and affective interrogation explored by *Hiroshima Mon Amour,* in which, according to Thomas Kinsella, Eugene Watters and Anthony Glavin, the Resnais and Duras assemblage allows a very rare achievement – "saying the unsayable" (Kinsella, Watters and Glavin, 2012, p. 114). *Hiroshima Mon Amour* tells the story of a French actress who participates in a pacifist film, fifteen years after the bomb, and her lover, a Japanese architect whose family was killed by the bomb. In the first scene of the film, she describes her visit to Hiroshima and what she has seen, while he opposes any attempt to re-present the bomb, to pretend that the traces seen in the present can reflect the unthinkable past, by repeating obstinately, "Tu n'as rien vu à Hiroshima". Everything she saw during her visit of Hiroshima (and that *we* are seeing during this dialogue: the hospital, the museum and the tears of the visitors) distract her/us from the fact that the reality of Hiroshima exhausts any possible attempts at representation.

> He: You saw nothing in Hiroshima. Nothing.
> She: I saw everything. Everything. The hospital, for instance, I saw it. I'm sure I did. There is a hospital in Hiroshima. How could I help seeing it?
> He: You didn't see the hospital in Hiroshima. You saw nothing in Hiroshima.
> (Duras, 1961, pp. 15–16)

The bomb is unknowable, incommensurable and overwhelms the sum of its visible consequences. Nothing of its unthinkability can be experienced in the wounds and ruins that outlast its destructive power. In this echo, *Vous n'Avez Encore Rien Vu*, the French "encore" sounds not as "yet", but as "again" or "once more", not as a repeated incapability to see, but to step out of the circle of correlation and face the fact that we correlate only with a minor part of the real. The echo of this initial dialogue is both a reminder of thought's incapacity to think the unthinkable, of its cloistered situation within the circle of correlation, and of three possible positions taken by thinking subjects confronted by the limit of thought. While "He" claims that the world is constantly in excess of our subjective correlation with it, "She" illustrates a philosophical position that considers correlation as an absolute, implying that everything that is is necessarily correlated, and that correlation is the essence of the world. This is certainly why "She" has the power, as Deleuze comments in *Cinema 2*, to draw her lover into her memories in which they "forget his or her own memory, and make a memory for two, as if memory was now becoming world, detaching itself from their person" (Deleuze, 1989, p. 118).

The title, *You Ain't Seen Nothin' Yet*, echoes also with another filmic memory, Al Jolson's "You ain't heard nothing yet!" and its intuition that sound would revolutionize cinema and that cinema would revolutionize our relation to sound; in other words, the promise that cinema will operate new correlates and reveal a world yet to come. Literarily, in *The Jazz Singer*, "You ain't heard nothin' yet" announces that after having sung *Dirty Hands and Dirty Face*, Al Jolson will sing *Toot Toot Tootsie (Goodbye)* and the other numbers of the film. However, considered almost a century later, this very first synchronized utterance announces also an entire cinematic world yet to come, but folded into this first sound, a sound that will reveal some of the unheard sounds of the universe, from the roar of the dinosaurs to the absolute silence of the intergalactic vacuum. Therefore, the resonance with *The Jazz Singer* turns *Vous n'Avez Encore Rien Vu* towards cinema's ability to correlate in new ways and to produce new correlates. When cinematic bodies, and cinema as a body, gain new faculties (to talk, to see), they change their relations with the world: how they can be affected by it, and how it can affect them. Such a change has been well documented and analysed with the transition from silent to synchronized films. As Jacques Polet explains, in early movie theatres, films required a wide range of persons who were involved in the aural environment of silent film screenings:

> Near the entrance stood the tout, whose enticing patter sometimes seeped in the space of the spectacle. There also was the lecturer, who, standing close to the screen, monitored the interpretation of the images but also the behaviour of an audience little inclined to silence and itself an important source of non-filmic sounds. Not far away, on the other side of the screen, was the pianist, and on occasion the orchestra playing in the pit. Behind the screen, there could be some speakers or singers, and backstage sound effects engineers performed various simulations. (Polet, 2001, p. 193)

With synchronized soundtracks, films changed not only their capacity to re-present the world, but they also changed the world itself. The sound assistants disappeared from the theatres, and the room they left vacant was taken by the standardization of experience. In Polet's terms,

> in the shift from non-fixed to fixed sounds […] a decisive step was taken. The presential, heterogeneous, plurilocalized nature of the former was replaced by the replicative, homogenized, and monolocalized character of the latter, in which the assembly of sources through technical mediation was to have as its logical outcome the unified soundtrack. (Ibid., p. 196)

With their soundtrack, the talkies reterritorialized the distribution of legitimacy (the sound would be, from now on, intrinsic to the film) of both authorship (the possible sound/image assemblages would be an authorial controlled decision) and spectatorship (the etiquette of the film theatre demands silent spectators). In exchange, they explored new territories, silence, for instance, since as Robert Bresson famously stated, "THE SOUNDTRACK INVENTED SILENCE" (as emphasized in Bresson's text (1997, p. 48)).

Resnais's cinematographic problem can therefore be rephrased from this epistemological perspective. We saw nothing with the "live action" films that "consist of unmodified photographic recording of recording of real events that took place in real, physical space" (Manovich, 2001, p. 294) of analogue cinema. Alternatively, to be more precise, we thought that cinema was projecting the world, whereas it was projecting thoughts (Deleuze, 1989, 2006). Cinema never gave us the world to see; what we actually saw was our vision of the world. We thought that the purpose of cinema was to observe facts, while indeed it was

making them.[36] One of the main cinematographic problems of *Vous n'Avez Encore Rien Vu* consists in considering how its complex assemblages (mixed authorship, but blurred objective and subjective positions, affects and affected distribution, analogue and digital images) affect the capacity of films not only to show anything yet unseen – not expanding the realm of our vision – but, more radically, to allow us to see something else than our own vision. *Vous n'Avez Encore Rien Vu*, as a title, is thus a double promise. On the one hand, it promises an attempt to reveal the unseen, through the experimentation of becoming-imperceptible as a possible way to create new thought-world correlates. On the other hand, as a magician who knows her tricks will be unnoticed, the film announces that, once more (the second meaning of "encore"), we will not see what is beyond the visible, not think the unthinkable. We will see that it will increase the circle of correlation in which we are cloistered.

1.3.2 Becoming-imperceptible

Vous n'Avez Encore Rien Vu sets its experiment of becoming-imperceptible from its very first scene. A brief opening credit mentions the producers, some technicians and artistic contributors, but only two actors: Denys Podalydès (D'Anthac) and Andrzej Seweryn (the enigmatic butler who directs the ceremony). The film starts with a phone ringing and a close back profile shot of French actor Lambert Wilson, in a dark environment, occupying the left side of the screen.

- Hello?
- Yes.
- Lambert Wilson?
- Yes, speaking.
- I am calling with unpleasant news.
- What's happened?
- Your friend Antoine d'Anthac has just died.[37]

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[36] I discuss this idea further, from various perspectives in Chapters 3 and 4, pp. 156-9 and pp. 192-3.
[37] My translation:
Allo?
Oui
Lambert Wilson?

The voice continues giving basic information about the death and the meeting in d'Anthac's house. While the voice is still delivering its message, another ringtone sounds and, on the right side of the screen, French actor Pierre Arditi appears on the screen. For a few seconds, both Wilson and Arditi are on-screen. The very same dialogue between Arditi and the voice starts: Allo? – Yes – Pierre Arditi? – Yes, speaking. – I am calling … and the same process repeats fourteen times with the fourteen actors invited to d'Anthac's house. All of them are shot in the same way, and appear on either free side of the screen, obeying the process of identification, having a blurred reflection of themselves occupying the back of the shot while they speak. The first scene sets the strategy of becoming-imperceptible, as described by Potte-Bonneville, through the articulation of utterances and enunciative positions as an irreducible discrepancy between, on the one hand, the lines, the cinematic dispositive that makes the bodies appear, double, reflect themselves and each other, already set in their roles, and, on the other hand, their statement of identity. The film's characters could make theirs Deleuze and Guattari's strategy: keeping their own our names in order to make their names, faces, bodies, blurred reflections, acting and roles distinct poles through which the process of assignation of identity loops at such a speed that no decision can be made and no stable position can be assigned. However, this loop is a variation on the circle of correlation, in which subjects and their reflections, actors and characters, actual and virtual, thought and being are the poles, one positive and the other negative, between which all the processes of subjectification loop. The film's first action consists of submitting all the actors, one after the other, to a process of fictionalization of their "real" identity through which they become imperceptible; the actor and the role loop in an unresolved appearance. This circuit, in which the subjectivity of both the actors and their roles are unassignable, expresses the circle of correlation in which being and thought co-construct each other in a closed world, as becoming.

After this introduction, *Vous n'Avez Encore Rien* focuses further on the possibility of thinking the relativity of exteriority as the factor that triggers novelty within a closed system.

Oui, c'est moi.
Je vous appelle pour vous faire part d'une sombre nouvelle.
Qu'est-ce qu'il s'est passé?
Votre ami Antoine d'Anthac vient de mourir.

The main part of the film develops in the closed space of a single room, located in the closed castle of d'Anthac, itself cut off from the world by a snow storm. In this cloistered environment, Eurydice (as the play, its heroin, the role, the actresses who perform it, but also the myth and, with it, all the possible forms through which it has been actualized and expressed) works as the affect that comes back, that performs its eternal return through all the persons involved in the film, and that is each time both similar and different. When the projection of *Eurydice* starts, the various actors remember their role and start acting again, dubbing, doubling, tripling the lines with various voices, emotions, intentions and effects. The lines of the play can be repeated two, sometimes three times and, sometimes, the actors on the screen engage with actors off-screen rather than with their on-screen partner. Gradually, the action of the play is developed more by the off-screen actors while the interactions with the on-screen actors become less frequent.

One of the specificities of *Vous n'Avez Encore Rien Vu* consists of the fact that it focuses neither on narration (neither on a story nor how a story is narrated) nor on characters (neither their reaction to a situation, nor their "disoriented and discordant movements while taken in processes of becoming" (Deleuze, 1995, p. 59)). The main characters of the film are not Eurydice or Orpheus as myths, nor d'Anthac as a specific character of the film, nor Azéma or Arditi as actors "caught in the act" but the affects that flow through and between them. What we have not seen yet (or what we never saw) is the time of difference as repetition of the embodiment of the same role in different actors. This shows the capacity of cinema to state, as a fact, that the world is common to all of us, finished but offering an unfinished number of connections and arrangements, through unlimited manners of folding. We pass on to the other side of time, from the time of the subject experimenting action or passion, to the time of matter folding singularities, which can appear under the condition of their becoming-imperceptible.

Becoming-imperceptible is not a personal mutation, nor a relation to oneself, but, conversely, it is a mutation in one's relation to the world through a double process of de-individualization and de-subjectification. It defines self-effacement as a process that substitutes singularity as flows and overflows of world materiality, for individuality as the stabilization of the materiality of the world, and subjectivity as a fixed and fixing perspective on the world. After Deleuze in *Immanence: A Life* (2001), becoming-imperceptible is the experience of approaching, as close as possible, life as such or pure immanence, without

disappearing into chaos. This implies experiencing singularity as the expression of a life as opposed to experiencing my individual life, or, in Braidotti's terms, "this is just one life, not *my* life. The life in me does not answer to my name: I is just passing" (Braidotti, 2006, p. 217). Deleuze finds an illustration of such a life in Dickens' *Our Mutual Friend*. In the novel, a man is between life and death and "the life of such individuality fades away in favour of the singular life immanent to a man who no longer has a name, though he can be mistaken for no other. A singular essence, a life…" (Deleuze, 2001, p. 29). Becoming-imperceptible aims to find this point of articulation at which subjects withdraw and their constituents are free to enter into circuits that trigger processes in which identity (the repetition of the same) becomes singularity (difference). It implies discovering this point of continuous disequilibrium that protects us from both lingering as stable subjects and of vanishing in the chaotic flow of life and destruction. From this point only can we experiment with our position as a unique, moving fold of all the matter of the world, as a singularity that allows the matter that shapes it to flow.

This vitalist perspective that *Vous n'Avez Encore Rien Vu* endorses in its cinematic way is an example of what Meillassoux considers as a hypostatization of thought. Correlates are the singular, relative expressions of an absolute correlation, qua A Life, understood as the flow of matter and affects that subsumes the real as the whole, i.e. the becoming in which everything that is both emerges from and participates in. From such a perspective, the exterior is considered as the flows of affect and matter that constitute the whole and trigger its development through their interactions. Novelty is the infinite number [38] of their composition.

Vous n'Avez Encore Rien Vu is, therefore, a machine that performs and observes both the creation of singularities from the flows of affects and matter and the release of these flows. Such a process is particularly observable in scenes when the characters of *Eurydice* are played in a choral way, and performers liberate common affects that flow through them, as for instance, in the scene during which Eurydice breaks up with Mathias, her former lover, just after having met Orpheus. The following table shows the flows of affects that develop through the various singularities engaged in the scene, streaming vertically (either from the

[38] For a discussion of the possibility to think the infinite within a finite set from Deleuzian and Meillassouxian perspectives, cf. pp. 202-3.

actors performing on-screen to the actors of the audience in the room of the castle or from the audience to the screen) or horizontally (from an actor in the room to another one, for instance). To make the reading of the table easier: Vimala Pons plays on-screen Eurydice, Anne Consigny and Sabine Azéma play off-screen Eurydice, Mathias is played on-screen by Vladimir Consigny and off-screen by Jean-Noël Brouté.

Table 1: Affects that develop through the various singularities engaged in the scene during which Eurydice breaks up with Mathias.

Role	Actor/actress	Line	Shot
Eurydice	Vimala Pons Vladimir Consigny	Come in, Mathias. You saw me? I kissed him. I love him.	Screen (Eurydice and Mathias) She gazes towards the camera and talks to the audience.
		What can I do?	Room (sitting in his chair), talking to the screen.
Mathias	Jean-Noël Brouté	Who is he?	
Eurydice	Vimala Pons	I don’t know.	Screen, as talking to the audience.
Mathias	Jean-Noël Brouté	You are mad.	Room (sitting in his chair).
Eurydice	Anne Consigny	Yes, I am mad.	Room (sitting in her chair) as talking to the screen.
Mathias	Vladimir Consigny	You’ve fled from me for a week.	Screen, as talking to the audience.

Eurydice	Anne Consigny	Yes, I've fled from you all week, yes.	Room (sitting in her chair) as talking to the screen.
Eurydice	Vimala Pons	But I only met him an hour ago.	Screen, as talking to the audience.
Mathias	Jean-Noël Brouté	What are you telling me?	Room (sitting in his chair) as talking to the screen.
Eurydice	Anne Consigny		Room (she turns towards Brouté, behind her; on the screen we can see Pons blurred).
Eurydice	Vimala Pons	You know it, Mathias.	
Eurydice	Anne Consigny	You know it, Mathias.	
Mathias	Jean-Noël Brouté	Eurydice, you know I can't live without you.	Room, in his chair as talking to A. Consigny in the room.
Eurydice	Anne Consigny Vimala Pons (synchronized)	I know, Mathias.	Room, A. Consigny looks at Brouté. Behind her, on the screen, blurred Vladimir. Consigny.
Eurydice	Vilama Pons	I love him.	
Eurydice	Anne Consigny	I love him.	
Mathias	Jean-Noël Brouté	I'd rather die than carry on without you.	Room, in his chair as talking to A. Consigny. in the room

Eurydice	Anne Consigny Vimala Pons (slightly unsynchronized)	I love him, Mathias.	Room, A. Consigny looks at Brouté. Behind her, on the screen, blurred Pons.
Mathias	Jean-Noël Brouté	Stop saying that!	Room, in his chair as talking to A. Consigny.
Eurydice	Anne Consigny Vimala Pons (slightly unsynchronized)	I love him.	Room, A. Consigny looks at Brouté. Behind her, on the screen, blurred Pons.
Mathias	Jean-Noël Brouté	Enough.	Room, he stands up.
Mathias	Jean-Noël Brouté	Leave me.	Room, A. Consigny looks at Brouté. Behind her, on the screen, blurred Vladimir Consigny leaves.
			Room, Brouté runs towards a door that opens on a train station platform.
Eurydice	Sabine Azéma	Mathias!	Room, as from the door, she runs towards the platform. Behind her, the projection room with Pons on the screen and A.

		Try to understand, I'm fond of you but I love him.	Consigny and Brouté sitting on their chairs. When she arrives in a medium-shot position in front of the camera, Amalric passes behind her. The camera follows him, he leaves the projection room and arrives on the train platform.
Eurydice	Anne Consigny	Same lines as in the previous shot.	Same shot as previous with interchange of Azéma and A. Consigny.

The focus of the above-discussed scene is not the subjective development of the characters, nor is it their actions or their becomings. Instead, it is the embodiment of affects that make the five actors involved as singularities. They express difference itself, variation of matter and speed, of the intensity to which these affects are shaping them and to which they release these affects back to the world. They are not various propositions on Eurydice, various possible instances of Eurydice, but the very articulation of Eurydice as a virtual in singular compossible actualizations. Hence the reference to *Nosferatu* through the intertitle, and its logic of vampiristic contagion of affects, as opposed to the filiation as organization of social identities and reproduction of the same. Deleuze and Guattari claim that "the vampire does not filiate, it infects" (1995, p. 266), and this is such an infection that is at stake in both the vertical and horizontal flows of affects that the film experiments with. *Vous n'Avez Encore Rien Vu* focuses on the eternal return of Eurydice, not just Anouilh's Eurydice, but of Eurydice as a storm of affects which flows through the history of humanity and that cannot

actualize and stabilize itself in, nor as, a human body. Eurydice is always in excess of her embodiment, always yet to appear, since, as Michel Foucault states, she "only shows the promise of a face" (1987, p. 43) in order not to be sent back to the realm of the dead. Indeed, Eurydice exhausts all attempts of representation since the affects that she carries through centuries are those of an impossible contact that links us with the invisible and the unthinkable. She who comes back from death has to stay unseen, and Orpheus keeps her as long as he does not look at her. Such is the link with the unthought that is lost, as such, through the process of thought. *Vous n'Avez Encore Rien Vu* works as a machine that keeps Eurydice unseen, exterior and out of thought, ungraspable by and inassimilable to any interiority. By multiplying Eurydice, the film multiplies with her, all the characters, *as* the very experience of the film, and they all have the same "war cry": give me bodies, not a single body that could stabilize me as a subject in and of the world, but give me bodies, various bodies through which all the affects we have been storming across ages can express themselves. And give me bodies that exhaust my affects and give them back to the world and multiply them even further through the cinematic process. Give me bodies, let me correlate again and forever, for the sake of correlation. Thus, the film assigns various statuses to the actors (famous actors credited as themselves, or as fictional characters, young emerging actors of the screened play) and positions (on- and off-screen) in an experiment that accelerates processes in which language and thought are multiplied. It generalizes this "thought from outside" that, according to Foucault, becomes when what is at stake

> is no longer discourse and the communication of meaning, but a spreading forth of language in its raw state, an unfolding of pure exteriority. And the subject that speaks is less the responsible agent of a discourse […] than a non-existence in whose emptiness the unending outpouring of language uninterruptedly continues. (Ibid., p. 11)

Hence, the experiment with the multiplication of the modes of imperceptibility of the actors (famous actors in the room of the castle who lose their self by acting it, young actors on-screen, who disappear in their roles, all becoming-other in their practice) seeks to make the flow of language unassignable. Furthermore, the multiplication of actors make impossible the assimilation of the singular expression of an affect to a thinking and speaking individual agent. This is a cinema in which,

> there are no more subjects but dynamic individuations without subjects, which constitute collective assemblages. Nothing develops, but things arrive late or in advance, and enter into some assemblage according to their compositions of speed. Nothing becomes subjective but hacceities take shape according to the compositions of non-subjective powers and effects. (Deleuze and Parnet, 2007, p. 93)

Finally, the fluid contagion of affects in a rhizomatic logic, which links together any point of the diegetic screen with the space of the diegetic audience (and potentially with the extradiegetic screen and audience), breaks the vision of cinema as a projection that stabilizes and hierarchizes space and reinforces the world/subject opposition. Space is not the depth in which subjects recognize and assume perspectives that pre-exist (i.e. in which world and subjects appear as having been, and being correlated) but the intensive surface on which entities emerge (i.e. becoming as the process of correlation itself).

By substituting a cinema of singularities for a cinema of identities, by exteriorizing the narrative and focusing on the embodiment of affects, by articulating the actor and spectator positions and by offering a space in which consciousness and world are not distinct, *Vous n'Avez Encore Rien Vu* experiments with a situation in which no actor/spectator as well as no possible stable seeing/being seen (op)positions can be sustained. The film demonstrates that there is neither a safe "outside" position in a world where we see "not those objects that fill space, but the continuum of space itself" (Brown, 2013, p. 50), not a world that could be observed from a safe distance, nor actors who could be observed by spectators.

Such a perspective endorses and gives a cinematographic translation of the absolutization of the circle of correlation. *Vous n'Avez Encore Rien Vu* suggests that thought cannot think its absence – since the absence of thought is the unthinkable – and that any exteriority is necessarily relative, and must be understood as a difference that expresses itself within the closed expansive whole. Exteriority appears as the affects that perform their eternal return (qua repetition) by haunting and possessing us, and create novelty (qua difference) in the specific and always renewed ways in which they link and shape the singularities that emerge as events. Correlates are thus relative, while correlation itself, as the plane on which correlates emerge, is absolute.

1.4 Conclusion: Post-human realism and subjectalism

Indeed, before *Enter the Void* and *Vous n'Avez Encore Rien Vu*, we had not seen anything. Or had we? If so, what have we, eventually, been able to see?

In spite of their many differences, both films discussed in this section engaged in the exploration of filmic consciousness, exploring their ability to think, cinematographically, their own absence. I discussed both films as cinematic devices that operate by building up an assemblage of consciousness, a prosthetic consciousness that allows us to observe a reality that each separate consciousness cannot access on its own. The films do not stop with the death of the main character,[39] or when it starts with this death, it does not just use death as the final point from which the voice of the dead can narrate, in a flashback, life before death (*Sunset Boulevard,* Billy Wilder, USA, 1950), in a system in which death is unthinkable (a dead man floating in a swimming pool narrates what he was when non-dead). Both *Enter the Void* and *Vous n'Avez Encore Rien Vu* set the condition for, and explore the reality of, continuity as the thinkable (the incess) of the unthinkable (the excess) of their main characters' absence. Both films consider that since we cannot think the absence of our thought, then we must be able to think the continuity of our presence as that which fills our absence. This is what Meillassoux describes as one of the main characteristics of the circle of correlation: the fact that the very condition of the existence of the world as we experience it involves our participation in its emergence. Such a perspective has two possible consequences. On the one hand, in order to be part of this emerging world, each entity, in order to exist, is not only correlated but also correlates. Therefore, correlation is the absolute, and being must be considered as a verb (synonym of to correlate) rather than as a noun (a correlate). Consciousness is thus a process. Everything that is therefore shares a common capacity to correlate. Since nothing can exist without being a correlate correlating, the absence of correlation is impossible and thought cannot think its own absence. On the other hand, if consciousness, as a process, is the necessary condition of being of every entity, a cinema that could document and reveal, or at least represent these processes, could be considered realist, no matter how its representation of the world would differ from our daily, human, embodied experience. From this perspective, a non-anthropocentric post-

[39] Nor does the film continue *in spite of* their death, claiming that its continuity, actually, is driven by a strength other than the protagonist's subjectivity, as in *Psycho (Alfred Hitchcock, USA, 1960)* or *Game of Thrones (David Benioff, D.B. Weiss, USA/UK, 2001-)*, for instance.

cinematographic thought consists in developing new ways of correlating with the world, of expanding correlation to levels that challenge our singular position, through the production of cinematic assemblages. This is a cinematic thought that finds the absolute in its ability to correlate with the world – as a consciousness among consciousness – and in the definition of the world as the network that their correlation wave. This is, for instance, from such a paradigm that which Brown and Fleming (2015) refer to when discussing *Enter the Void*.

The interest of engaging with Meillassoux in this discussion relates to assessing the possibility to develop a realist and non-anthropocentric view, from a subjectalist perspective. The first section of this chapter discussed the Ptolemaic counter-revolution performed by such a position, and the discussion of both films tried to give evidence of how the exploration of the circle of correlation induces structures that are fundamentally closed and centred as well as affects that are fundamentally cloistering and centring. In order to conclude, it is important to highlight how Meillassoux's concepts are helpful when discussing realism and anthropocentrism. In *After Finitude*, Meillassoux defines realism as "claiming to think what there is when one is not" (2008a, p. 55). This formulation, both admirably simple and powerful, defines both realism and correlationism since it highlights that any attempt to think, conversely, what there is when one is is excluded from the field of realism and included in the paradigm of correlation. Indeed, the broad correlationist paradigm, according to which the presence of a thinking subjectivity is the very condition of the emergence of the real, can only describe this real as relative to the conditions of its emergence. However, such a paradigm, in order to eschew idealism (the paradigm that states that thought cannot think an in-itself that differs from the phenomenon, in other words that does not consider the possibility of a world independent from consciousness), must infer the reality of a world in-itself, more or less accessible to consciousness, but, nevertheless, necessarily existing independently of it. Meillassoux therefore draws a clear line between realism that states that the world without us exists and that makes it its field of study, and correlationism that also states the existence of the world without us, but focuses on the world with us. From this perspective, no correlationism can be a form of realism, unless claiming that the world with us and for us is the world itself. Such a statement makes our presence the central condition of the existence of the real, while realism makes our absence its central condition. It is thus difficult to argue that correlationism can be a realism, and even more that it can be non-anthropocentric, since it places the very presence of humans as the central condition of the

emergence of the real; any variant of correlationism is, by definition, the study *by us*, of the world *with us*, the only thinkable *for us*.

However, *Enter the Void* and, perhaps to a lesser extent, *Vous n'Avez Encore Rien Vu* claim a certain realism, by setting experiments in which processes or entities that were unseen can be observed. *Enter the Void* creates a complex device that makes visible the continuity of processes of subjectivation, while *Vous n'Avez Encore Rien Vu* reveals the processes of subjective contagion and possession through which affects develop and renew themselves. But should we grant these images the power not to "show us objects, but more pointedly that which exists between these objects, that from which all objects and matter are woven – namely the void itself" (Brown and Fleming, 2015, p. 137)? Or, conversely, that while the film does not "show" anything, we see in it the void for us that we fill with ourselves? Obviously, when making digital images, we transform the world as matter, into lines of code, digits, thought and replace it with an idealist dream in which consciousness has deterritorialized any other possible form of being. Post-cinema's realism can thus no longer be defined in the sense of Bazin's realism, or Sobchack's film phenomenology, as the correlation between two viewing viewers, adjusting their subjectivity in a common experience of the world, but should be defined as the correlation of two processing processors that, by transforming everything into thought, dematerialize all the matter of the world.

> In digital cinema […] there is no such thing as a still image, no punctual moment. There is only a consistent process of becoming (and unbecoming) based on the binary sequencing of zeros and ones that creates a constant relay of appearing and vanishing, of presence and absence. (Bryant and Pollock, 2010, p. 8)

By hypostatizing the processes of becoming and unbecoming, by making the emergence of any image a process, by withdrawing the materiality of the world from the world, we deprive the world of its ability to resist our desires. While an analogue image was still an object of and in the world, while its very indexical nature was witnessing matter reminding light affected by matter, digital images are images only for us. As Lev Manovich claims, "for a computer, a film is an abstract arrangement of colours changing in time" (2001, p. 302), and the objects and the process that the audience follow as characters, narratives and cuts are skeuomorphic. They offer a reconstruction of the world in which the world represented is absent; not only a world for us, but a world for us only.

In *Post-Cinematic Affect*, Shaviro argues that these digital images participate in the larger social and political context from which they emerge. From this perspective, these images could be understood as realistic not for showing absolute truth about the processes that make the world, but for documenting the making of such a world and exhibiting the processes at work.

> Just as the old Hollywood continuity editing system was an integral part of the Fordist mode of production, so the editing methods and formal devices of digital video and film belong directly to the computing-and-information-technology infrastructure of contemporary media finance. There's a kind of fractal patterning in the way that social technologies, or processes of production and accumulation, repeat or "iterate" themselves on different scales, and at different levels of abstraction. (Shaviro, 2010, p. 3)

Films like *Enter the Void* and *Vous n'Avez Encore Rien Vu* could, thus, be read as political as much as ontological essays. Their celebration of fluid flows of energy and consciousness, made possible by digitalization, can perhaps be understood as the quite naturalistic depiction of the transnational flows of capital that shape the conditions of their emergence, distribution, marketing and audience. In this sense, their celebration of the circle of correlation as a closed world of which we are the centre, out of which we cannot step, to which even death cannot put a term and that we cannot challenge because there is no alternative, could be a variation of the famous formula stating that "it is easier to think the end of the earth than the end of capitalism", quoted by Fredric Jameson (2003), Mark Fisher (2009) and paraphrased by Slavoj Žižek in *Žižek*! (Ashra Taylor, USA/Canada, 2005).

However, such a reading suggests that the realism of such films does not address an absolute condition of being, but is a fact, i.e. something that was made, which is the point discussed in the next chapter.

Chapter 2: The facticity of correlation

In the previous chapter, I focused on the impossibility for cinematic thought to consider and think the world as it is when there is no thought, its incapacity to step out of what Meillassoux describes as the circle of correlation. However, does this imply that cinematic thought considers that the correlation between world and thought is absolute and necessary? Can cinema think that facticity of correlation, i.e. the fact that correlation is a mere fact, is contingent and non-necessary? This chapter, the second half of the first part about film, thought and correlation, takes further the exploration of what post-cinematic thought can do. It considers how films can, from within the circle of correlation, question the facticity of correlation, or the fact that correlation itself is contingent, i.e. it could not exist or take forms that are completely other. In the first theoretical part, I discuss how Meillassoux conceptualizes facticity and contrast his concept of facticity with the existentialist framework from which the concept emerged. Furthermore, I distinguish, from the perspective of Meillassoux, facticity from contingency, and establish the relevance of this distinction for film studies. I argue that while contingency deals with an excess of actualization, facticity deals with an excess of the virtual. I then turn to Deleuze and Guattari to theorize how some forms of becoming express such excesses of virtual, and define "bodies of becoming" as the constructions through which such becomings are made possible. I then discuss two films that resonate strongly with these issues. In the second section, I analyse *Les Garçons et Guillaume, à Table!*, an autobiography in which Guillaume develops as a multiplicity of modes of emerging in and as the world. I discuss how, by putting the issue of the facticity of his identity at the centre of the film, Guillaume reveals the facticity of time, space and causality. The last section discusses briefly *Ne Te Retourne Pas*, the issues of the reflexivity of digital camera and the world and human correlation. I finally address the questions of morphing in relation to the facticity of images.

2.1 Film, facticity and bodies

2.1.1 Facticity and existentialism

When engaging with facticity, Meillassoux revisits a concept that has a long lineage. The modern use of the concept[40] originates with the post-Kantian philosopher Johann Gottlieb Fichte – to whom Meillassoux refers when establishing his own definition of the concept – but has been central in the philosophy of Husserl, Heidegger, Sartre and Jean-Luc Nancy. Obviously, mapping facticity from Fichte to Nancy, from phenomenology to existentialism and post-structuralism is beyond the scope of this project.[41] In a few words, facticity is a term that has mainly been used to describe the fact that we, as conscious subjects for whom being is a problem, are "thrown in the world" (Heidegger's "Geworfen" and "Dasein", or Sartre's "existence") with characteristics that we could not choose, that we were given, such as our DNA, social background or sex assignment. These are arbitrary facts and our freedom results from our acknowledgment of their facticity. Such an idea is epitomized in Sartre's famous formula "existence precedes essence" (Sartre, 2007), which claims that in a world in which no reason – either God or any other form of destiny – grounds our facticity, we exist before having a purpose. Freedom – i.e. the ability and necessity to make choices – is, therefore, the main necessity that we have to face as living subjects.

In film studies, facticity has been used mostly in explorations of the work of specific existentialist philosophers and film (Boulé and MCaffrey, 2011; Boulé and Tidd, 2012; Shaw, 2017). A particularly interesting example of such an approach can be found in the anthology *Existentialism and Contemporary Cinema, A Beauvoirian Perspective* (Boulé and Tidd, 2012) which engages in a dialogue between the philosophy of Simone de Beauvoir and film studies. Facticity is defined in the chapter "Revolutionary Road and the Second Sex" (Mui and Murphy, 2012, pp. 67–80) as the inessential given past:

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[40] Specifically, this concept comes from an older tradition. In *The Passion of Facticity* (2008) – in which Giorgio Agamben examines facticity in relation to Dasein in Martin Heidegger's *Being and Time* (1996) – he argues that the origin of Heidegger's use of the concept is to be found in Augustine and he describes the soul as factus (made by God) as opposed to natus (generated by Nature).

[41] For precise analysis of the history of the concept of facticity, see Francois Rassoul and Eric Nelson's anthology *Rethinking Facticity* (2008).

> As such, the person exists by incorporating the past as facticity only to transcend it toward the future as possibility. To be human is to exist as a struggle, a dialectical stretching-out between the essential (i.e. one's freedom) and the inessential (i.e. one's facticity, such as women's restrictive role). (Ibid., p. 69)

This perspective allows us to explore interesting aspects of film narratives and to address ethical questions with which films engage, as exemplified by Stephen Bradley's chapter "How Am I Not Myself? Engaging Ambiguity in David O'Russell's I ♥ Huckabees" (Bradley, 2012, pp. 109–122). However, "Existentialism is a Humanism", as Sartre famously claims, and such a conceptualization of facticity restricts its scope to, or at least focuses it on, human existence. Conversely, Meillassoux extends the discussion of facticity to any entity and, as discussed in the following chapters, to any process of the world, including correlation itself. Such a conceptualization allows us to address the complexity of the world, film and human relations.

2.1.2 Meillassoux, contingency and facticity

In *After Finitude*, Meillassoux makes a distinction between the concepts of contingency and facticity based on their epistemological potential. While both concepts are concerned with the possibility of the being-otherwise of beings and events, he suggests distinguishing them based on their capacity or inability to offer positive knowledge about the world.

Contingency concerns either processes or beings which we know can be different from what they are, and even not exist. We know that every object could be different and that every event could not happen, or happen differently, and we know that we could be what we are not, or not be at all, which allows us to describe the world as it is, as it is not, and speculate about what it could, should and would be. We know that the real subsumes both the actual and the virtual and that the actual is only one possible actualization of the virtual. From its very origin, cinema has been fascinated with the exploration of contingency,[42] to such an extent that Mary Ann Doane, in *The Emergence of Cinematic Time* (2002), argues that "the

[42] Obviously, literature, oral and written, explored contingency long before cinema. *The Epic of Gilgamesh* could perhaps be considered one of the first written traces of human's description of the world as it is and as it could be, or what Mihai Spariosu describes as an "Exilic-Utopian Imagination" (Spariosu, 2015). However, cinema has a unique ability to document the facticity of the world, in a way that includes contingent movements (cf. Doane further in this paragraph).

camera's function for Meliès was, in a sense, like that of Lumière – to register contingency, to transform it into a representational system while maintaining both its threat and its failure" (p. 138). She argues that both Lumière and Meliès captured the "instability and unpredictability of the phenomenological world" (ibid., p. 135), albeit through very distinct technical means. On the one hand, the Lumière achieved this by using long shots in which contingency revealed itself as the chronicle of the becoming of the world, as the "capacity to record the singular and the opacity of the 'thisness' captured and represented by the machine" (Doane, 2002, p. 65). Doane argues that *Barque Sortant du Port/A Boat Leaving Harbour* (Louis and Auguste Lumière, 1897), in which a sudden wave disrupts the ongoing process in which rowers are engaged, illustrates film's ability to register random and unexpected events. On the other hand, Meliès's special effects achieved by cut or "invisible editing" (ibid., p. 134) develop an aesthetics "of implausibility, of impossible things happening in a world in which impossibility is the norm" (ibid.) in which the filmic processes challenge the identity of some of the entities they engage with. In both cases, films catch the act of facticity at work in the world/camera assemblage, and reveal it as "out there" and documented, or "within" and mechanically (re-)produced.

Films can also engage with contingency at the level of their narrative in a perhaps reflexive and speculative way. *It's a Wonderful Life* (Frank Capra, USA, 1946), *Lola Rennt/Run Lola Run (*Tom Twyker, Germany, 1998) or *Smoking/No Smoking* (Alain Resnais, France, 1993) are some examples among many films that reaffirm that every object or process that emerges *in* the world and *as* the world could be different from what they are, and, subsequently, that the world would be altered by this very difference. For example, *It's a Wonderful Life* famously contrasts the town of Bedford Falls and its community as it developed in the presence of one of its humble members, George Bailey (James Stewart), and how it would have become a different – and dramatically worse – place if he had not been born. Such narratives play not only with the contingency of the entities themselves (the possibility that Bailey could not have been born), but also with the processes and events in which they are involved. As another example, *Lola Rennt* is constructed as the paralleling of three different versions of the same story, which all end differently depending on the way Lola, the main character, performs the same mission, and in which various side characters are also affected by the differences in her performance. This ability of cinema to explore contingency, understood as the way difference itself creates new, alternative states of the world and the modalities that regulate their coexistence, has been widely studied. In *Deleuze, Cinema and*

National Identity (2008), David Martin-Jones focuses on films from the turn of the millennium that address, and sometimes challenge, the creation of national identity through the construction or deconstruction of a "binary 'right' and 'wrong' view of time" (Martin-Jones, 2008, p. 4). He analyses various strategies, drawn from Deleuzian concepts – processes of deterritorialization, reterritorialization and falsification – through which these films develop by multiplying and contrasting their narratives, drawing sometimes sharp, sometimes blurred boundaries between the actual and the virtual. In *Supercinema* (2013), Brown, also from a Deleuzian perspective, argues that digital films can develop a "supercinematic logic […] in which repeatedly we cannot tell the virtual from the actual" (Brown, 2013, p. 118). He comments on films in which the narrative develops parallel worlds that are shown as equally real in the *Back to the Future* series (Robert Zemeckis, USA, 1985, 1989 and 1990), coexisting in *The Matrix: Reloaded* (Lana Wachowski, Lilly Wachowski, USA/Australia, 2003) or even communicating in *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind* (Michel Gondry, USA, 2004). Once more, these films and the discussions they trigger explore what Meillassoux calls contingency, qua the difference that gives us a positive knowledge about the world. They reaffirm that we know that some elements of the world could be different, and that their difference could affect the world.

Facticity, for Meillassoux, is a concept distinct from contingency, and I will now examine its specificity philosophically, before exploring its possible relevance for film studies. Meillassoux establishes that facticity refers to processes and entities whose being-otherwise can be speculated, but that do not provide any positive knowledge about the world as we know it. He explains that while contingency reveals to us the infinite possible variations that the world can experience, we face with facticity "those structural invariants that supposedly govern the world […] whose function in every case is to provide the minimal organization of representation: principle of causality, forms of perception, logical laws, etc." (Meillassoux, 2008, p. 39). The stability of these structures means either that we can never experience their variation, or that we cannot even think their modification. From the strict perspective of the laws of logic, for instance, we cannot rationally challenge the principle of non-contradiction and consider a being that would be contradictory, at the same time and in the same sense as A and non-A, or not self-identical.

However, Meillassoux emphasizes that these structures and laws are mere facts since they can be described, but not deducted, which means they are not the necessary consequence of

a more or less inaccessible higher reason. For instance, while the law of general relativity allows us to explain such phenomena as gravity and time dilatation, the facticity of the general law and of its consequences "reveals itself with the realization that they can only be described, not founded" (ibid.). In other words, Meillassoux describes the facticity of the world correlated to our access to it as the consequence of our incapacity to establish whether both the world itself and our access to it could be different or not. He summarizes this in a stunning[43] formula: "If contingency consists in knowing that worldly things could be otherwise, facticity just consists in not knowing why the correlational structure has to be thus" (ibid.).

Meillassoux highlights that facticity confronts us with a double ignorance. On the one hand, we cannot deduce the necessity of the invariants that regulate the givenness of the world, which implies that establishing them as absolute is impossible. On the other hand, we cannot experience the contingency of these invariants, and the very expression of a "contingent invariant" might sound like an oxymoron. Meillassoux therefore defines facticity as "the lack of reason of any reality: that is the impossibility of giving an ultimate ground to the existence of any being" (Brassier et al., 2007, p. 428). It is important to highlight that this definition focuses on facticity as a concept related to epistemology rather than ontology,[44] which he emphasizes in *After Finitude* when defining facticity as "thought's inability to uncover the reason why what is, is" (Meillassoux, 2008a, p. 52). We are thus in a paradoxical situation, both locked in the circle of correlation (we cannot experience nor think the world from outside the finitude of our embodied perceptions and of our thought) and contemplating the facticity of correlation (unable to dismiss the possibility that the world could be radically different from our thought and experience of it).

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[43] Formally stunning in the original French text, at least: "Si la contingence est le savoir du pouvoir-être-autre de la chose mondaine, la facticité est seulement l'ignorance du devoir-être-ainsi de la structure corrélationnelle" (Meillassoux, 2006, p. 54). Ray Brassier's excellent translation focuses on the argumentative beauty of Meillassoux's formula, but does not emphasize the formal beauty of its expression.

[44] As developed in the next two chapters focusing on hyperchaos, Meillassoux develops his most original ideas when demonstrating that facticity is also ontological. He calls "factiality" the idea that facticity itself is a fact and that it is possible to think its absence and, thus, the absence of any possible being. From this, he draws that contingency itself is an absolute that we can think from within the circle of correlation.

2.1.3 Facticity and film images

With this in mind, it is time now to consider to what extent cinema has the ability to explore facticity as it explores contingency and, thereafter, to unpack carefully the difference that cinematic thought can establish between both concepts. First this will necessitate discussing André Bazin's notion of "image fact" before considering how Deleuze's idea of "the unbearable" resonates with and extends Bazin's description of the relation between facticity and the film image.

2.1.3.1 Bazin, the shot and the image fact

In *An Aesthetics of Reality: Neorealism* (2005), Bazin famously advocates a cinematic practice oriented towards "facts", rather than towards "shots", two terms that take, in this context, a very specific, philosophical meaning. For Bazin, what is at stake in these two regimes of cinematic images is to question whether the meaning of a moving image is anterior or posterior to its visibility. In other words, it is important to determine when the reality of the world is enclosed in an image or, conversely, when reality is in excess of an image. He therefore defines "shots" as moving images built for a specific purpose, whose meaning pre-exist their emergence. Bazin gives a clear and simple example of shots in what he refers to as classical editing:

> A man locked in a cell is waiting for the arrival of his executioner. His anguished eyes are on the door. At the moment the executioner is about to enter we can be quite sure that the director will cut to a close shot of the door handle as it slowly turns. (Bazin, 2005, p. 27)

Shots constitute "a series of either logical or subjective points of view on an event" (ibid.) and they have univocal meanings and roles. Each shot is thus determined, in its essence and in its shape, from a reason that precedes its emergence in the world, and as part of the world.

Conversely, Bazin describes an "image fact" as a "fragment of concrete reality[45] in itself multiple and full of ambiguity, whose meaning emerges only after the fact, thanks to other imposed facts between which the mind establishes certain relationships" (Bazin, 2005, p. 37). When revealing that there is no reason behind or beyond the emergence of the world in and as the frame, cinema reflects and reflects on the facticity of both the world and of the cinematic image. The image fact is therefore an image that repeats, on the one hand, that we cannot know why the world is here, why we correlate, why everything that is has to be thus, and, on the other hand, that we, as spectators, are engaged in actually *making* sense, a sense that does not pre-exist our viewing. Sense is not rooted in the very essence of the entities, in their very presence as thought and world correlate, but has to be made after their emergence, by an external viewing subject – i.e. independently from the ontological conditions of their emergence.[46] Image facts are not necessary; they are pure emerging material that can meet – or not – a meaning or, in other words, that can be correlated or not, interlinked or not.

Bazin illustrates how the logical, narrative and causal links are external to the image facts when analysing how *Ladri di Biciclette*/*Bicycle Thieves* (Vittorio De Sica, Italy, 1948) unfolds "on the level of pure accident: the rain, the seminarians, the Catholic Quakers, the restaurant – all these are seemingly interchangeable, no one seems to have arranged them in order on a dramatic spectrum" (Bazin, 2005, p. 59). Not only are entities factual, but their relations are too: the events, their temporal succession, and establishing their chronological sense falls to the viewer, not to the film itself. They are mere facts that can be incorporated, or not, in a network of meaning constructed by the activity of the viewer. However, image facts are in excess of the film/world/viewer relation since they confront spectators with images that are a priori, both unnecessary and meaningless, and caught in a process of sense-making that does not exhaust the potential of their presence.

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[45] The translation of this fundamental sentence might be ambiguous. In the French text, Bazin writes, "Fragment de réalité brute, en lui-même multiple et equivoque" (Bazin, 1962 p. 32) in which the itself (en lui-même) refers unambiguously to "fragment", both because of the comma, and of the fact that whereas réalité is feminine, both "fragment" and "lui-même" are masculine. The translators chose not to put a comma before "in itself", which might lead some readers to infer that it could refer to "reality". Bazin has such an unmerited reputation for being a naïve realist that every single comma might be fundamental. For fascinating discussions of Bazin's realism, see Morgan (2006) and Rushton (2011).

[46] This challenges the Sartrean opposition between humans and artefacts, according to which objects are made for a specific purpose and have an essence that precedes their existence. While Sartre's humanism considers facticity as a boundary between human and non-human, Bazin blurs this line.

2.1.3.2 Deleuze, the cliché and the grasp of the unbearable

This excess rooted within the fact image resonates strongly with Deleuze's notion of the "unbearable". However, while Bazin locates the facticity of the film image in the excess of real actualized by the image, Deleuze locates it in the inexhaustible virtual, always in excess of what an image can actualize. Deleuze suggests an opposition that can be compared and contrasted with the Bazinian shot/image fact in the beginning of *Cinema 2* where, in order to distinguish movement-images from time-images, he places "the cliché" in opposition to "the unbearable". He defines the cliché as "a sensory-motor image of the thing" (Deleuze, 1989, p. 20). Clichés are artefacts that allow the emergence of entities, their development and interaction in agreement with the laws of our human mode of construction and prehension of space, time and logic. In our mundane, everyday life, we perceive, reflect and reflect on the world through clichés, through our sensory-motor apparatus and filters.

However, Deleuze, drawing on Bergson, argues that images (i.e. things in themselves (ibid.)) are always more complex than what humans can correlate with and experience as clichés. Not only are clichés limited encounters with the itself, but they are challenged, from outside, by the imperceptible excess of the itself.

> On the one hand, the image constantly sinks to the state of cliché: because it is introduced into sensory-motor linkages, because it itself organizes or induces these linkages, because we never perceive everything that is in the image, because it is made for that purpose […] On the other hand, at the same time, the image constantly attempts to break through the cliché. (Deleuze, 1989, p. 21)

The world of clichés constitutes the reality experienced through our "automatic pilot" mode, the world in which time flows as a linear stream coming from the past and rushing towards the future, the world in which each thing finds its origin in a cause, and each movement has a consequence, and is empowered as well as limited by our embodied experience. However, on some rare occasions (Deleuze claims that this happens when we lose our sensory-motor capacity, as for instance when sitting in a movie theatre, facing a screen), we sense that there is more than the cliché, more than what we can see, feel and think. Deleuze describes this excess as "unbearable", which we meet when facing purely optical and sound situations.

> A purely optical and sound situation does not extend into action, any more than it is induced by an action. It makes us grasp, it is supposed to make us grasp, something intolerable and unbearable […] It is something too powerful, or too unjust, but sometimes also too beautiful, and which henceforth outstrips[47] our sensory-motor capacities. (Deleuze, 1989, p. 18)

The unbearable therefore reveals, on the one hand, the facticity of the sensory-motor world by demonstrating that the modes that regulate the emergence of such a world are not necessary. In other words, and remembering Bazin's fact images, the emergence of the world is in excess of any reason, and the selections, linkages, modes of organization of entities and events are nothing more than human modes of being in the world. On the other hand, the *intolerable, unbearable, unthinkable* are expressions of the finitude of thought, i.e. its incapacity to step outside the circle of correlation, when facing the facticity of the world, i.e. its excessive unreason, and the part of the itself that we cannot access from the circle of correlation.

This very unbearable, however, allows films to think, and spectators to think with films. When Deleuze argues with J. M. G. Le Clézio (ibid.) that cinema allows us to move from a perspective of clichés based on "reconnaissance (recognition)" to a perspective of pure optical and sound situations that allows "connaissance (knowledge)" (ibid.), he obviously does not mean that cinema can give us access to an absolute knowledge of the itself. Conversely, the passage from *reconnaissance* to *connaissance* implies that cinema can think, i.e. manage operations based not only on repetition but also on difference. Thanks to this capacity to produce difference by revealing the presence of the unbearable, of the unthinkable, cinema can reflect and reflect on facticity, which Meillassoux describes as what "forces us to grasp the 'possibility' of that which is wholly other to the world, but which resides in the midst of the world as such" (Meillassoux, 2008, p. 40).

The cliché is, therefore, a film image that repeats the world for us (and reveals contingency as the mode of being of repetition) while the unbearable reveals a film image haunted by the difference of the world itself (and reveals facticity as the mode of being of difference). In other words, clichés deal with contingency as an excess of the actual while the unbearable

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[47] In the original text: "excède".

deals with facticity as an excess of the virtual. For example, George Bailey in *It's a Wonderful Life* or Lola in *Lola Rennt* are clichés since they are experiments in and of repetition. They repeat that as entities, we could be either absent or present, and that as events we could interact in and with our environment differently from how we do, and that each process and each emerging entity could – essentially if not practically – repeat itself. However, more significantly, they repeat that although our existence is contingent, our contingency does not affect the way the world emerges for us as entities engaged in processes. In other words, the hazards that might happen during repetition do not affect the stability of repetition itself as the fundamental laws that regulate the world. As established by Martin-Jones (2006), the cinematic gesture of accounting contingency by multiplying variations of actualizations through parallel narratives per se does not challenge the cliché. It can, conversely, reinforce the necessity of linearity, when, for instance, claiming "the legitimacy of the one true time" (Martin-Jones, 2006, p. 4) through the construction of one of the narratives as the best one, the one that is closest to reality as we know it. In this case, repetition welcomes a difference that does not affect the very structure of repetition: the excess of actualizations is thus the product of a repetition whose process is not affected by difference.

To look at this from a different angle, in the following sections of this chapter, I will discuss two films, *Les Garçons et Guillaume, à Table!* and *Don't Look Back*, that illustrate film's capacity to consider facticity as an excess of the virtual by engaging with processes of becoming-multiple.

2.1.4 Facticity and filmic bodies

Les Garçons et Guillaume, à Table! and *Ne Te Retourne Pas* both engage with multiplicity experienced as what I will define as a body of becoming that empowers the filmic characters they relate to with an ability to experiment with the very structures through which they emerge as events. This includes, for instance, the principle of causality, the forms of perception, the logical laws and, reflexively, their digitality.

Seen from this perspective, these films contrast with a long and fascinating cinematic tradition of films that explore the issues of contingency, difference, body, and identity from a deterministic perspective. For example, some films examine how much difference a body can experience and still emerge in the world as self-identical (e.g. *The Fly*, David

Cronenberg, USA/UK/Canada, 1986); others focus on how a single tiny difference in the way a body performs a given task can impact the world (e.g. *Lola Rennt*); and others show that a simple difference on a body – e.g. the presence or absence of a tattoo – can turn someone into a killer (e.g. *Memento,* Christopher Nolan, USA, 2000). I will now contrast such a perspective by considering how *Les Garçons et Guillaume, à Table!* and *Ne Te Retourne Pas* question what a digital cinematic body can do from the perspective of facticity.

2.1.4.1 Bodies of becoming

The questions that, for instance, Guillaume (the main character in *Les Garçons et Guillaume, à Table!*) addresses do not investigate what would, could or should happen, or would have happened, if difference was introduced in one way or another in his life. Much more radically, the film is a complex machine that enables Guillaume to question whether there is a reason why he should necessarily be identical to himself or could, conversely, experience difference itself to such an extent that he could be, at the same time and from the same perspective, a child and an adult, male and female, or mother and son. Obviously, in order to accomplish this, "Guillaume" cannot refer to the individual, the human being actualized in chronological time, but to a filmic *body* constituted by the constellation of processes, strengths, tensions and energies that it is in relation with. From this perspective, Guillaume can be considered a virtual body, or a body of becoming, rooted in a time that is prior to the processes of binary choices triggered by actualization. In order to theorize such a filmic body of becoming and analyse its developments I need first to turn to Deleuze's theorization of time in *Cinema 2*, and to the theorization of becoming that he develops with Félix Guattari in *A Thousand Plateaus*.

Deleuze famously argues that time cannot be understood as a succession of presents that organize temporality as a linear chain of moments. For Deleuze, the real question of time is the question of becoming. How does present become new? How does it become past? How does it become future? The answer cannot be found in a chronological time since "there is no present that is not haunted by a past and a future, by a past that is not reducible to a former present, by a future that is not reducible to a future to come" (Deleuze, 1989, p. 37). Understanding how past and future cannot be reduced to either "a former present" or "a future to come" requires us to challenge our intuitive comprehension of the nature of time as a regular flow, a succession of presents that organizes past and future. Time, instead, is the continuous process during which it divides itself into simultaneous past, future and

present, through a double process of actualization of the virtual and virtualization of the actual. Deleuze, commenting on Bergson's second schema of time, the famous cone, in which past is seen as a cone and the present is the point of the cone, states that the actual present is part of all the past, or, to be more precise, is "the most contracted degree of the past" (ibid., p. 98). Past and present coexist, therefore, at the point of the cone, since "the point […] is clearly the actual present, but this is not strictly speaking a point, since it already includes the past of this present, the virtual image which doubles the actual image" (ibid., p. 294). The essence of time as a process, or "the most fundamental operation of time" (ibid., p. 81), is the operation of a continuous splitting during which present, past and future are constituted simultaneously:

> Since the past is constituted not after that present that it was but at the same time, time has to split itself in two at each moment as present and past, which differ from each other in nature, or, what amounts to the same thing, it has to split the present in two heterogeneous directions, one of which is launched into the future, while the other falls into the past. Time has to split at the same time as it sets itself out or unrolls itself: it splits in two dissymmetrical jets, one of which makes all the present pass on, while the other preserves all the past. Time consists of this split. (Ibid.)

Hence, time is not a linear transformation in which past, present and future are punctual, clearly separated and organized in phases. It is a coextension in which past, present and future are simultaneous, co-existent and in constant interaction. For Deleuze, "the past coexists with the present that it has been, the past is preserved in itself as past in general (non-chronological); at each moment, time splits itself into present and past, present that passes and past that is preserved" (ibid., p. 82).

Such a theory of time implements the multiple at the core of any experience. Since shifting the essence of time from succession to coextension implies that time is not ruled by a logic of either/or (past/present/future, accomplished/unaccomplished, true/false), but by a logic of both/and, every moment is the double articulation of a present with all the past. The flow of time is, therefore, not to be found in Chronos, the succession of actual entities, but in Aeon, the simultaneous process of actualization of the virtual (becoming actual or the move towards the future) and of virtualization of the actual (becoming virtual or the move towards the past). Deleuze and Guattari, in *A Thousand Plateaus*, give a clear definition of both perspectives on time:

> Aeon: the indefinite time of the event, the floating line that knows only speeds and continually divides that which transpires into an already-there that is at the same time not-yet-here, a simultaneous too-late and too-early, a something that is both going to happen and has just happened. Chronos: the time of measure that situates things and persons, develops a form and determines a subject. (Deleuze and Guattari, 1995, p. 262)

In cinema, bodies can explore time either in Chronos, in which they are historical bodies, or in Aeon, in which they are what I refer to as bodies of becoming. Historical bodies are bodies which reveal specific moments in time, which stabilize chunks of time in a body, as most bodies do in films engaging with topics related to childhood and memories. Consider, for instance, how Varda organizes Demy's childhood in *Jacquot de Nantes* (Agnès Varda, France, 1991) in three main chronological eras, each being embodied in/by a different actor. Michel Marie refers to *Jacquot de Nantes* as a film that "describes a trajectory which starts at the end of childhood and journeys through the early then late teens[48]" (2009, p. 158). Conversely, consider how, in *Spider* (David Cronenberg, Canada/UK/France, 2002), Spider as an adult (Ralph Fiennes) revisits his childhood and interacts with himself as a boy (Bradley Hall), both being two different embodiments of the same character at a different age. In a more radical way, *I'm Not There* (Todd Haynes, USA/Germany/Canada, 2007), Bob Dylan's biopic, emphasizes the singer's power to renew himself by casting six very different actors (as different as Cate Blanchett and Richard Gere to mention only two of them) in order to represent six very different phases of his life. Varda's, Cronenberg's and Haynes's films are all examples of films that use historical bodies to emphasize their characters' capacity to become-other, while giving an indirect image of becoming since the very process of becoming happens in the interstices which differentiate each phase of the body.

By contrast, as I will develop further in the next section of this chapter, in *Les Garçons et Guillaume, à Table!*, Guillaume, as a child, a teenager or an adult is played by a single actor in his forties (Guillaume Gallienne) but his very body multiplies through the becomings which Guillaume experiences. This same body can appear simultaneously in a single shot as

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[48] My translation: "Le film décrit donc un trajet qui part de la fin de l'enfance et aborde la pré-adolescence, puis l'adolescence."

various presences of Guillaume, as his mother, or as various fantasized characters. Guillaume's body reloads the Deleuzian/Spinozian claim, according to which "we don't know what a body can do" in the context of digital cinema. The problem of film-philosophy that *Les Garçons et Guillaume, à Table!* addresses can be summarized in this question: "What can a body do in a digital film?" The body at stake here is not the historical, stabilized body that can be determined by its form (Demy at 8 years old as opposed to Demy at 14), by its subjectivity (Spider as the child who acts versus Spider as the adult who sees), or by the functions it fulfils (Dylan and his "lionisation by the civil rights movement; his role as an anti-war balladeer […] his surprise commitment to fundamental Christianity" (French, 2007)). By contrast, Guillaume's body is a body of becoming, emerging from events, from the multiplicity of interacting processes.

In *A Thousand Plateaus,* Deleuze and Guattari develop such a definition of a body:

> A body is not defined by the form that determines it nor as a determinate substance or subject nor by the organs it possesses or the functions it fulfils. […] A body is defined only by a longitude and a latitude: in other words the sum total of the material elements belonging to it under given relations of movement and rest, speed and slowness (longitude); the sum total of the intensive affects it is capable of at a given power or degree of potential (latitude). (Deleuze and Guattari, 1995, p. 260)

The longitude is the sum of the unformed elements that constitute the body, its molecular mapping or, in other words, the network of its constituents in a specific situation. Its latitude is its capacity to affect and to be affected, to both be impacted by and impact other bodies. The two terms of longitude and latitude are, therefore, cursors which can identify a body in the non-chronological time of becoming. They focus on the shared data that this body actualizes at a specific moment and how this data extends and prehends in new assemblages. Deleuze and Guattari emphasize the ahistorical condition of becomings that do not develop as a series of transformations in time, but spring between actualizations, in the split of Aeon: "Unlike history, becoming cannot be conceptualized in terms of past and future […] it passes between the two. Every becoming is a block of coexistence […] becomings are molecular" (ibid., p. 260). History selects points in time and organizes them as a linear succession of exclusive moments whose sense is evaluated by its capacity to produce a coherent form, stable and recognizable, which is the process that Deleuze and Guattari describe as "the submission of the line to the point" (ibid., p. 293).

Chronos, as it shapes history and the historical body, is a perspective on time,

> a historical manner of occupying diagonals or transversals, lines of flight: […] the lines […] moving towards the vanishing point, (point de fuite), in other words, of reterritorialising […] We use the word "occupy" in the sense of "giving an occupation to" fixing memory and a code, assigning a function. (Ibid., p. 198)

In Chronos, the line that links two points is stopped, immobilized, stabilized by its point of origin and point of arrival and occupied by the memory that it implements. Becoming does not ignore points, but extends between existing points, in order to produce novelty.

> A line of becoming is not defined by points that it connects, or by points that compose it; on the contrary, it passes between points […] A becoming is neither one nor two, nor the relation of the two; it is the in-between, the border or line of flight or descent running perpendicular to both. (Ibid., p. 293)

Aeon is, therefore, the time of multiplicity and becoming. As time itself, or, as Deleuze states in *The Logic of Sense,* it is the "past-future which in an infinite subdivision of the abstract moment endlessly decomposes itself in both directions at once" (Deleuze, 1990, p. 89). Aeon is the process of split which creates novelty, extends itself, by passing between points, dividing them, separating them, launching endlessly the becoming actual and the becoming virtual of all possible moments of the world.

Finally, Deleuze, with and without Guattari, when read with Meillassoux in mind, suggest(s) a theory of time that helps to distinguish between contingency and facticity in film. Contingency deals with the points and segments that link two points together while claiming that other points could have been at either the origin or the end of each segment, which implies that other segmentations were possible. Contingency reiterates that one single process is at work, i.e. the double mechanism of virtualization of the actual and actualization of the virtual, expressed by the split of Aeon. However, contingency deals with the infinite series of the unactualized in excess of each single actualization, and contemplates their incompossibility. Facticity, conversely, springs between the points and signals, in the actualized, the presence of the unactualizable, i.e. the excess of the virtual that threatens, from the core of the repetition of punctuation, its very possibility.

2.1.5 Time, film and facticity

The films I will discuss in the following sections of this chapter endorse and experiment with such a complex vision of time. They suggest that time can be characterized as both Chronos, the chronological human lived time (and its regime of linearity, succession, exclusive logic of either/or, and identity), and Aeon, the time of the double articulation of the actualization of the virtual and virtualization of the actual (and its regime of contiguity, simultaneity, inclusive logic of "both and", and multiplicity, in which "I is another"). Interestingly though, as David Deamer (2011) notes, although Deleuze contrasts the two times by the two very distinct names of Chronos and Aeon, he mentions the difference only once in *Cinema 2*, and by using two very similar words, "Cronos, not Chronos" (Deleuze, 1989, p. 81). Paradoxically, when dealing with cinema, Deleuze chooses to distinguish both times, evanescently, by the very silent letter that makes them orally and aurally undistinguishable. Deamer convincingly analyses this lexical change as a strategy used by Deleuze to emphasize that the two times are "so close, so difficult, perhaps impossible, to separate" (Deamer, 2011, p. 375). Meillassoux's principle of factiality helps to undertsand further about their indistinguishable distinction. If we admit that thinking time within the circle of correlation implies that we cannot access the itself of time, but only time as a correlate, Cronos is not more the itself of time than Chronos. Not only are they two distinct perspectives of a single event (time as both the habitual memory that is filled by corporeal events, and as the absolute, inexhaustible memory of incorporeal events), but the event upon which they both reflect is correlation itself. Chronos is the time of the organization of the events and entities that constitute the world for us; Cronos is the time of the subjectification of the world for us. Therefore, Meillassoux highlights that cinematic thought has the ability to reflect and reflect on the facticity of both Chronos and Cronos. On the one hand, when playing with our daily, lived experience of time, it states that Chronos is a fact and could be different. On the other hand, when playing with relations of causes and consequences, being and becoming, when actualizing entities that emerge as contradictory beings, or modes of actualizations that do not originate from the virtual, it states that Cronos is a fact, and could be different.

2.2 Facticity and Les Garçons et Guillaume, à Table!: Becoming a multiplicity

Les Garçons et Guillaume, à Table! is a French comedy that follows its main character, Guillaume, in the complex exploration of his sexual identity. The film is adapted from an autobiographical one-man-show written by Guillaume Gallienne, a famous French actor, in which he played all the characters on stage. Gallienne is the director of the film, the writer of the autobiographical script and the main actor who plays Guillaume and his mother. Guillaume as a child, a teenager, and a young adult are, therefore, played indistinctly by the forty-year-old Gallienne in a non-realistic way, while he also plays the mother, dressed up as a woman. The film starts and finishes with Gallienne in his dressing room, in the theatre, during what seems to be the opening night of the one-man-show.

Even though the narration develops through a complex net of scenes on stage and scenes off stage, it is possible to follow Guillaume's story. He is the third son of a highly bourgeois and wealthy French family and, while his father is close to his two elder brothers with whom they do "boy stuff" (sailing in Australia, horse riding in Kenya), Guillaume has a veneration for his mother. During a holiday in Spain, Guillaume learns to dance the traditional Sevillana with Paqui, the mother of his Spanish host family, who teaches him to dance… as a woman. Guillaume discovers his talent to behave as a girl and, convinced that his mother wanted a daughter rather than a third son, he learns to be a girl, by imitating his mother's mannerisms and, later, finding his inspiration in other women. However, his father, thinking that Guillaume should learn to behave like a boy, sends him to a boarding school where he is bullied and unhappy. He is then sent to an English school where he falls in love with one of his fellow students, Jeremy, but his feelings are not returned as Jeremy dates a girl, Lisa. When Guillaume talks to his mother about his misfortune, she tries to cheer him up by telling him that many gay men can lead a very happy life. This is a turning point for Guillaume: he has to accept that his mother does not want him to be a girl, and he starts trying to construct himself as a boy. He therefore has to face (or get exempted from) military service and explore the homosexuality towards which everything and everybody around him seem to lead him, until he meets by chance a woman, Amandine, with whom he falls in love at first sight.

2.2.1 A film with a meaning? Ambivalence and socio-cultural context

Les Garçons et Guillaume, à Table! was a success when it came out in France, where it was screened for 24 weeks and seen by 2,800,000 people, which makes it the second best comedy of 2013 in terms of public engagement (Sandeau, 2018). It also received lots of positive feedback from both popular and highbrow press (ibid.). However, it received little academic attention. Only one article has been published so far, "Enjeux sociaux-culturels et reception de la comédie *Les Garçons et Guillaume, à Table!*" (Sandeau, 2018), which studies the reception of the film by analysing reactions of journalists and spectators. Sandeau argues that *Les Garçons et Guillaume, à Table!* deals with topics that were contentious in France when the film came out. The nation was discussing, sometimes quite passionately,[49] issues related to gay rights (same-sex marriage and LGBT parenting) and general issues of sexist socialization and education (policies related to gender awareness in school curricula). However, he shows that, strangely, the film received positive comments and analysis from journalists and spectators who expressed radically opposite perspectives on these topics, and found elements in the film to support their statements. According to Sandeau, the film's success cannot be analysed as a sign of national reconciliation on topics that have been controversial in the very recent past. He conversely attributes this success to the fact the film is a text flexible enough to support the views of both conservatives and liberals. However, Sandeau argues that *Les Garçons et Guillaume, à Table!* posits itself on the conservative side and he analyses how the film constructs homosexuality as a less desirable sexuality.

Sandeau's analysis is quite serious and interesting. However, if I share his interest for the ambivalence of *Les Garçons et Guillaume, à Table!*, my intent, in this chapter, is to refrain absolutely from stabilizing its meaning one side or the other. Conversely, I will argue that the singularity of the film is rooted in its very capacity to be absolutely other, not self-identical, and that this very ambivalence results from the film's fascinating experiment in and with facticity.

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[49] Same-sex marriage became legal in France on 18th May 2013. Among the many operations organized to protest against this law (in advance of it coming into law), a demonstration of between 340,000 and a million people occurred on 13th January 2013 (Girard, 2013 http://www.liberation.fr/societe/2013/01/18/le-prefet-de-police-defend-son-comptage-de-la-manif-pour-tous_874962 accessed April 22 2018).

2.2.2 Facticity, narration, mise en abyme

The French title[50] comes from a line in the film in which the mother calls her children for lunch and addresses Guillaume as excluded from "the boys", a group including his two elder bothers. This title epitomizes the otherness that allows Guillaume's emergence in the film and in the world. Obviously, the film addresses the fact that Guillaume is treated as other, bullied and abused because of his lack of interest in conforming with the expected performance of either his assigned sex or his assumed sexuality. This otherness can be considered relative to the social norms and the performances expected and valorized by the patriarchal order symbolized by the father and brothers. However, Guillaume's otherness can be seen as absolute when relating to his facticity, to the event and entity through which he emerges in the world.

The experiment with facticity that *Les Garçons et Guillaume, à Table!* engages in results from a complex narrative device. As mentioned earlier, the film is adapted from a theatre play written by Gallienne about his childhood, in which he narrates his own story and interprets its different characters. Parts of the film are recreations of the play, developed in the dark scene of a theatre, with few accessories and costumes. Contrasting with these on-stage scenes, off-stage scenes develop in various settings such as the bourgeois mansion of his parents, a nightclub or his aunt's house in Morocco. Even though the film starts and finishes in the theatre dressing room and seems to document the first performance of the play, it does not build on a logic that would assign a specific function to each distinct scenographical setting. On stage and off stage do not distribute a system of oppositions between narration and flashback, narration and spectacle, reflection and action, nor real and false, since each of these can be found in both settings. I suggest that these two modes of appearance are two differing intensities of the same space–time which allow distinct intensities of becomings. When emerging on stage, Guillaume appears as a simple, single body that experiments with changes through the affects which part, divide, link and (trans)form the different characters that shape him and to whom he gives shape. When off stage, Guillaume's body can multiply and be himself and his mother (or various versions of himself) in the same frame. He can emerge as various assemblages, make a body with distinct elements coming from various entities. None of these regimes of emergence is more

[50] Literally, the title could be translated as: "Boys and Guillaume, Dinner Time!"

real or true than the other; none is more necessary or has more reason to emerge as such. The frame therefore becomes a filmic space–time occupied by entities that reveal their facticity. Bodies and entities emerging in a same, singular process of actualization coexist and interact together. Furthermore, thanks to the ability of digital cinema to composite its plans, they can also interact with bodies and entities emerging from an excess of the virtual. Digital cinema shows that there is no reason why Guillaume could not be his mother, or why his body could not host, at the same time, the actualization of his self as a child and as an adult. What is at stake here, however, is not the issue of the excess of the actual, in which Guillaume appears *symbolically* or *metaphorically* as rooted in various actualizations of himself, as various historical bodies meeting in the same shot. Instead, as a multiplicity of digital bodies, Guillaume suggests an excess of the virtual, or the fact that his multiplication in the shot reveals various modes of emergence, various modes of assembling some common features. His emerging is a multiplicity rather than the multiplication of his emergences.

By incessantly passing from one system of performance to the other, the film allows Guillaume to experience his body of becoming as an intensive multiplicity and seems to welcome the challenge which Deleuze and Guattari address in *A Thousand Plateaus*: “Don’t be one or multiple, be multiplicities! Run lines, never plot a point! Speed turns the point into a line. Be quick, even when standing still!” (1995, p. 24). Guillaume establishes that films are space–times in which excesses of the virtual that challenge the laws of logic (being quick while standing still, being at the same time and from the same perspective the mother and the son, an adult and a child) are possible. They put correlation out of joint by playing with the facticity of the processes through which entities emerge.

2.2.3 Repeating difference: The facticity of identity

This narrative device that reveals the facticity of correlation can be illustrated by a scene in which the on-stage and off-stage Guillaume enter in a rich set of interactions, which I will describe in detail. After having been harshly told off by his mother, Guillaume wonders why she is not happy in spite of the fact that now he is “a girl, like her”. He suddenly realizes that he actually looks too much like her and, therefore, he needs to turn to other women to find his inspiration. He first observes his grandmother and his aunts, tries to imitate some of their mannerisms until he decides that he should observe and learn from all women. With this shift, he discovers that becoming is neither imitating nor repeating the same, but is the repetition of difference itself.

On stage, Guillaume, in his school uniform says:

> I started looking at them, examining each of their gestures, attitudes, glances (he imitates various postures) /
>
> each of their quirks … how Martine crosses her legs (Guillaume is in the family's mansion's games room in front of a large window, wearing a sweater and a cardigan he observes) /
>
> (close shot on women's legs crossing) how Isabelle touches her hair /(close shot on a smiling Isabelle playing with her hair)/ how Christine looks away /
>
> (large shot of the games room, men are playing pool, the camera pans towards a table where three women are playing cards) or how Victoire plays with her rings /
>
> (Guillaume on stage, sitting on the bed moves his hand as if playing with rings) How Valérie says "yes" breathing in like that … wait (still on stage, he points his finger, suddenly intense) / (close shot on his face) wait, do that again /
>
> (the women are playing cards and Valérie looks at her right, off frame) What? /
>
> (Guillaume in the games room) The yes
>
> (close shot of a surprised Valérie who says, breathing out) Yes /
>
> (Guillaume in the games room) No, no you went "yes" breathing in, like that /
>
> (Valérie smiles) It was beautiful
>
> (Guillaume in the games room and in the same position as before, **but now in his school uniform**) It's amazing. I just understood something great. Actually the main difference in women is their breath. /
>
> (Guillaume on stage, breathes in) Yes. It is softer, more flexible, less linear, less uniform, exactly, the breath of a woman is in a state of flux, depending if she's moved or concentrated or seductive or charmed (his expression follows each of these emotions)
>
> /(a swimming pool with students, it's a competition, boys are swimming, girls looking at them, experiencing various emotions related to the situation, Guillaume, in his school uniform, observes various girls, the way they breathe.) And so, I learned

> them all, every breath, all those respirations which made my heart beat as one with women.[51]

This scene, in which Guillaume experiences that becoming cannot be achieved through the repetition of the same and the imitation of specific women, is the shifting moment in which he understands a distinction similar to the one that Deleuze and Guattari establish between "imitation" and "becoming". One is transitive (imitating something/someone), but the other is not, and anything that enters in a process of becoming acts as an adverb. This is why Deleuze and Guattari hyphenate their "becoming-animal, becoming-woman or becoming-child". For them,

> becoming is not to imitate or identify with something or someone. […] becoming is to extract particles between which one establishes the relations of movement and rest, speed and slowness that are closest to what one is becoming, and through which one becomes. (Deleuze and Guattari, 1995, p. 272)

Becoming is, therefore, fundamentally molecular. It is a process of extension and (ap-) prehension in which the elements that constitute a body are experiencing new speed and new relations instead of repeating their organic, socially pre-connected networks of identification. In this scene, breathing is understood not as the reflex action of an organ fulfilling systematically a limited set of specific social or biological purposes. It is neither considered as the socially coded way of performing this action, which reinforces gender specificities. Guillaume focuses on breathing as the singular expression of difference itself, as the consciously shared flow of matter and affects which, with each breath, returns as

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[51] My translation: Je me suis mis à les regarder, à scruter chacun de leurs gestes, chacune de leurs attitudes, chacun de leurs regards, chacune de leurs manies. Comment Martine croise les jambes, ou comment Isabelle joue avec ses cheveux. Comment Christine regarde de côté ou comment Victoire joue avec ses bagues, comment Valérie dit 'oui' en inspirant comme ça… Attends, refais-ça.
-Quoi?
-Le oui.
-Oui.
-Non, non, tu as fait "oui" en inspirant comme ça. C'était beau! Ah c'est génial! Je viens de comprendre un truc dingue. En fait, la plus grande différence des femmes, c'est leur souffle. Oui. Il est plus doux, plus variable, moins linéaire, moins homogène, voilà c'est ça, le souffle d'une femme, en fait, il varie tout le temps, selon qu'elle est émue ou concentrée ou séductrice ou charmée. Ainsi, je les ai tous appris, tous les souffles, toutes ces respirations qui faisaient battre mon cœur à l'unisson avec les femmes.

different. Since he shows no interest in learning to repeat the way of breathing which could identify him as a boy, he challenges the construction of himself as a social subject, a term understood by Judith Butler as "a consequence of certain rule-governed discourses that govern the intelligible invocation of identity" (Butler, 1999, p. 185). Furthermore, he does not discover that he could learn to breathe like a woman, but that he could enter a creative process of becoming a woman which would focus on the destabilization of the system by practising "the possibility of a variation on that repetition" (ibid.). His goal is not learning to breathe like women do, if such a thing existed, but learning to put variation at the core of repetition.[52] The turning point of this scene occurs, therefore, when he experiences breathing as an intensity of difference itself, understood as the variation in the pace of becoming or the speed to which the exchanges of matter and affects constitute his body through its interaction with the world. Thus, breathing is the incessant experience of the repetition of difference, of the non-uniform flux which expresses the specificity of every moment as an event in which the way a body is affected by or affects other bodies accelerates or slows down its most fundamental process of gaseous composition. From this perspective, "every breath, all those respirations which made my heart beat as one with women" are not the addition of the limited way of breathing that women would typically perform, but the experience of breathing as an affect. It is the elementary exchange through which we are being changed by the world, while also changing it. Guillaume discovers, therefore, the facticity of identity when discovering that by breathing differently, he emerges as different, in a world that his breathing makes different.

The way in which this scene develops performs such a repetition of the different, and by doing so, establishes that "on and off stage" are two differing intensities of the same continuous space–time. In this scene, Guillaume's regime of appearance clearly challenges a dual system of representation, in which he would be either on stage in his uniform, commenting, narrating, acting, in the present, or off stage in his individual clothes, experiencing, illustrating, and living as a recollection of the past. When the Guillaume in uniform flows from the stage to the games room, he returns to the games room as different;

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[52] A further comment on this point: in French, "la plus grande différence des femmes" is a quite interestingly loose formulation. It can obviously express a qualitative difference that could be equivalent to "the most distinctive characteristic of women". However, it can also express an intensive difference, and could be translated as "that in which difference expresses itself at its highest level", close to Derrida's "différance" (Derrida, 1982) according to which meaning is always differed.

the affects experienced by Guillaume on stage (his latitude) changed the material elements of Guillaume off stage (his longitude) and changed, in Deleuze's words, "the set of relation of speed and slowness, of speed and rest between particles that compose" (Deleuze, 1988, p. 127). Therefore, on and off stage are neither two distinct spaces nor two distinct times, each producing a possible stabilization of Guillaume; rather, they are variations of intensities of the same time–space. Cinema reveals the multiple at the core of each event, the instability within the persistent and any experience as one of the many possible intensities of the movements of the whole. In Deleuze and Guattari's words, "It is as though an immense plane of consistency of variable speed were forever sweeping up forms and functions, forms and subjects, extracting from them particles and affects. A clock keeping a whole assortment of times[53]" (Deleuze and Guattari, 1995, p. 271). Thus, Guillaume is an assemblage, a multiple relation of matter and information which aggregates at various speeds in a multi-temporal continuum, an excess of the virtual. He experiments with his presentness as a multilayered, multi-intensive narrative position, a multiplicity of forms and positions from which he correlates with the world. Through these multiple spaces and times from which he articulates and enunciates his presence in the world, he experiences the excess of the actualization of his presence that reveals the facticity of subjectivity.

2.2.4 Differing intensities: The facticity of space and time

The most basic example of this multiplication can be seen in Guillaume and his mother. In all the off-stage scenes, except in one of the last scenes, Gallienne plays both characters, who interact in the same composited shots through the off-stage scenes. In most scenes, both characters are clearly different and have their physical and psychological specificities, but the fact that both are played by the same actor stresses that no matter how distinct and specific they seem, they are two possible assemblages of the same matter and information, or to be more precise, of some of their shared, selected, intensified presence. Each of the scenes in which they both appear is therefore a mise en abyme or a set of co-constructive

[53] In French: "Une horloge qui donnerait toute une variété de vitesses" (Deleuze and Guattari, 1980, p. 331). Here the word *vitesse*, *speed* is important since it is quite unusual and striking in this context. In French, a clock is neither *fast* nor *slow*, but *early*, *avance*, or *late*, *retarde*, and assigning *vitesse* to an *horloge* changes the nature of a French clock. Brian Massumi is perfectly right, therefore, not to translate *vitesse* as *speed* which, in English, would be trivial and focused on the mechanism of the clock. This being said, Deleuze and Guattari refer not to "an assortment of times" (quantitative and specific), but to "a variety of speed" (intensive and generic).

endless reflections between which the becomings of Guillaume springs. The mother is no more the becoming woman of Guillaume, the possible achievement of a performance that could be repeated without changing what it repeats, than the son is the becoming-child of Guillaume. Indeed, becoming never achieves anything. It is the contagious process of destabilization of the molar forms. Deleuze and Guattari remind us that "Becoming is always double, that which one becomes becomes no less than the one that becomes – block is formed, essentially mobile, never in equilibrium" (ibid., p. 305). Hence, child and mother are the two intensive poles, the two changing points between which Guillaume's becoming emerges, passes as a line of flight, and is irresolvable to these two identifications. As the extensive in-between-child-and-mother, he is the multiplicity of lines that develops virtually between them. Since child and mother are two possible differing intensities of the same body of becoming, their presence in the same shot is always both evident and uncanny. The child and mother appear together in many scenes of the film, but their bipolar presence is particularly evident in some scenes in which the mother appears in an unexpected, unrealistic way. At the beginning of the film, for instance, Guillaume, inspired by his mother who can speak Spanish, spends a holiday in Spain and stays with a family in order to learn the language. The exuberant Paqui welcomes him, makes plans for his stay and offers to teach him to dance the traditional Sevillana so that he can integrate into the community and share the fun of a big local festival. At the beginning of the scene, they are in the sitting room; Paqui speaks in Spanish, and Guillaume struggles to understand her. As she puts some music on to start the first lesson, Guillaume's mother – who did not leave Paris – enters the room from Paqui's kitchen on the left. While walking through the sitting room, she explains to Guillaume what is going on, in her distinctive coarse way, before disappearing into Paqui's dining room and closing the door behind her. These scenes, in which Guillaume and his mother challenge the intuitive human experience of space and time, emphasize the fact that Guillaume and his mother are two poles of a body of becoming that continuously exchanges, extends and prehends information and data. This body, which develops through its fluid exchanges of information and affects, operates its connections, oblivious of the Cartesian space understood as being "made up of fixed points that exist along the horizontal (x), vertical (y) and depth (z) axes" (Brown, 2013, p. 48) and developing as a solid space in which every point has stable, fixed coordinates. Indeed, from both the perspective of digital cinema and becoming, the fact that whether the interactions between Guillaume and his mother challenge our perception of space–time or not is irrelevant. Actually, what happens at Paqui's happens in any scene in which Guillaume and his mother interact, for instance in

the kitchen of their Parisian mansion where they seem to share the same time in the same space. In both cases, they are two possible actualizations of a dynamic becoming which processes data and information and which affects and is affected independently of the illusion of the stability of their environment. From this perspective, the less realistic scenes could work as a reminder that neither Guillaume nor his mother can ever be identified as stable individuated subjects (inter)acting in specific, stable, separated environments. Indeed, in digital cinema, any space can be specific, determined, solid and intensively folded, or fluid and elastic. Brown states that space in digital cinema shows realistically the Riemannian nature of space and its "malleable, ever changing and connected nature" (Brown, 2013, p. 49), according to which "the relationship between the points changes, such that the notion of fixed points in space (Euclidean/Cartesian geometry) is undetermined" (ibid., p. 50). Nevertheless, Guillaume and his mother reterritorialize what Brown conceptualizes as a "posthuman perspective on space" (ibid.). As digital bodies interacting within the mosaic of pixels of the Cartesian/Euclidean space of the frame, while suggesting an intensive Riemannian space, they reflect and reflect on the ability of digital cinema to think the facticity of space.

Guillaume's multiplicity becomes even more complex when his various roles start acting together and enter processes that make him imperceptible. The scene in which Guillaume plays the princess Sissi[54] provides interesting examples of these. Off stage, in his bedroom in the family house, Guillaume plays "Sissi and her mother-in-law, Archduchess Sophie"; his sheets are a dress, his jumper a wig, and he arranges the sleeves as a complex mantilla. While he is knotting his headdress, his hands become Guillaume-the-on-stage-actor's hands, and he is sitting on a bed on the dark theatre stage. Having arranged his "dress" over his school uniform, he takes the Japanese fan he uses as a stage accessory, while a ray of light comes on him, similar to the opening of a door. He enters a palace room, he is Archduchess Sophie, wearing a formal dress, pearls and carrying a Spanish style fan, which evokes Vilma

[54] Even though Guillaume's game does not quite fit with the stereotyped category of "boy's games", the word Sissi, in French, is not charged with derogatory and sexist connotations as it does in English. It refers to Elisabeth of Bavaria, Empress of Austria and Queen of Hungary, immortalized, at least for the French audience, by the Sissi trilogy – *Sissi* (Ernst Marischka, Austria, 1955), *Sissi Die Junge Kaiserin* (Ernst Marischka, Austria, 1956), *Sissi Schiksaljahre eine Kaiserin* (Ernst Marischka, Austria, 1957) – three films which have had lasting success on French television and are regularly included in the Christmas and New Year programmes. *Sissi Schiksaljahre eine Kaiserin* was broadcast on the afternoon of 31st December 2014 with 2.63 million viewers, which represented a market share of 21.3% (http://www.toutelatele.com/audiences-des-films-du-31-decembre-sissi-don-camillo-blanche-neige-ont-leurs-fans-67204).

Degischer's outfit in *Sissi* (Ernst Marischka, Austria, 1955). She starts her lecture about the court code, etiquette and expected behaviour, addressed to Sissi, Gallienne again, but with long, loose red hair and wearing a sophisticated blue dressing gown, like Romy Schneider in *Sissi*. As in *Sissi*, the two women become engaged in a discussion, during which Sophie reprimands Sissi for not behaving as her duty demands. Gallienne appears as both of them, sometimes in the same frame, until Guillaume's father enters the palace room in his modern nightclothes, asking: "What's happening here?" Archduchess Sophie answers first by saying "I'm in a private audience, dammit", swearing as Guillaume's mother does, while Sissi kneels in front of the father and addresses him as Sissi would address her father: "Papili, take me to the forest!" The scene continues in Guillaume-as-a-child's bedroom and a discussion between Guillaume (still wearing his bed linen as a dress, and his sweater on his head) and his father, during which Guillaume's behaviour is questioned, again, and ends up with Gallienne on stage commenting on his father's reaction: "He didn't like Sissi!"

In this scene, in which his body experiences different longitudes, Guillaume is an unresolved appearance. This scene gradually unfolds Guillaume's multiplicity: Archduchess Sophie's body appears slowly as the process of matter and affects that are common to Guillaume, his immediate environment (bed linen, sweater), of the stage environment (fan), and of the film (the dress, the pearls, the palace). Simultaneously, another assemblage produces Sissi's body and multiplies Guillaume's bodies and gets them to interact. Only the intrusion of the father and the coarse reaction of the Archduchess reveals, by the end of the scene, that his mother is part of one of the assemblages too. As in the "breath scene", the three spaces involved – the boy's room, the stage and the palace – are three various differing intensities of the same experience. Guillaume's body of becoming experiences increasing speed in its processes of extensions and prehension; it develops, multiplies, envelops the mother before slowing down and recovering its slower speed, on stage. He is an unresolved appearance, an excess of the virtual, at the same time and from the same perspective, himself as boy, and himself as an actor, and himself as the boy played by himself as an actor, and Archduchess Sophie and Sissi and Guillaume's mother and Guillaume's mother playing Archduchess Sophie…. Unlike the images that represent a different animal or character depending on the way we watch them, such as the rabbit or duck illusion, in which the brain switches between two distinct and exclusive actualizations of the same input (Jastrow, 1899), by constructing an "either/or" system, the scene focuses on the display of a visual multiplicity of the virtual. None of these appearances rejects any other, and they all resist any attempt at ranking by

importance or chronology; they coexist, each in their particularity, equally fundamental to the scene and layered in a depth of deferred presence. Indeed, Guillaume's body of becoming is a deferring machine, in the words of Deleuze and Guattari as a longitude, "a block of coexistence, the sum total of the material elements belonging to it under given relations of movement and rest and a latitude, or the sum total of the intensive affects it is capable of" (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 260). Its emerging is always in-between and in excess of the virtual, as "the simultaneous too-late and too-early, a something that is both going to happen and has just happened" (ibid., p. 262) of the Aeon. Guillaume's body of becoming never emerges in the present. It is nowhere to be found, neither reducible to its past which was actualized, nor deductible from its yet to come, since its extensive virtualization is an exponential future. The mother springs out of the Archduchess' body by her swearing, which actualizes her as part of the assemblage that was virtual from the very beginning of the scene. Simultaneously, the extension of the mother in the Archduchess expands her virtual connections in new assemblages whose powers and capacity to affect and be affected are yet to come.

Such a scene affirms that Aeon and its process of split is, therefore, at the core of digital cinema. This split produces a gap that, as Steven Shaviro states, the gap "rather than separating the actual and the virtual […] works towards their indiscernibility, so that they can change places, again and again" (Shaviro, 2010, p. 41). This is, therefore, a cinema which can reflect and reflect on becomings, on characters who are not caught in the act of achieving (or struggling to/failing to achieve) a subjectivity but are unresolved networks of past and future yet to appear and of powers yet to experiment. For Brown, this past and future yet to appear emerge in parallel universes. He explains that when time splits every moment in an expending virtual and when the distinction between the virtual and the actual is challenged,

> the true and the false, the subject and the object, the possible and the impossible […] become indiscernible according to the traditional, or classical frameworks that we normally apply to film. Parallel universes exist alongside the actual universe that we inhabit, such that the two are interdependent. (Brown, 2013, p. 117)

What is therefore at stake is not to resolve Guillaume's appearances and assess them as a degree of reality, to organize them in time or to deduce from his performance a "real" time from which the narrative would originate. As differing intensities of the same body of

becoming, Guillaume, Sissi, Archduchess Sophie and the swearing mother develop, perform and interact as various temporalities of Guillaume which expand in distinct and interconnected waves of actualization and virtualization that can interact together, and even interact with the father in his modern pyjamas who enters the palace. Hence Guillaume's becoming creates a continuous, intensive space–time which expands throughout their interactions.

This is similar to what William Brown describes as

> a universe of constant becoming: there are only differing spaces and times, or a spacetime that is […] made up of multiple timespaces, each of which affects the others such as there is no clear boundary between one and the next; each has a quasi-causal role to play in everything else, such that everything is a quasi-agent. (Brown, 2013, p. 112)

I will now concentrate on analysing the quasi-causal structure of the film in order to argue that it reveals the facticity of causality.

2.2.5 Quasi-causal narration: The facticity of causality

The film constantly acknowledges not only the interactions of various simultaneous times but also various modes of linking events together. The fluid world of Guillaume, on the one hand, and the stable and rigid world of his family, the strict hierarchized bourgeois household, the school and the army, on the other hand, follow distinct logics which sometimes interact and impact on each other. Guillaume's logic of becoming, as a nonlinear, fluid way of connecting, distresses the logic of the patriarchal filiation, which challenges the very logic of cause/consequence. The narrative of his becomings flows between differing intensities, following quasi-causes rather than causes. Liquid, gaseous, it runs through the breath of women and water.

This quasi-causal system of progression is epitomized by a long stream of correspondence that overflows the causal construction of the chronological narrative and takes Guillaume from the games room where he learned the power of breathing, to a stuttering army psychiatrist who declares him unfit for service. From the games room, he passes through women's breath to his English school, where, on the edge of the swimming pool, he observes how the girls breathe while some boys are engaged in a swimming race. Jeremy, the boy

Guillaume is in love with, wins the race and while still in the water, smiles in Guillaume's direction and invites him to come to the edge of the pool to give him the winner's hug or kiss. When Guillaume understands that these signs were addressed to Lisa, Jeremy's girlfriend, standing beside him, and who actually receives the kiss, Guillaume falls in the swimming pool. His body, wearing his school uniform, is floating in the water. A quick succession of flashbacks shows Guillaume and Jeremy sharing moments of intimacy and closeness from which Guillaume develops his romantic interest. These are shown in alternate cuts with his body floating in the swimming pool. The last flashback follows Guillaume discovering Jeremy and Lisa having sex at night, on a terrace in the pouring rain. In the swimming pool, Guillaume tries to get his head out of the water but a hand pushes him down, as if trying to drown him. This is one of his brothers. Guillaume gets out of the swimming pool at his aunt's Moroccan house. The brother tells him, "It's guy stuff, so butt out!", and then he disappears. Guillaume, crying, sits on a bench and his mother joins him. He explains to her that he loves Jeremy who prefers Lisa. The mother, trying to comfort him, tells him that she understands his situation and that "lots of them" lead very happy lives, but since Guillaume does not understand what she is referring to, she eventually has to make it clear that she is talking about homosexuals. Guillaume is shocked, and, on stage, in a series of very close shots on his face and his crying eyes, explodes when understanding that the desire of his mother is not for him to be a girl: "I'm not gay since I'm your daughter, who is attracted to a boy, what could be straighter? It's not lots of them. I'll show you lots of them, I can't believe it. So, if I'm not really a girl, it means that, it means that, I will have to do my military service." A scene in which he goes through the various medical and psychological examinations that determine if he is fit for military service directly follows this: while young men wait in line, Guillaume takes various tests. In the last development of this movement, a military psychiatrist tries to get from Guillaume a straight story about what he refers to as a suicide attempt, and Guillaume, stuttering, struggles to explain that his brother wanted to drown him because "I slept with a", but he cannot continue and stutters on the "a". The doctor grows more and more impatient and pressurizes him to talk. When Guillaume says eventually, in a breath, "a black guy", the doctor stutters "and, and, and…", tries to regain his composure and asks eventually: "And what do you think of Blacks? … Sorry, of the army."

From the perspective of the construction of Chronos, various distinct scenes link points together following a causal structure: the swimming pool race and Guillaume falling into the

swimming pool, seven flashbacks in which we understand how Guillaume fell in love, the drowning attempt, the conversation with the mother, the medical tests and the discussion with the psychiatrist. Following Deleuze's theories (1986) regarding the movement-image, these scenes develop in a logic of either SAS, an action that changes an initial situation such as the swimming race episode, or ASA, an action that explains a situation that triggers another action, in this case, the drowning attempt. The series of flashbacks can be seen as recollection images of Guillaume, suspended in the water, unconscious, having lost his sensory-motor capacity and viewing memories of his past as if his life-with-Jeremy was flashing before his eyes. From the perspective of Aeon, all these cause/consequence relations are folded in continuous flows that are both wider (they develop in units that are larger than the narrative scenes) and faster (they connect distant times and spaces) and develop as quasi-causes. Thus, breath links the games room to the swimming pool, which links England to Morocco. Guillaume, therefore, progresses in smooth spaces, through which he escapes, moves, draws lines of flight and makes linearity stutter. In *The Logic of Sense*, Deleuze develops the concept of quasi-causalities as a productive, creative system of relations. From the perspective of events, life is "an aggregate of non-causal correspondences which form a system of echoes, of resumptions, of resonances, a system of signs – in short an expressive quasi-causality and not at all a necessitating causality" (Deleuze, 1990, p. 170). Steven Shaviro insists on the creative capacity of quasi-causes seen as "generative aftereffects" (2014, p. 86). If there is, on the one hand, a causal system that combines corporealities in their actual form, then, on the other hand, the virtual, understood as "the impelling force […] that allows each actual entity to appear (to manifest itself) as something new" (ibid., p. 85) is the system of effects yet to appear: "Alongside the actual material connection of physical causes to one another, there is also a virtual relation, or a bond, linking effects or incorporeal events among themselves. The virtual is the realm of effects separated from their causes" (Ibid., p. 86).

For Jay Lampert, quasi-causes are the schema of the "becoming-causal" (Lampert, 2006, p. 97) specific to Aeon that unstabilizes the very logic of causality. "If communication across events is carried across an empty present (one of Deleuze's definitions of Aion[55]), then causal form is not a mechanism, but pure variability or pure temporality" (ibid., p. 102).

[55] In French, Deleuze uses "Aion" to translate the Greek "αἰών", which in English is translated by most authors as "Aeon". However, Lampert is faithful to Deleuze's "Aion".

Assigning a relation of cause/consequence implies a chronological substrate in which the change can develop, but, in Aeon which "endlessly subdivides the event and pushes away past as well as future, without ever rendering them less urgent" (Deleuze, 1990, p. 63), "no local chronology can circumscribe the limits to the impact that a past event can have upon the present and future" (Lampert, 2006, p. 102). Relations of cause and consequences are, therefore, always a reconstruction operated through the selection of finite criteria isolated from extensive and always excessive events. They are localization, stabilization and organization of a world in an incessant state of becoming.

Why does Guillaume fall in the swimming pool? How can he discover twice that Jeremy prefers Lisa to him? How can he be his mother's daughter? How can he be gay since he is a girl who loves a boy? How can the chronological organization of the scenes, their clear causal relations, not be disturbed by Guillaume's body of becoming? How can the past stop developing? The long string of scenes that starts from the games room and ends up (perhaps) with the psychiatrist is constructed through such a logic of generative aftereffects: the fact that Guillaume falls in the swimming pool is a consequence that calls not one cause but that has a network of connected quasi-causes that extend both in the past and in the future. Moreover, through the continuous virtual connections of the quasi-causes, he travels from a swimming pool to another one, from an excess of causes to a cause that will never be known (why does his brother try to drown him?) and he is saved from military service by the affect produced by a cause that has never been actual ("Because I slept with a Black guy").

Guillaume reveals, therefore, the facticity of the "real" world, of its linearity and synchronicity. In the shot of the medical tests, the room is constructed as a time in which various temporalities develop at various speeds. Guillaume is going through the various medical and psychological examinations which determine if he is fit for military service. Space is explored through a very classical continuous, low-angle, left to right dolly-like shot that glides above the cubicles in which the various medical tests are conducted. We are in a large military room constructed as a single space in which time is continuous: while exploring the first row of cubicles, we can also follow the young men who are queuing in the corridor behind, talking to each other or simply waiting for their turn; we can even have a glimpse of the tests conducted in the parallel far row of cubicles; space and people smoothly enter the shot by the right side of the screen and leave by the left side. Now, this linearity is challenged by what happens in the first row of cubicles, since we can see

Guillaume naked and being examined by a doctor in the first one, Guillaume having a hearing test in the second one, a cardiac stress test in the third one, an eye test in the fourth one and, eventually, Guillaume filling in a form of what might be an IQ test in the fifth one. Obviously, when the camera dollies along from one cubicle to the next one, we can see two Guillaumes performing two different tests simultaneously. Guillaume's time, totally devoted to failing each test, is slower than everybody else's time and while the young men are queuing in the corridor at both the "normal" speed of the dollying camera and our "real" spectator time, Guillaume lingers, insists and multiplies his presence in the shot. In a world that flows at its own pace around them, five Guillaumes are therefore present in the same space–time and multiply temporalities as they linger in whirlpools of present, start processes of multiplication and slow down their processes of becomings. This continuous shot gives a direct image of a digital time, as defined by Timothy Barker as "a multiplicity of nonlinear nested durations, carried into the present" (2012, p. 186). This is a digital crystal image, which focuses on the split of time and shows that the actual does not pass into the virtual at the same speed for each and every body. Guillaume's body challenges the uniformization operated by the linearity of the (dolly) time which constructs a line of bodies as regular points linked in space; he takes every opportunity to fail a test as a chance to spring out of line and occupy his lines of flight. Later, Guillaume experiments with his power to alter the masculine, "straight" line of time when his stuttering becomes contagious. Hence, the psychiatrist loses his capacity to control his body, his time and, through a Freudian slip, the control of the virtuality that he actualizes.

The final event in Guillaume's story engages with the facticity of causality. The fact that Guillaume, eventually, falls in love with a woman shows his power to create connections that do not obey chains of causes and consequences, but that create assemblages that are always renewed and renewing. Guillaume is not a hero just because he challenges any determination that would either stop the construction of himself as a composition of relations, or canalize, stabilize, finalize these relations. He refuses the patriarchal system of filiation and the repetition of the pace of the father. He rejects the chain of causality that would select significant points of his life and stabilize them by linking them as one single line that would organize his past as one meaning. He does not obey primary cause nor eventual finality. What makes him a hero is his capacity, as a digital body of becoming, to offer an ethics of acting.

2.2.6 An ethics of the digital body of becoming

In his second book dedicated to Spinoza, *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy*, Deleuze defines Spinoza's ethic as

> an ethology, that is a composition of fast and slow speeds, of capacities of affecting and being affected on this plane of immanence. That is why Spinoza calls out to us in the way he does: you do not know beforehand what good or bad you are capable of; you do not know beforehand what a body or a mind can do, in a given encounter, a given arrangement, a given combination. (Deleuze, 1988, p. 125)

The question is, therefore, not to determine first what is right or wrong but to experience what is good or bad in the relations that a body can compose with another one. "What are its nutriments and its poisons? What does it take in its world?" (ibid.). The good is what increases its power, extends and accelerates its capacity to create new compositions, while the bad is what decreases its power, slows down, and decomposes. What is at stake, nevertheless, is not just to know how bodies compose or decompose when entering relations, but to understand, from these experiments, "whether relations (and which ones?) can compound to form a new, and more extensive relation, or whether capacities can compound directly to constitute a more 'intense' capacity or power" (ibid., p. 126). Guillaume's quest is therefore a quest for an ethical way of being in the world. He searches for bodies with which he can agree, which have a similar speed, which feed on the same nutriments and increase their power of acting, and with which he can create new assemblages. I started this chapter asking "what can a body do in a digital film?" A possible answer could be as follows: by being digitalized and sharing the same ontological status with all the elements of the film, a body can act and multiply every thing's capacity to act. The power of the body of such an actor is therefore not to repeat, imitate, consider their body from the perspective of the cliché, of its sensory-motor mode of interaction with the world, but rather express the virtual that is in excess of its actualization. By multiplying, creating new assemblages, and becoming imperceptible, by connecting with persons, objects, characters and ideas, Guillaume reveals the facticity of space, time and causality, and explores new ways of emerging in and as the world.

2.3 *Ne Te Retourne Pas*: Mapping intensive identity

Ne Te Retourne Pas (Marina de Van, France/Italy/Luxembourg/Belgium, 2009) offers a complementary perspective on the digital body of becoming by exploring how the main character's identity shifts when a body of the past starts composing connections with her. Jeanne (Sophie Marceau) is a writer specializing in biographies, happily married and a mother of two. Her familiar world starts changing when her publisher refuses her last book, a work of fiction based on her childhood that she wrote in order to understand why she has few childhood memories. She does not recognize her house, and her body starts changing, something which nobody else seems to notice. Her husband thinks she might have a brain tumour, but a medical examination dismisses this explanation. Nevertheless, she is transforming into another woman, Rosa Maria (Monica Bellucci), through slow processes of progressive morphing while her mother changes suddenly into another person (Brigitte Catillon/Sylvie Granotier) and her husband does likewise (Thierry Neuvic/Andrea Di Stefano). While at her mother's house, she finds a photograph that shows her as a child smiling in front of an Italian trattoria with two women. One is the mother as she looked before Jeanne's transformation process, and the other is the mother as she looks now. The mother tells Jeanne that the other woman is a long-lost acquaintance. Hence, Jeanne goes to Italy in a quest for her identity. She discovers that when she was eight, Jeanne's parents adopted an Italian girl called Rosa Maria and on their way back from Italy, Jeanne was killed in a car accident. Her parents raised Rosa Maria as a substitute for Jeanne. A last scene shows Jeanne and Rosa Maria (Marceau and Bellucci) typing their story as if playing a four-hand sonata.

If Guillaume explores multiplicity and the joy of becoming-other as the creative process that celebrates his facticity, Jeanne experiences a more traumatic "other becoming" that develops in the well-established frame of fantastic films. *Ne Te Retourne Pas* considers multiplicity from the perspective of the uncanny return of a hidden truth, a primary cause that develops in a character and overtakes her as a victim. The film explores how Jeanne discovers the facticity of her identity, how she experiences that the very process of the repetition of her identity is challenged by an excess of the virtual. Furthermore, she experiences, throughout this process, the facticity of her correlation with the world.

2.3.1 What can we see when watching what the camera sees when they watch us?

The first symptoms of Jeanne's other becoming express themselves through the way she perceives space and human behaviour. Interestingly, she first discovers that reality fails to repeat its mode of emergence thanks to moving images caught by a digital camera. When Teo, her husband, shows to the family shots he made of them with their brand new camera, Jeanne first notices that, in the film, the kitchen table is perpendicular, instead of parallel, to the kitchen window. She goes to the kitchen to verify the situation and realizes that, indeed, the table is as shown in the film. Furthermore, she sees in the film that while she is doing the dishes, turning her back to the kitchen space, her husband and children, facing the camera, repeat strange signs with their arms, as if performing an enigmatic body language. She considers this to be games played by her husband and children. However, her entire environment slowly starts transforming, and she experiences unexplainable body changes. In these scenes, the film addresses, through the mise en abyme of the digital camera, fundamental questions about the human/camera/world correlations. What can a digital eye see in a digital film? How can humans correlate with the camera/world correlation? Do various means of operating a correlation with the world produce a stable reality? Is this reality equally recognizable and sharable? Indeed, human and digital correlations are problematic, as, for instance, argued by Nicholas Rombes, when discussing *Paranormal Activity* (Oren Peli, USA, 2007). Rombes states that the horror starts "when human beings [are] held in possession of another's gaze, the unblinking gaze of the camera" (Rombes, in Denson and Leyda, 2016, p. 850). Similarly, in *Ne Te Retourne Pas*, the otherness of the digital gaze triggers in Jeanne a sudden split, the realization that the real has no reason to be as such and that it could be different, the deconstruction of the real as a stable, continuous, homogenous repetition. It is in this very split that an excess of the virtual can spring and be cinematographically explored through the morphing between Jeanne/Marceau and Jeanne/Bellucci.

Jeanne is the opposite complementary of Guillaume; while he has one body that becomes a multiplicity of characters, Jeanne/Marceau and Jeanne/Bellucci are two becomings of the same character. However, none of them is a distinct historical body of Jeanne, and no one around her can notice the transformation that she goes through. None of her bodies is more true or real than the others, as they are the two poles of her becoming. Rather than two

opposite actualizations of some elements that Jeanne and Rosa Maria have in common and of elements that distinguish one from the other, they are variations of intensities of the elements that they share together. They do not actualize two distinct sets of elements but vary according to the speed and intensity at which the same set composes her body. Actually, De Van explains that one of the reasons that made her choose Marceau and Bellucci is the different speed of their bodies:

> Sophie is always in motion, she acts with her whole body, her movements are fast, nervous. It is very difficult to catch her gaze, her face. She's always on the move, flying away, as a very shy or modest soul […] Monica is very different […] her still face evokes Mona Lisa, an enigma.[56]

The film suggests thus that the transformations experienced by Jeanne are linked to the excess of the virtual that expresses itself through her. Being Jeanne implies the possibility to be completely other. She emerges in the world as entirely different when the intensity and speed of the processes through which she develops change. Jeanne's difference is not to be found in the differences of the two historical bodies of the actresses that form the two poles of her becoming, but in their inbetweenness, in the virtual that neither of them actualizes and that springs between them.

2.3.2 Morphing or the other of becoming

This excess of the virtual takes the filmic form of digital morphing, which, in *Ne Te Retourne Pas*, challenges Sobchack's description of the process as performing "effortless shape-shifting […] homogenizing consumption of others and otherness" (Sobchack, 2000, p. xi). Jeanne's morphing is slow: it takes twenty minutes of the film and three different scenes spread out over a diegetic period of one to three days. Furthermore, it seems painful both physically and psychologically: it is not a "homogenizing consumption" but rather a form of becoming that is understood as the articulation of both the self-manifestation of an inner otherness and the other manifestation of an inner selfness. This progressive morphing

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[56] From http://www.allocine.fr/film/fichefilm-110128/secrets-tournage/
My translation: "Sophie est très mobile, elle joue beaucoup avec son corps, ses mouvements sont rapides, nerveux. C'est très difficile d'attraper son regard, son visage. Elle est toujours en course, fuyante, comme une nature inquiète, un peu farouche ou très pudique, […] Monica, elle, est très différente, […] Son visage immobile évoque une Joconde, une énigme."

changes Jeanne by the slow contagion of Marceau's body by Bellucci's, with first an eye, then the shape of the chin, imperceptibly. Her body becomes, therefore, the plane on which a new intimacy is creating itself, as a new assemblage of parts that live separately, and a re-organ-ization of the body that chases any possible assertion of identity away. This resonates with what Jean-Luc Nancy reflects on in *The Intruder* (Nancy, 2000), when he considers the assemblage he becomes when *a* heart is beating in his chest after the implant:

> In a single movement, the most absolutely proper "I" withdraws to an infinite distance (where does it go? into what vanishing point from which I could still claim that this is my body?) and subsides into an intimacy more profound than any interiority (the impregnable recess wherefrom I say "I," but that I know to be as gaping (béant) as this chest opened upon emptiness or as the slipping into the morphinic unconsciousness of suffering and fear, merged in abandonment). (Nancy, 2000, p. 12)

The morph at work in *Ne Te Retourne Pas* reveals in a cinematic way this "intimacy more profound than any interiority", which was also the mark of Guillaume and the spring of his multiplications. It resonates with our definition of a body that cannot be understood if considered as an organism and by its form, but, conversely, when considered as the moving sets of relations between the elements that belong to it at certain speeds, and its power to affect and be affected by other bodies. Furthermore, the morph stresses the fundamentally unstable equilibrium of these assemblages, and the fluid and immaterial processes on which we construct the intuitive representation of our stability since, according to Sobchack,

> the morph confronts us with a representation of Being that is intellectually familiar yet experientially uncanny. It calls to the part of us that escapes our perceived sense of our "selves" and partakes in the flux and ceaseless becomings of Being – that is, our bodies at the cellular level ceaselessly forming and reforming, and not "ourselves" at all. (Sobchack, 2000, p. 136)

At the end of the film, it is Jeanne's "not herself at all" that appears on the train to Italy when Jeanne-Bellucci looks at her reflection in the window as Jeanne-Marceau. Her quest for identity leads her to appreciate and accept the facticity of her presence and of her very emergence as a singular multiplicity, as part of the reality of the world.

2.4 Conclusion: Is becoming necessary?

In this chapter, I have argued that, after having focused on the exploration of contingency at the turn of the millennium, contemporary French cinema engages with its facticity. I have first distinguished the concept of facticity as used in speculative realism by Meillassoux from its use in existentialism, and secondly discussed the distinction that can be drawn between contingency and facticity. I have shown that film engages with the former when exploring the mechanism through which it produces incompossible worlds and studies their possible relations. I have suggested considering such filmic contingency as excesses of the actual, i.e. film's ability to multiply actualizations of events that exclude each other in our daily encounter with the emergence of the extradiegetic real. When dealing with contingency, film abolishes the law according to which only one actualization is possible at a time, however, with facticity, it abolishes any possible law regulating the emergence of the real. Facticity is therefore an excess of the virtual and suggests the instability of all the laws that regulate the emergence of the world, and govern time, space and causality. I have suggested that film engages aesthetically with facticity through the explorations of bodies of becoming, i.e. filmic bodies that do not retrace the development in time of an identity nor emerge as contingent incompossible actualizations of variations and differences. Bodies of becoming explore incompossible virtualities and contradictory beings, and consider every law as mere contingent facts that can either exist or not. They do not inquire about their selves by investigating cinematically the multiplicity of their possible beings, but by emerging as the multiplicity of their impossible becomings. They have the ability to establish that all the processes through which they emerge in and as the world are contingent.

I have analysed how *Les Garçons et Guillaume, à Table!* sets a cinematographic dispositive that allows Guillaume to develop as a multiplicity, i.e. both the main character, a diegetic and extradiegetic actor, and his diegetic and extradiegetic self, child and adult, mother and son. The film allows him to emerge as the fluid and layered energy that loops between these poles and, consequently, to disrupt the laws that rule the logics of causality and binarity, and the constructions of identity, space and time. By revealing that these laws are unstable and not necessary, Guillaume, as a filmic body of becoming, puts correlation out of joint: it does obviously not offer something else than correlation, but demonstrates that the laws according to which we emerge in the world and, reflexively, according to which the world emerges for us are contingent.

Ne Te Retourne Pas has brought two new elements in the discussion of film and correlation. As a film playing with the boundaries of genre, positing itself as a psychological drama playing with themes, technics and some stereotype of thriller and fantastic films, it resonates with the anxiety of the ontological change of the real when daily life is filmed in the post-cinematic era. While Guillaume sets a complex system involving theatre and autobiographic exploration, Jeanne needs only the eruption of a family camera recording her life to reveal trouble in correlation. Facing what we can see when we watch what camera sees when they watch us, performs a process in Jeanne that starts a re-organ-ization of herself, physically and psychologically. She suddenly experiences a becoming-other through the second novelty that the film brings in, morphing. Here, this technic, far from being the superficial movement that links two poles without changing them, explores an intimacy that has no interiority, a self that emerges as an excess of the virtual. Correlation, i.e. the relation between our presence in the world and the emergence of the world, is thus unstable, fragile and founded on laws that are uncertain and fickle.

These films have put correlation out of joint while asserting the necessity of becoming. Guillaume and Jeanne break the rules according to which human beings and the world emerge in correlation, but obey one law: becoming. Obviously, my intention of exploring through bodies of becoming how film can reflect and reflect on facticity, embedded becoming as a necessary element of this discussion. In the second part of this thesis, I will now explore how film can think the contingency of becoming.

Chapter 3: Hyperchaos, unreason and the joy of factiality

In the previous two chapters, I engaged with Meillassoux's philosophy in order to discuss films that develop percepts that resonate with his concepts of correlation, the circle of correlation and its facticity. I analysed films that think aesthetically the fact that filmic consciousness cannot think its own absence, but can think its own facticity and the facticity of time, space and causality. I will dedicate the last two chapters of this thesis, its second part, to hyperchaos and, more precisely, to films that suggest a time in which events and entity can change at any time and for no reason. I will first unpack Meillassoux's concept of hyperchaos and stress its link with Hume's problem of the stability of the laws of nature and the principle of ultimate reason. I will explain how Meillassoux confronts this principle, which implies that we must accept our ignorance in front of the origin of all causes, and suggests instead the principle of unreason, and the knowledge that every process and entity are absolutely contingent. I will explain how Meillassoux draws from this challenge of the necessity of causality, the concept of factiality, according to which every process and entity, including becoming and correlation, are absolutely contingent and non-necessary. I will then discuss how film studies have engaged with chaos and establish the specificity and relevance of hyperchaos. I will argue that it is a conceptualization of time that resonates strongly with the time depicted by some contemporary films, and, perhaps more convincingly, with the regimes of correlation that digital post-cinematic films engage in. I will define and illustrate hyperchaos cinema through the analysis of two films, *Rubber* and *Bird People*. With *Rubber*, I will explore the epistemological and ethical potential of hyperchaos as a time producing absolute novelty and alterity. I will argue that *Bird People* is a film that does not engage with ethics, and will analyse how it performs an act of justice that involves the active participation of the three consciousnesses at work in the film experience. I will argue that both films, in very different ways, celebrate the joy of factiality, and suggest a non-anthropocentric ethics for the Anthropocene.

3.1 Hyperchaos

3.1.1 From Hume's problem to hyperchaos

Many are the ways that lead to hyperchaos. In the introduction, I followed the main, most direct one, the facticity route, which states that since only contingency is necessary, time is also regulated by absolute contingency. Meillassoux calls hyperchaos a time in which

everything can change at any moment and for no reason. However, in order to explore further the theoretical framework in which Meillassoux develops this concept and some of its ramifications, I would like to follow the "Hume route". I will follow Peter Hallward's advice: "the simplest way to introduce Meillassoux's general project is as a reformulation and radicalization of what he describes on several occasions as Hume's problem" (Hallward, 2011, p. 131). Indeed, on various occasions (Meillassoux, 2007, 2008a, 2008b, 2014, 2015), Meillassoux discusses how Hume addresses the problem of "our capacity to demonstrate the necessity of the causal connections" (Meillassoux, 2008a, p. 85) or, in other words, how we can know that the events that have been repeating themselves in the past will continue to repeat themselves in the future. As an illustration of this problem, Meillassoux quotes Hume's speculation on the billiard game developed in *Enquiry on Human Understanding*.

> When I see, for instance, a billiard-ball moving in a straight line towards another; even suppose motion in the second ball should not by accident be suggested to me, as the result of their contact or impulse; may I not conceive, that a hundred different events might as well follow from that cause? May not both these balls remain at absolute rest? May not the first ball return in a straight line, or leap off from the second in any line or direction? All these suppositions are consistent and conceivable. Why then should we give the preference to one, which is no more consistent or conceivable than the rest? All our reasonings a priori will never be able to show us any foundation for this preference. (Hume, in Meillassoux, 2008a, p. 88)

For Hume, reason cannot prove that a given material event will repeat itself in the same manner or, in other words, that the same causes will always have the same effects. In Meillassoux's words: "We cannot rationally discover any reason why laws should be so rather than otherwise, that is to say why they should remain in their current state rather than being arbitrarily modified from one moment to the next" (2008b, pp. 272–273). Indeed, from the strict perspective of reason at least, nothing guarantees that the laws of nature must repeat themselves, unchanged from one moment to the other. Meillassoux highlights that reason finds nothing contradictory in assuming that a law valid at time *T* and that produces entity *a* could change at time *T+1* and produce entity *non-a*. The only contradiction that reason refutes is a contradictory law that would produce, at the same time and from the same perspective, both entity *a* and *non-a*. Reason cannot refute a priori the hypothesis according to which such laws could change in the future, and neither can experience. The latter

provides information about the present and the past (what we are experiencing and we have experienced), not about the future.[57] Everything we know about the future is necessarily rooted either in scientific predictions or in empirical beliefs. Obviously, science is able to calculate, and very precisely, when and how future events will be processed. However, this is done at a certain price, by taking for granted the very theoretical point which, according to Hume and Meillassoux, needs to be demonstrated, i.e. that the laws according to which these processes will develop are the same as the ones we know and have known so far. It is only by disregarding the fact that reason challenges the a priori stability and the repeatability of the laws of nature that science can produce a discourse about the future of the world. Meillassoux argues that science substitutes "good sense" for reason, and asks: "But what should we make of a 'good sense' that relies neither on logic nor on experience?" (Meillassoux, 2015, p. 10).

Hume famously argues that humans, when facing this problem, learn nothing about the world itself or its actual rules, nor the laws that regulate causality, but they do learn a lot about themselves. He explains that we face a fundamental ignorance about the world and its laws, but we can develop a knowledge about our relation with the world. He introduces the concept of custom, or habit, whereby when we notice that an event repeats itself in the world, we develop the certainty that it will reoccur. We therefore have to accept with "blind faith" the fact that ultimate causes, which are above any possible demonstration, rule the natural, physical world, while accepting that the problem addresses more our belief in the necessity of the laws of nature than with their actual ontological nature.

Meillassoux considers this resolution of the problem unsatisfactory [58] since such a perspective implies that being "a sceptic is to concede that reason is incapable of providing a basis for our adherence to a necessity we assume to be real" (Meillassoux, 2008a, p. 90).

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[57] Nobody has experienced the future, except in films, perhaps. Nevertheless, films teach us that experiencing the future makes the present chaotic (*L'année Dernière a Marienbad/Last Year at Marienbad*, Alain Resnais, France/Italy, 1961). Other films demand that we accept various paradoxes that Meillassoux's strict logical framework disregards – from *It Happened Tomorrow* (René Clair, USA, 1942) to the *Back to the Future* trilogy (Robert Zemeckis, USA, 1985, 1989, 1990). Furthermore, in most of these films, the experience of the future is performative of the stability of the present; time travel prevents changes in the laws experienced in the present (*Interstellar*, Christopher Nolan, USA, 2014 or *Arrival*, Denis Villeneuve, USA, 2016).

[58] Meillassoux develops this discussion further, and refutes how Kant and Karl Popper address and answer Hume's problem. These fascinating discussions are, however, not directly relevant to this thesis. See Meillassoux, 2008, pp. 89–90 and Meillassoux, 2015, pp. 11–23 for a discussion of Popper's refutation and pp. 24–30 for Kant's.

He follows the objective of addressing the question of causality (reason cannot explain why the billiard balls could not adopt unexpected trajectories) while refusing to believe in anything that resists logic and reason. He pushes Hume's logic to its limits, refuses the "embedded" ultimate metaphysic causal necessity, and deduces from the impossibility to establish an ultimate reason that there is actually no reason, no cause that organizes the stability of the physical world. He turns Hume's ignorance into knowledge; instead of admitting that the laws that regulate causality are inaccessible to reason, he claims that reason proves that there are no necessary laws, that every law is contingent. In other words, instead of accepting that the universe is stabilized by inaccessible rules, themselves rooted in ultimate inaccessible reason, he argues that the universe is absolutely unstable and that everything can change at any time, and for no reason. He substitutes then the principle of unreason, what he also calls the principle of factiality,[59] for the principles of ultimate reason and sufficient reason. From this, he concludes that

> we must seriously maintain that the laws of nature could change, not in accordance with some superior hidden law – the law of the modification of laws, which we could once more construe as the mysterious and immutable constant governing all subordinate transformations – but for no cause or reason whatsoever. (Meillassoux, 2008a, p. 83)

The world therefore appears potentially subject to radical changes that are either caused or uncaused. Everything can, thus, appear or disappear at any moment, and for no reason. When rejecting the first fundamental law of ultimate necessity, Meillassoux reveals a counter-intuitive world that is not ruled by laws, and in which what we experience cannot be explained by stable, everlasting systems of cause/consequence. It is instead a chaos in which

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[59] Meillassoux establishes very precisely his concept of the principle of factiality in the third chapter of *After Finitude* (pp. 50–81). In a nutshell, it states that "only facticity is not factual – viz., only the contingency of what is, is not itself contingent. But it is important to bear in mind the following: the principle of factiality does not claim that contingency is necessary; its precise claim is that contingency alone is necessary" (Meillassoux, 2008, p. 80).
With the principle of factiality, Meillassoux establishes two fundamental points of his philosophy. First, since we cannot prove the existence of an ultimate reason, we must accept that laws are not necessary and, therefore, that every entity, event or law is mere contingent fact. This implies that processes and entities emerge for no reason, that they are not necessary but, conversely, that only their contingency is necessary. Indeed, in order to produce a world in which neither beings nor the conditions of their emergence are necessary, contingency has to be absolute, i.e. a necessary quality shared by everything that is. Furthermore, Meillassoux highlights the fact that contingency is *only* necessary to prevent a metaphysical reading of his concept. No being, no law, no principle can be necessary as long as every being, law or principle is contingent. I will further discuss this point in the second section of this chapter when discussing *Rubber*.

the regularity of the phenomenal experience should not be understood as a set of laws, but as mere contingent fact. Obviously, we have been observing regularities in the world, which we call natural laws, such as the law of gravitation, but this does not bring an important contradiction to Meillassoux's system. In hyperchaos, the principle of factiality does not imply that change is necessary, but that everything that is has the ontological ability to change. It is not because things *can* change that they *must* change when contingency, as an absolute, is the only necessary quality of everything that is.

Meillassoux suggests, therefore, that the world governed by absolute contingency, free from ultimate cause and reason, develops in hyperchaos, a time

> that is inconceivable for physics, since it is capable of destroying, without cause or reason, every physical law, just as it is inconceivable for metaphysics, since it is capable of destroying every determinate entity, even a god, even God. This is not a Heraclitean time, since it is not the eternal law of becoming, but rather the eternal and lawless possible becoming of every law. It is a Time capable of destroying even becoming itself by bringing forth, perhaps forever, fixity, stasis, and death. (Meillassoux, 2008a, p. 64)

Hyperchaos has the power to create events ex nihilo, caused and uncaused processes, entities that do not originate from previous ones, or, in other words, absolute novelty. It can accelerate any possible process and generate chaotic becoming, or suspend duration and freeze any flow. It is a time

> for which nothing is or would seem to be, impossible, not even the unthinkable […] a rather menacing power – something insensible, and capable of destroying both things and worlds, of bringing forth monstrous absurdities, yet also of never doing anything, of realizing every dream, but also every nightmare, of engendering random and frenetic transformations, or conversely, of producing a universe that remains motionless down to its ultimate recesses, like a cloud bearing the fiercest storms, then the eeriest bright spells, if only for an interval of disquieting calm. (Ibid.)

As I noted earlier,[60] hyperchaos differs from chaos on at least two main points. First, ontologically, chaos is the state of the world governed by a single rule, as for instance the high speed of its processes for Deleuze and Guattari (1994), or the unpredictability of quasi-consequences in a deterministic system for chaos theory (Werndl, 2009). In hyperchaos, conversely, every form of causality is only one of the possible unstable outcomes of absolute contingency. Meillassoux's demonstration that contingency only is necessary implies that no law whatsoever can subsume hyperchaos, and that changes might happen, or not, at any time, and for no reason. Hyperchaos can, but is not limited to, produce changes, or to be more precise, can produce all the varieties of (im)possible changes and move from one end of the continuum of processes (hectic changes) to the other (absolute stability) at any time and for no reason. Secondly, unlike chaos, hyperchaos is neither the other of "order", nor the unpredictable – but nevertheless predetermined – consequence of an initial quasi-cause, but the very power of absolute facticity to create both relative novelty (caused events) and absolute novelty (uncaused events).

Time, for Meillassoux, is therefore not a flow regulated by a process that subsumes everything that is in a whole (for instance prehension for Whitehead,[61] duration for Bergson, or the double movement of the virtualization of the actual and of the actualization of the virtual for Deleuze) but the expression of the absolute facticity of each entity and law. The relation between time and laws therefore has to be reversed and Meillassoux argues that "time is not governed by physical laws because it is the laws themselves which are governed by a mad time" (Meillassoux, 2014, p. 10). Hyperchaos is therefore the expression of the principle of factiality, of all the possible contingent changes that any entity and process can experience. This includes the creation and destruction of becomings, and "the equal contingency of order and disorder, of becoming and sempiternity" (ibid., p. 25).

Meillassoux draws from hyperchaos conclusions that extend far beyond the scope of this thesis[62] and I will develop only three characteristics of hyperchaos as a cinematic time. In the remainder of this chapter, the discussion of possible links between specific films and hyperchaos focuses on the principle of factiality or unreason. Chapter 4 focuses on films that explore a time without becoming and construct narratives that build in, and as, a non-whole.

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[60] Cf. Introduction, pp. 31-3.
[61] For a precise analysis of Whitehead and time, see Barker, 2012, pp. 39–46.
[62] For a precise and critical perspective on Meillassoux's work, see Harman, 2011.

However, before attempting to discuss possible images of hyperchaos, it is important to first establish the relevance of hyperchaos as a filmic time, and differentiate hyperchaos cinema from other possible theorizations of contemporary digital films.

3.1.2 Chaos cinema, hypercontinuity and hyperchaos cinema

Digital cinema has been associated with chaos by various film scholars, either negatively (Stork, 2011) or as a celebration of its ability to resonate with chaos theory (Shaviro, 2010; Brown, 2013; Denson, 2016). Before engaging directly with hyperchaos cinema, it is important to discuss first chaos cinema, its specificity, theoretical framework and limits.

The term "chaos cinema" was suggested by Stork in his 2011 video essay *Chaos Cinema: The Decline and Fall of Action Filmmaking* (Stork, 2011), in which he criticized, quite harshly, contemporary action films produced by Hollywood. From a phenomenological perspective, Stork argues that in classical cinema, diegetic time and space were congruent with our daily experience of time and space, and that the spectators had, therefore, always a privileged vision of the action in its context. Conversely, Stork claims that digital action films such as *Bad Boys II* (Michael Bay, USA, 2003) construct their scenes through an intense multiplication of shots, in which the camera does not adopt a distinct, intelligible perspective on the action. Nostalgic of the "classical era", Stork does not theorize chaos cinema any further, but his observation is nevertheless eye-opening when considering that the films his essay contrasts denote a radical change of paradigm in contemporary digital film-making. Storks regrets, explicitly, the fact that in classical cinema, changes happened "for good reasons" (Stork, 2011) whereas in chaos cinema, films produce reality and construct their narratives through changes that happen for no reason.

Stork mourns the loss of the centrality of the human subject or, more precisely, the loss of the anthropocentric organization of the real, according to which reasons are "good reasons" when they reflect and reinforce human ways of making sense of space and time, of entities and events. He does not engage with chaos cinema's celebration of the ability of digital films to challenge our understanding of the modalities according to which the real emerges. With chaos cinema, films are not engaged in the dialectical relation of the viewing/viewed and the

viewed/view theories by Sobchack (1992),[63] according to which films share our perception of the world and in the gaze of which we recognize our gaze. Cameras have ceased to repeat the centrality of our humanity, as they used to, when they were, as Deleuze states, a consciousness "sometimes human, sometimes inhuman or superhuman" (Deleuze, 1986, p. 20). They refuse to be a consciousness that offers a range of prefixes to "human". In chaos cinema, the real is no longer processed by and for humans, gazing at the world from their various perspectives and times (Chronos and Cronos), but is reterritorialized by non-human gazes that do not share our cause and consequence schemes, nor our embodied perceptions and constructions of space–time.

In an entry on his blog (Shaviro, 2012, 2016), *The Pinocchio Theory*, Steven Shaviro discusses Stork's chaos cinema from the perspective of what David Bordwell calls "intensified continuity" (Bordwell, 2002, 2008). Bordwell shows that in the 1970s, mainstream commercial cinema coming from Hollywood's studios launched an acceleration of the narrative, through rapid cut, shorter shots and dramatic changes of lens lengths, for instance. However, Bordwell argues that these effects were not attempting to challenge classical modes of narration and techniques, but, conversely, to radicalize and intensify them. Some film scholars (Salt, 2004; Brown, 2013) have endorsed Bordwell's position and argued that digital cinema paradoxically realizes some of the aspirations of classical cinema when multiplying cuts while not needing to cut, and having the ability to produce films that develop as a single seamless shot (Brown, 2013; Brown and Fleming, 2015). Brown, for example, explains quite convincingly that "digital cinema does not help cinema to achieve some preordained destiny (which would be to think teleologically), but it does realize yet further potential regarding what cinema is, or rather, what it can do" (Brown, 2013, p. 4). The fact that digital cinema can produce long shots in which the camera cruises seamlessly through matter, for instance, can be considered a technical evolution that achieves smoothly what classical cinema could do with apparent cuts and editing, as does, for instance, the opening scene of *Psycho* (Alfred Hitchcock, USA, 1960). At the other end of the spectrum, the hectic multiplication of "hyperactive, overstuffed" (Stork, 2011) shots of chaos cinema can be described as the quantitative upgrade of classical experiments with the representation

[63] Cf. introduction, pp. 44-7.

of speed, as exemplified by the intense cutting of the scenes in *La Roue/The Wheel* (Abel Gance, France, 1923) in which the hero, Sisif, pushes the locomotive he drives to its limits.

Against such a vision of the continuous intensification of percepts, Stork argues that what is at stake in chaos cinema is a radical change of classical techniques rather than just their acceleration or radicalization.

> In many post-millennial releases, we're not just seeing an intensification of classical technique, but a perversion. Contemporary blockbusters, particularly action movies, trade visual intelligibility for sensory overload, and the result is a film style marked by excess, exaggeration and overindulgence: chaos cinema. (Ibid.)

Without endorsing Stork's judgemental statements, Shaviro agrees with the idea that chaos cinema has made a radical break with classical cinema. He claims that "in the 21st century, the very expansion of the techniques of intensified continuity, especially in action films and action sequences, has led to a situation where continuity itself has been fractured, devalued, fragmented, and reduced to incoherence" (Shaviro, 2012). In order to describe and analyse this shift, he prefers, however, to use the term "post-continuity". Such a concept allows him to argue that we live in a post-truth, neoliberal context in which continuity has ceased to be important, which expresses itself in films through the idea that incoherent changes happen in the narrative without being significant. Interestingly, he contrasts post-continuity with Godard's famous jump cuts in *A Bout de Souffle*/*Breathless (*Jean-Luc Godard, France, 1960), which were testing, challenging and, thus, revealing the usually invisible omnipresence of the rules of continuity. Conversely, in post-continuity, these very rules have lost their "systematicity, centrality and importance" (ibid.). Shaviro considers the rupture with classical film continuity to be a radical change in our way of understanding space and time.

> In classical continuity styles, space is a fixed and rigid container, which remains the same no matter what goes on in the narrative; and time flows linearly, and at a uniform rate, even when the film's chronology is scrambled by flashbacks. But in post-continuity films, this is not necessarily the case. We enter into the spacetime of modern physics; or better, into the "space of flows", and the time of microintervals and speed-of-light transformations, that are characteristic of globalized, high-tech financial capital. (Ibid.)

As Shaviro develops in *Post-Continuity* (2012), a talk given at the Society for Cinema and Media Studies conference in Boston accessible on his blog, we are living in a world regulated by flows of energy, in which the value of work force, capital, images and identity depend on their ability to be flexible, dematerialized and fluent. Post-continuity is both conditioned by and an active agent of the wider context in which it develops and that it reinforces. As such, however, the shift that Shaviro operates from chaos cinema to post-continuity sounds like an attempt to identify the specific law that regulates chaos. Indeed, he claims that, in the digital age, every being is ontologically necessarily inscribed in "the space of flows" that subsumes modern physics, capital and films. "The flow" appears thus as a dialectic agent that both generates and stabilizes chaos, and an agent that deregulates everything. Shaviro describes the flow as "the delirium of globalized financial capitalism, with its relentless processes of accumulation, its fragmentation of older forms of subjectivity, its multiplication of technologies for controlling perception and feeling on the most intimate level, and its play of both embodiment and disembodiment" (ibid.). However, when considering chaos as a form of organization regulated by a single law, the flow takes the role of the necessary law that guarantees the chaotic nature of chaos. It is absolute, i.e. the necessary condition of being of any event and entity, and the ultimate cause, the reason of all reasons, the common law of physics, capitalism and post-continuity.

Shaviro's reterritorialization of chaos cinema through post-continuity enacts therefore a shift from Stork's anthropocentric perspective to an anthropomorphic one. In *The Universe of Things* (Shaviro, 2014), he develops a speculative realism based on the philosophy of Whitehead in which he finds a vitalist theory that suits his purpose for establishing the ontological necessity of flows. However, from a Meillassouxian perspective, his system does not eschew the danger of being grounded in a metaphysical belief, when considering "economy" (flows and exchange of data) as the basic principle that regulates the universe. He refers to economy as the "last instance", qua ultimate reason, that cannot be proved, and whose existence in the future cannot be experienced.

> Ethics, politics, and epistemology are all determined "in the last instance" by economy: in human terms, by the forces and relations of production and in cosmic terms by the "general economy" of quantum fields, energetic flows, and entropic processes. (Shaviro, 2014, p. 13)

I discussed earlier how Meillassoux convincingly demonstrates the inanity of establishing an ontological truth on a necessary cause. Furthermore, such an allegiance to economy is highly arguable,[64] and the imposition of a human concept, economy, as the universal and necessary ontological truth is quite an anthropomorphic[65] move, described by Meillassoux as "humanism-in-denial":

> this refusal of anthropocentrism in fact leads only to an anthropomorphism that consists in the illusion of seeing in every reality (even inorganic reality) subjective traits the experience of which is in fact entirely human, merely varying their degree (an equally human act of imagination) […] to free oneself of man, in this strange humanism-in-denial, was simply to disseminate oneself everywhere, even into rocks and particles, and according to a whole scale of intensities. (Meillassoux, 2012b, p. 5)

Furthermore, Shaviro's perspective endorses the "no alternative" of neoliberalism and repeats it by making the very principle of economy the core of philosophy, science, ethics or aesthetics. If everything is ruled by economy, i.e. if everything is fundamentally a matter of exchange of data, then we live in the "best possible digital world" in which the modality of our existences reflects the modality of the universe itself. In this brave new world, films emerging from intensified continuity are both "expressive of, and embedded within" (Shaviro, 2012) flows of information, capital, identities and power, and as such can merely repeat the order according to which they emerge. Conversely, hyperchaos, and what I will define as hyperchaos cinema, challenges any discourse that grounds the legitimacy of any matter of fact in the metaphysical belief in a necessary cause,[66] whose reality is impossible to establish. Hyperchaos disregards the necessity of flows and points towards an outside of the flow and an alternative to the whole that subsumes everything that is.

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[64] For example, I argue in the next section dedicated to the discussion of *Rubber* that ethics and economy are two very distinct fields.

[65] Shaviro acknowledges this anthropomorphic position, which he presents as a means to work against anthropocentrism: "a certain cautious anthropomorphism is necessary in order to avoid anthropocentrism" (Shaviro, 2014, p. 61). However, as I have been arguing, his reterritorialization of flow implies conceding a metaphysical absolute that Meillassoux's realism aims to overcome. Furthermore, I will argue in section 3.3.2 that hyperchaos suggests an ethical perspective, radically non-dualistic, and that jettisons both anthropocentric and anthropomorphic positions.

[66] I develop this idea further with *Rubber*, cf pp. 163-5.

3.1.3 Hyperchaos cinema: Unreason or the celebration of factiality

Meillassoux provides a useful framework when considering digital films that resist both Stork's anthropocentric perspective and Shaviro's anthropomorphic one by celebrating events and entities that emerge, appear, disappear and transform for no reason. I suggest using the generic term of hyperchaos cinema for films that engage, experiment with, and reflect on a time characterized by uncaused changes and, thus, that resonate with Meillassoux's principle of factiality. As digital films, they share with films described as chaos cinema or intensified continuity the ability to watch humans from a non-human gaze and to produce films that challenge human visual experience by changing perspective hectically or, conversely, enclosing a film in a single shot. They can produce both hectic flows of actions and movements that freeze. However, singularizing, theorizing and analysing the specificity of films relating to hyperchaos cinema from the perspective of factiality brings two important perspectives. First, it reveals film's ability to think, from within the circle of correlation, the possibility of a non-human time in which novelty arises from absolute contingency (*Rubber*, *Bird People*). While experimenting with its ability to reflect on such a time, filmic thought produces images that develop in the non-whole of hyperchaos (*Holy Motors*, *Reality*) in a time without becoming, in which we humans appear maybe not in the world itself, but at least in a world for not us, both impacted on by us and existing apart from us.

However, before engaging further with hyperchaos cinema and the precise analysis of examples, it is important to discuss how hyperchaos cinema differs from what Meillassoux calls extro-science fiction, and establish the legitimacy of films that do not belong to this genre to provide images that relate to hyperchaos.

3.1.3.1 Extro-science fiction and hyperchaos cinema

When discussing hyperchaos, Meillassoux never mentions films. Nevertheless, he engaged with fiction, more precisely science fiction literature, in a 2006 conference paper, published in 2013[67] and translated into English in 2015 as *Science Fiction and Extro-Science Fiction*.

[67] The conference took place on 18th May 2006 in the Ecole Normale Supérieure (Paris Ulm) and the paper was then published under the title *Métaphysique et Fiction de Mondes Hors-Science* by Les Edition Aux Forges de Vulcain.

In this paper, he identifies within science fiction a specific regime of narration that he coins extro-science fiction. To differentiate these two regimes, he focuses on the relation established by the narrative between scientific knowledge and the real. Science fiction imagines "a fictional future of science that modifies, and often expands its possibilities of knowledge and mastery of the real" (Meillassoux, 2015, pp. 4–5). In other words, science fiction deals with a future in which scientific knowledge allows humans to explore further the world, according to what Meillassoux presents as an axiom: "in the anticipated future it will still be possible to subject the world to a scientific knowledge" (ibid., p. 5). Indeed, since "science" is at the core of these fictions, the future of our relations with the world that they imagine does not challenge the methods according to which science establishes and legitimates its knowledge, i.e. the selection of "events whose observation […] obeys a procedure that ensures their reproducibility" (ibid., p. 34). Meillassoux defines extro-science fiction either as a different genre from or as a subgenre of science fiction. Extro-science fiction specifically imagines a future of the world "where, in principle, experimental science is impossible, and not unknown in fact" (ibid., p. 5). It focuses on a world stable enough to allow (human) life to persist, but in which the rules that regulate the emergence of the real vary to such an extent that no scientific practices and discourses could describe it as a stable, coherent, lasting unity. When discussing extro-science fiction, Meillassoux's objective is twofold. On the one hand, he wants to identify narratives that share his fascination for the questions addressed by Hume's problem, and imagine futures that jettison causality. This implies changes in the rules that challenge the practice of science. On the other hand, he wants these narratives to illustrate the possibility of a non-Kantian world,[68] a world without laws but one in which consciousness could nevertheless still endure. However, Meillassoux struggles to find relevant examples of actual novels that match the criteria that he defines. He briefly comments on a few science fiction novels[69] that start with descriptions of a sudden absence of causality but, eventually, fail to embrace the principle of factiality and resolve the intrigue with a rational explanation. According to Meillassoux, these books follow the

[68] Meillassoux comments on the question of Kant's answer to Hume's problem in a few fascinating pages (Meillassoux, 2015, pp. 24–31) that summarize Chapter 4 of *After Finitude*.

[69] Meillassoux mentions Robert Charles Wilson's *Darwinia*, Douglas Adam's *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* and Philip K. Dick's *Ubik* as novels that start with *something like hyperchaos*, but offer a rational resolution of the initial situation by identifying the cause of the dysfunction or discover previously unknown laws.

constraints of science fiction as a genre. Nevertheless, he identifies a single genuine example of extro-science fiction, *Ravage* by René Barjavel, a novel first published in 1943.[70]

I will argue in the following sections of this thesis that contemporary French digital cinema offers a broader range of examples of fictions that not only engage with factiality at the level of their narrative, but also experiment with non-causal narration. The four films I discuss celebrate uncaused events without suggesting any causal resolution. Furthermore, *Rubber* starts with a prologue in which one of the main characters explains to the audience that films and life are "filled with no reason", and describes the film as "an homage to the no reason". The first characteristic of hyperchaos cinema is, therefore, this embracement of an unstable world in which entities and events can change for no reason (emergence ex nihilo in *Rubber* and *Réalité*, metamorphosis in *Bird People* and *Holy Motors*).

I will also argue that, contrary to extro-science fiction that speculates a future in which hyperchaos will change the rules of nature, hyperchaos cinema engages with both the factiality of, and factiality in, our present post-cinematic context. Indeed, most of the films I will discuss in this second part of the thesis can be related to science fiction, as defined by Shaviro as a genre focusing on "capturing and depicting the latent *futurity* that already haunts us in the present" (2010, p. 66). Hyperchaos is therefore not a reality that these films attempt to describe or represent from the stability of our present world, as tales about a future during which laws would become contingent, but a reflection on our daily, actual lives. As cinematic images produced and experienced in a post-cinematic environment, the films I will discuss reflect on human's consciousness experiencing the loss of its centrality in a world recorded by various digital correlating correlates that, from their non-human perspective, gaze at, listen to, and participate in our human experience of the world. The exploration of the encounter with the other of correlation is the second main characteristic of hyperchaos cinema. More precisely, hyperchaos is revealed through the loss of centrality of human correlation experienced in the interaction between two distinct modes of correlations that partially co-correlate. The second characteristic of hyperchaos cinema is thus to point towards this world in excess of the human correlate, both present and unreachable in the filmic encounter.

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[70] Cf. Meillassoux, 2015, pp. 49–56 for his analysis of the novel.

Finally, hyperchaos cinema experiments with non-causal narrations, in which events and entities extract themselves from a world of becoming, considered as a whole, and experience subsisting as consciousness in a non-whole. Hyperchaos cinema therefore implies a non-Kantian exploration of our position in the world in which forms of human consciousness insist and persist, while the causal structure of the experience collapses.

3.2 *Rubber*: "Once again, the answer is: no reason"

In this section, I discuss *Rubber* as a film that epitomizes hyperchaos cinema since it engages with the emergence of life ex nihilo in a tyre. I will discuss the epistemological and ethical issues that such an event raises, and how the film reflects and reflects on how to correlate with such an alter correlating correlate. To my knowledge, *Rubber* has received no critical attention so far.

A brief plot synopsis is in order A group of people are gathered in the desert to watch what is presented as a film. Paradoxically, this film is not projected but happens in real life and the audience can follow the action with binoculars. They witness the emergence of life in an old tyre that discovers its capacity to get up, to roll, and to explore its environment. However, while cruising in the desert, the tyre, Rubber (playfully credited as Robert), experiments with its power to crush and destroy. Rubber becomes out of control when it discovers its ability to produce waves that make any object or living creature explode, and starts a bloody journey, killing people. While the spectators watch the show from a safe distance and local police forces try to handle the situation, a mysterious agent receives orders to kill the spectators so that nobody can bear witness to Rubber's disruptions of the natural and social order. The Lieutenant's team eventually kills Rubber, who reincarnates into a baby tricycle and directs himself towards Hollywood. On its way, all the old tyres that have been abandoned on the side of the road become alive and join what becomes a crowd of tyres rolling their way towards the dream factory.

3.2.1 Lieutenant Chad's foreword

Rubber resonates with hyperchaos not only by focusing its action on the emergence ex nihilo of life in an object, but primarily by stressing that this extraordinary event – as any filmic event – happens for no reason. This is established in what can be described as the foreword of the film, delivered by one of the main characters, Lieutenant Chad (Stephen Spinella),

who celebrates what he calls “no reason”. In his quasi-monologue, facing the camera, he invites the audience to consider films in general, and specifically *Rubber*, not for their capacity to reflect an exterior reality and reinforce our naïve perspectives on natural and human laws but rather for its experimental potential. In other words, he addresses in his rough and paradoxical way the perspective that *Rubber* will embody and experiment with.

This scene (and, thus, *Rubber*) opens with various shots of a desert, burnt by the sun, with overexposed skies that contrast with dark, burnt, dry vegetation. This end-of-the-world atmosphere becomes more enigmatic and desolate with the next shots that focus on wooden chairs, scattered on a dusty desert road. This lifeless, abandoned setting is followed by a shot of a man, credited as the accountant (Jack Plotnick). More precisely, the shot starts by showing his feet, legs and two hands, holding a dozen pairs of binoculars in each hand as the double promise to reveal something yet to see, and to provide the technology to make it visible. The camera moves up and frames the upper body of the man, obviously waiting. In the following shot on the lines of chairs, a police car enters the field and carefully knocks the chairs down, one by one. The car stops, Chad comes out of the trunk, holding a glass of water. He walks towards the camera, stops and, while gazing directly at the camera, delivers what can be considered the programmatic prologue of the film:

> In the Spielberg movie *ET*, why is the alien brown? No reason. In *Love Story*, why do the two characters fall madly in love with each other? No reason. In Oliver Stone’s *JFK*, why is the President suddenly assassinated by some stranger? No reason. In the excellent *Chainsaw Massacre*, by Tobe Hooper, why don’t we ever see the characters go to the bathroom or wash their hands like people do in real life? Absolutely no reason. Worse: in *The Pianist*, by Polanski, how come this guy has to hide and live like a bum when he plays the piano so well? Once again, the answer is: no reason. I could go on for hours with more examples; the list is endless. You probably never gave it a thought, but all great films, without exception, contain an important element of no reason. And you know why? Because life itself is filled with no reason. Why can’t we see the air all around us? No reason. Why are we always thinking? No reason. Why do some people love sausages and other people hate sausages? No fucking reason.
>
> (A police officer in the car beeps the horn and says:)
>
> - Come on, don’t waste your time explaining that garbage, let’s go.

> - Just a minute, let me finish. Ladies, gentlemen, the film you're about to see today is an homage to the no reason, the most powerful element of style.

He pours the water in his glass onto the ground. A wider shot of the same setting shows him in the back, blurred by the long focal length, getting back into the trunk of the police car that then leaves the place while a group of people occupies the foreground. They were facing Chad when he was delivering his speech and they are still standing on the road while the accountant gives a pair of binoculars to each of them. Chad's foreword addressed indistinctly the diegetic and extradiegetic audiences that this shot separates.

Chad is definitely a comedy character who struggles, often ridiculously, during the entire film to handle the difficult situation that he is facing. However, he might be considered a contemporary figure of the wise fool who delivers paradoxical riddles, or perhaps a zen master who challenges our Kantian categories through a series of koans. Indeed, I will now argue that he wisely addresses, from the very first scene, *Rubber*'s philosophical problem, "What is the joy of factiality?", and its ramifications: Does the absence of reason constitute a loss to be mourned or, conversely, the gain of a positive knowledge that sets the basis of another, more ethical, mode of relating with the world? How do films reflect and reflect on this shift? Do they do ethics, and if yes, how? In order to unpack these questions and establish Chad's film-philosophical insight, I will discuss in detail two of his statements.

3.2.1.1 In Oliver Stone's JFK*, why is the President suddenly assassinated by some stranger? No reason*

With this specific statement, Chad invites us not to limit cinema to its capacity of mimesis and, by celebrating the principle of unreason that cinema reveals, put an end to the process of mourning the loss of our access to knowledge. In order to unpack this, I will first explain how *JFK* has been discussed as a film reflecting on the creation of a myth that masks our possible anxiety when facing the inaccessibility of truth. I will then argue that the experimental power of cinema enables us to radicalize its ability to distinguish facts from metaphysical explanation, and that we can ground an ethics of hyperchaos cinema on this pure filmic facticity.

In “To touch a ghost: Derrida’s work of mourning and haptic visuality in three films”, Evan M.S. Woods suggests that *JFK* not only addresses mourning as a narrative theme, but more significantly uses it as its performative gesture. Woods argues that *JFK* engages with one of the most important traumas of the USA’s past and the series of processes of mourning that it started. The film itself, made twenty-eight years after the facts, provides evidence that the violence of Kennedy’s assassination still haunts the nation. However, Woods also highlights that the film explores how the mourning of the young president subsumes the loss and mourning of the nation’s belief in the ability of filmed images to deliver knowledge about the facts that they record. More generally, it reflects the loss and mourning of human ability to establish, formulate and reveal a knowledge about the origin of a fact. In Woods’ terms,

> the moment of crime was caught on film, and yet despite this, *JFK* is at pains to show that this moment is entirely inaccessible. We can theorize, hypothesize and speculate, as Garrison asks X to do in the final scenes, but we will never achieve certainty. (Woods, 2016, p. 6)

For Woods, what is at stake in *JFK* is not an attempt to challenge an official version of history with an alternative one, in an epistemological duel that opposes a “singular (fictionalized) truth to a singular official lie” (Williams, 1993, p. 16, quoted in Woods, 1993, p. 5). Conversely, he argues that the film’s project consists of constructing a myth that masks the frightening inability to access knowledge. However, this disappearance of the possibility to know the reason of facts triggers very distinct emotions. While Woods mourns, Chad celebrates, and reformulating his claim in Meillassouxian terms might help us to rejoice with him. By stating that in *JFK* the President is assassinated for no reason, the lieutenant focuses on facts (factum – the contingent events and entities that were made, and witnessed, the endless combinations of (quasi)causes and their consequences) rather than opinions (the metaphysical speculations about their hidden reasons). This distinction highlights cinema’s experimental power, and its capacity to create conditions that are different from those we experiment with in non-cinematic life but that give access to real phenomena that would remain unobservable without them. In Godard’s words,

> cinema is what cannot be seen without a camera. As a microscope is needed to see the infinitesimally small and a telescope is needed to really see the stars, cinema

> shows us, in our universe of average infinity, things we would not have been able to see without it.[71]

Furthermore, cinema establishes a relationship between the observing device and the observed that is similar to the experimental scientific situation in which, as Bruno Latour explains, the observed is always first created. Camera is to cinema what the air pump or the particle accelerator are to the physics laboratory, since these instruments share the capacity to allow "the observation of a phenomenon produced artificially in the closed and protected space of a laboratory" and, thus, reveal facts that are "indeed produced artificially in the new installation of the laboratory and through [its] artificial intermediary" (Latour, 1993, p. 18).

It would, therefore, be possible to argue that films are laboratories in which experiments are performed. Expensive, they need cutting-edge technologies, as did Robert Boyle, one of the pioneers of experimental sciences in the middle of the seventeenth century, when, in order to investigate the weight of the air, he created a complex and costly air pump. For Latour, by doing so, "Boyle defines (a strange) artefact. He invents the laboratory, within which artificial machines create phenomena out of whole cloth. Even though they are artificial, costly and hard to reproduce […] these facts indeed represent nature as it is" (ibid., p. 28). As Boyle's air pump created air-free jars in which he could experiment with vacuum, films create space–times in which we can observe the facts that emerge from this artificial, altered environment. From this perspective, the narrative or the affects that films produce are pure facts that are certainly woven in complex cause and consequences networks, which can be extensively discussed and theorized outside of the film, but that are exterior to their cinematographic materiality. Cinema shares with science, as described by Latour, the ability to control the processes that it triggers, to focus on facts and disregard any metaphysical opinions. When describing experimental science, he argues that

> we know the nature of the facts because we have developed them in circumstances that are under our complete control. Our weakness becomes a strength provided that

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[71] Sentence that Godard is supposed to have said during a conference at l'IDHEC, often quoted, for instance, in http://www.lesinrocks.com/2015/10/06/actualite/yervant-gianikian-et-angela-ricci-lucchi-une-camera-pour-voir-11779123/. My translation: "Le cinéma c'est ce qu'on ne peut pas voir autrement que par la caméra. Comme l'infiniment petit ne peut être vu qu'avec un microscope et les étoiles ne peuvent être vraiment vues qu'avec un télescope, le cinéma nous montre dans notre univers de l'infini moyen des choses qu'on n'aurait pas pu voir sans lui."

> we limit knowledge to the instrumentalized nature of the facts and leave aside the interpretation of causes. (Ibid., p. 18)

Films, as laboratories in which the real is experimented, do not re-present an exterior, pre-existing reality; rather, they produce and reproduce facts that can be observed, witnessed, discussed and analysed, but that do not give any access to the reasons that ground their emergence. Chad is thus right: Kennedy was assassinated, this has been filmed, and a fiction can reproduce and quote these facts. However, the question of knowing why this happened is useless and does not belong to the experimental field of cinema.

However, by urging us to embrace the principle of unreason, the lieutenant seems to adopt a position that, on the one hand, endorses Latour's description of the experimental facts as artefacts, which explains that no reason external to the film itself explains that the President is suddenly killed by a stranger. On the other hand, more radically, he challenges Latour's safe separation between what can be known and what is out of the field of knowledge. His bold statement does not advocate for a suspension of knowledge when considering the reasons that explain the observed facts, but, conversely, for an affirmation of the principle of no reason. Obviously, his position resonates with Meillassoux's resolution of Hume's problem through which he substitutes the ignorance of the reasons that regulate the emergence and development of the world's events and entities with the knowledge that they are absolutely contingent. This very knowledge is a joy in itself and the first joy of factiality. It releases us from mourning a loss that did not happen in the first place, and thus sets us free from the anxieties that push humanity towards myths, their construction and their competition.

I will now analyse how this celebration of knowledge against belief, which implies a radical dismissal of any possible metaphysical explanations, grounds "no reason" as a strong ethical principle.

3.2.1.2 In The Pianist*, by Polanski, how come this guy has to hide and live like a bum when he plays the piano so well? Once again, the answer is "no reason"*

This statement, which might first sound quite paradoxical, perhaps even offensive, actually resonates with strong ethical issues linked to the political, social and, thus, filmic

commodification of injustice, pain and suffering.[72] For instance, in *Postsecular Feminist Ethics*, Rosi Braidotti develops an ethics rooted in the principle of no reason, in order to confront the post-capitalist logic that tends to transform injustice into a commodity that can be evaluated and compensated. Braidotti, following Primo Levi and Jean-Francois Lyotard, claims that an ethical consideration of pain and injustice requires "a sort of depersonalisation of the event" (Braidotti, 2009, p. 56) through which the only possible answer to the question "Why me?" is "for no reason".

> Examples of this are the banality of evil in large-scale genocides like the Holocaust (Arendt, 1963), the randomness of surviving them […] There is something intrinsically senseless about the pain, hurt, or injustice: lives are lost or saved for all and no reason at all. […] Why did Frida Kahlo take that tram which crashed so that she was impaled on a metal rod, and not the next one? For no reason at all. (Ibid.)

Chad's reading of *The Pianist* echoes Braidotti's claim: "reason has nothing to do with it" (ibid.). Such a statement acknowledges that the victims of genocides and slavery, to mention only some of the most obvious systemic negations of humanity, but also, in the case illustrated by Kahlo, the victims of random catastrophes, are ontologically innocent. In other words, their fate cannot be linked to a quality of their being and their specific singularity cannot be accepted as the cause of the injustice that they suffered, which implies that "we need to delink pain from the quest for meaning" (ibid.). Pain and injustice can, therefore, be socially and politically fought, but cannot be evaluated, compensated or commodified. The principle of no reason is, therefore, fundamental to the development of an ethics that refuses the recourse to metaphysical explanations in order to grant any value or possible commodification to pain and injustice. Indeed, Braidotti highlights that the very possibility to evaluate, estimate and prize suffering are linked to contemporary forms of the revival of metaphysics. *Postsecular Feminist Ethics* is a fascinating text in which Braidotti confronts "postsecular metaphysics that reterritorialize the grounds of ethics and politics by presenting themselves as absolute, objective and unquestionable laws [and] circulate as master-narratives" (ibid., p. 40) that define ultimate reason 2.0 as, for instance, "the inevitability of

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[72] Godard, for instance, repeatedly expressed his disapproval of *Schindler's List* (Steven Spielberg, USA, 1993) for ethical reasons. He accuses Spielberg of reproducing and reconstructing Auschwitz in order to turn "the Holocaust into a Hollywood tale" (Sanchez, 2016, p. 271). For a precise analysis of Godard's perspectives on *Schindler's List*, see Wheeler, 2009.

capitalist market economies, biological essentialism and the selfish gene or the claim that 'God is not dead'" (ibid.). I discussed earlier how Meillassoux radicalizes such an anti-metaphysical perspective by exploring its ultimate rational position. He first disregards the possibility to accept a singular narrative as a stable law that grants balance to the universe, and instead considers the impenetrable ways of God, the invisible hand of the market, the survival of the fittest or the universal economy of exchange of data as metaphysical variations on the principle of ultimate reason.

Furthermore, Meillassoux radicalizes another fundamental theoretical point that he shares with Braidotti. Since no metaphysical law organizes the emergence of events and entities, the actual neither limits nor determines the future. Braidotti develops this perspective as an ethics of becoming, inspired by the tradition that links Spinoza, Nietzsche and Deleuze, and is defined as "the practice that cultivates affirmative modes of relation, active forces, and values" (ibid., p. 46). She promotes an ethical practice that does not repeat the negative, but enters into new assemblages that set the conditions of a possible future. The absence of reason is therefore not a loss, but the very chance for creating novelty, defined as the possibility to engage with the world as an affirmation yet to come. This constitutes the second joy of factiality, i.e. the capacity of the world to create absolute novelty. I will discuss in the next section, with the emergence of life ex nihilo, and more in detail in the last chapter how Meillassoux theorizes hyperchaos as a time without becoming, a time in which becoming is contingent, and how this allows him to think a virtual that can produce futures that are perhaps unthinkable for a philosophy of becoming.

I have argued that Lieutenant Chad's prologue and his celebration of the principle of no reason resonates strongly with such a philosophical perspective and establishes film's ability to link with philosophy and ethics. With this in mind, it is now time to accept his invitation to consider *Rubber* as a homage to no reason, and even, as I will argue, as an experiment with no reason, and to discuss how it expresses cinematically the joy of factiality.

3.2.2 Experiments

3.2.2.1 A post-digital, post-cinematic experiment

I discussed earlier how hyperchaos cinema is both linked with and different from science fiction and extro-science fiction, and *Rubber* exemplifies quite well the inbetweenness. Its

aesthetics seems indeed quite far away from the futuristic code of the genre, since it develops quite consciously in a post-digital environment. In *Rubber*, technology is mostly analogic (people use phone booths, cord phones, cathode ray TVs), people drive cars that came out in the 1980s, listen to music from the 1970s and wear clothes that anybody could have been wearing during the last three decades. The very multiplicity of the time indicators dispersed in the film annihilates, therefore, the relevance to locate the action of the film in a specific period of the past. The film seems to acknowledge the persistence of the past in the contemporary issues that it addresses and links to the digital context of its production and release. From this perspective, *Rubber* is thus post-digital, in which "post" is not synonymous with "subsequent to", as the linear progression of what comes after and implies the end of the digital,[73] but implies a reflexive ongoing process that blurs borders between what is and is not digital. When discussing this concept in popular culture, Florian Cramer explains that

> the prefix post should be understood in the sense of post punk (a continuation of punk culture in ways which are somehow still punk, yet also beyond punk) [and] post-feminist (as a critically revised continuation of feminism, with blurry boundaries with "traditional", unprefixed feminism). (2014)

Rubber establishes its post-digital strategy just after Chad's foreword and before the credits. I explained earlier how, during his speech, the lieutenant is filmed in a medium shot, addressing the audience, and how, when he leaves, another shot reveals that he was also addressing a diegetic audience. The accountant then distributes a pair of binoculars to each of them, so that they can watch a film, outdoors, from a hilltop in the middle of the desert. However, this film does not consist of the projection of light on a screen, but in a show similar to live action and that develops in real time, over two days. This complex filmic strategy – which states that spectators watch, in the desert, with binoculars, a film that blurs the boundaries between reality and virtual reality, while offering the extradiegetic audience the possibility to experience cinematically what they see – suggests a twofold post-digital statement. It first claims that subjectivity, technology and construction/definition of the real is an ongoing process and situates the post-digital real in its latest form (persistence of the

[73] Post-cinematic and post-digital share the same meaning of post. Cf. pp. 19-21, where I discuss the term "post-cinematic".

past). Digital cinema is included in the history of optics and in the experiments in which humanity seeks to observe what the naked eye cannot see, and the boundaries between digital and non-digital is blurred. Secondly, it affirms that, from the perspective of our digital context, there is no possible way back, and no matter how we interact with older technologies, we use them in, and from, a real that is rooted in the digital logic. When the audience members are given the binoculars, they do not question the relevance of such a technology in order to watch a film, but its capacity to offer an up-to-date experience. They ask whether it is "going to be in colour or black and white", whether there is sound, and a child hopes that it is not going to be "an old style film". *Rubber* illustrates, in its post-digital way, our difficulty to distinguish the specificity of the digital and the analogue logic at work in our daily life, filled with moving images. In its post-cinematic way, it both contrasts and subsumes the diegetic audience enjoying an immersive filmic experience, and the extradiegetic audience enjoying the film as an artefact and taking some reflective distance with their experience. Consequently, *Rubber* merges what Shaviro describes as the twofold opposition between, on the one hand, montage and composition and, on the other hand, immersion and disjunction:

> The combination of moving images is governed by two pairs of oppositions, or unfold along two axes. On the one hand, the mimetic, hypotactic, and striated space of cinematic montage may be opposed to the simulacral, paratactic, and smooth space of the digital compositing. On the other hand, the *effects* aimed by these procedures may range from the seamless unity of the multiple elements to their more or less explicit disjunction. (Shaviro, 2010, p. 78)

Rubber functions as a film that neither considers these positions as oppositions, nor chooses to put one against the other; conversely, the film carries them both and blurs their boundaries. It is the film that the diegetic audience experiences from the smooth space of the desert,[74] as a simulacrum developing in a seamless continuity. However, it is also, and simultaneously, the mimetic montage of disjointed shots that the extradiegetic audience experiences as a film in the striated space of their movie theatre or computer screen. It performs its link to the real as an indefinite and irresolvable enigma in which Rubber (the tyre) is a simulacrum that

[74] In the chapter of *A Thousand Plateaus* called "Treatise of Nomadology – The War Machine", Deleuze and Guattari oppose striated and smooth spaces and claim that deserts epitomize the latter (Deleuze and Guattari, 1995, pp. 351–424).

qualifies for opposite definitions of the term. As an illusion, a mirage in the desert, as the image of an image that blurs the line between illusion and reality, it is a simulacrum as defined by Baudrillard in *Simulation* (Baudrillard, 1983). At the same time, it is an image without resemblance. When Rubber becomes alive, it is no longer the image of a tyre, whose relation with the original would be degraded, but an active agent that breaks the original/copy relation found in a simulacrum as defined by Deleuze in *Logic of Sense* (Deleuze, 1990). The power of the simulacrum comes from its power of "revenge" through which it becomes an image without resemblance, as Adam when becoming a sinner is no more the resemblance of God (ibid., pp. 257–258). Through *Rubber*'s post-digital and post-cinematic mise en abyme of the diegetic and extradiegetic positions, neither of these definitions excludes the other, both are accurate, and Rubber is in excess of both.

Rubber's presence in the world affects the world, and the way people correlate with it to such an extent that reality cannot be addressed from a stable perspective. This culminates in one of the key scenes of the film, in which all the incompossible reals become equally, and simultaneously, real and unreal. This scene happens in the middle of the film: Rubber is out of control, has killed people in a motel, and Chad is in charge of the enquiry. At night, the accountant receives a phone call in his room from a mysterious man who charges him with the task to kill the diegetic audience. In the morning, he prepares and delivers poisoned food to the audience, since, if there is no more audience, the show will stop. This leads to a scene that develops in front of the motel where Rubber has just killed a cleaner; an ambulance is on the scene and the police team are at work and the dead cleaner's corpse lays in a body bag. Chad announces that everything is over and congratulates them for their great job. When the police team express their incomprehension and explain that they are real police force members, dealing with real murders and a real dead body, the lieutenant explains that none of this is real: "Come on, stop acting like this is real life, I'm telling you that we're done, there's no one watching any more." When one of the agents argues that this is real life, the lieutenant answers: "No, you have a stuffed alligator under your arm." The camera frames the agent's face, follows his gaze when he looks down towards his chest, where he is actually holding a toy stuffed alligator under his arm, and asks: "So?"

To make his point, Chad asks one of his team members to shoot him; he smiles when receiving the shot, then continues bleeding and smiling. He explains again that everything is fake. However, they have to face the fact that the cleaner is actually dead. The accountant

enters the scene, whispers to the lieutenant that one member of the audience is still alive, watching them, and that they have to go on. Chad turns towards the police crew and asks them to forget everything he has just said, and leaves the premises to resume his enquiry.

This scene epitomizes hyperchaos cinema's ability to untie the complex links that tie together the question of the principle of unreason, of the nature of the real and of the necessity of the observer in correlation. It develops in a time in which the emergence of entities are unstable (the alligator) and in which a single law cannot explain the complexity of the processes at work. On the one hand, Chad engages with the situation in a Baudrillardian fashion, explaining that everything is fake, that the entire situation is a simulacrum, an image that "has no relation to any reality whatsoever" (Baudrillard, 1994, p. 6). To do so, he reveals that all the signs that legitimate his power (his uniform, his badges, his gun) are "signs that dissimulate that there is nothing" (ibid.). On the other hand, a single law cannot subsume the complexity of the emergence of the real that springs out, in excess of the simulacrum. *Rubber* suggests, thus, a real in which the issue is not to distinguish the real from the fake, not to search for the lost real in the hyperreal, or to forget the real by celebrating the fake, but in which the real emerges according to different, contradictory laws. *Rubber* exemplifies the post-cinematic anxiety that humans feel when emerging as subjects from their interaction with images produced from non-human correlating correlates. In other words, the simulacrum does not represent the loss of the real, but, as Deleuze argues, celebrates the power of an image without resemblance. With its post-cinematic, post-digital setting, in which the boundaries between real and film are irrelevant, *Rubber* puts the various regimes of correlation into a competition that reveals the factiality of correlation, i.e. the fact that no absolute reason regulates the emergence of the real. Indeed, in this specific scene, the real appears to be in excess of any resolution: the characters in excess of their roles, and the roles in excess of their characters. Police officers are police officers, but their guns do not kill the lieutenant and stuffed animals pop up under their armpit. Chad is an actor, but he exerts his power as a lieutenant on his team, gives orders that are obeyed with little hesitation ("Shoot me!"), and some wounds are lethal while others are fake. *Rubber* provides here a scene that complies with the expectations that Meillassoux expresses in his definition of extro-science fiction: hyperchaos revealed by a world in which subjectivity is possible, whereas science is impossible.

3.2.2.2 An experiment with life ex nihilo

The reality of *Rubber* is thus located in the inaccessible inbetweenness of the subjective positions of distinct correlating correlates: human observers, post-cinematic digital mediations and a tyre gifted with life and consciousness. Hyperchaos is the filmic time that emerges from this inbetweenness, from the crack in correlation operated by the distinct regimes of relation with the world that the film incorporates, accumulates and considers as equally contingent, both in rupture and continuity.

This starts in the first minutes before the credits. The diegetic audience are gathered in the middle of the desert to create and witness an unseen phenomenon. The setting is a reminder of the infamous nuclear tests performed by the French Army in Reggane during the Algerian war (Opérations Gerboise[75]), or by the American Army in Arizona. What is experimented with and witnessed here is not a nuclear fusion resulting from the possibility to split the nucleus of an atom, but the emergence of life ex nihilo in an object. *Rubber* exemplifies the experimental potential of cinema that I discussed earlier. In the "closed", safe environment of the cinematographic desert, and of the film within the film, it experiments with hyperchaos by bringing an old tyre to life, for no reason. However, in our post-cinematic context, films have reterritorialized the real, they are no longer confined to the closed theatres, and the experiment will soon get out of control. Before analysing precisely how Rubber becomes alive and how the film engages with the fascinating issues relating to filming how an object becomes a body, and how this emergence impacts the world, it is important to establish how this event resonates with hyperchaos.

After having discussed at length Lieutenant Chad's foreword, the answer to the question "In *Rubber*, why does the tyre suddenly become alive?" should be quite obvious. As in Meillassoux's hyperchaos, the affirmation of the principle of unreason brings a world in which the regularity and very legitimation of any law should be challenged. The specificity of *Rubber* is, therefore, not to experience possible dramatic changes in the laws of nature characteristics widely shared by many cinematographic subgenres with which *Rubber* resonates, from horror to fantasy, science fiction, and their hybrids, but to state that these changes are contingent. Indeed, it could be tempting to state that films have always explored

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[75] For a historical overview of the French nuclear tests in Algeria and an analysis of their impact, see IAE (International Atomic Energy Agency), 2005 and for the Nevada tests, see Terrence and Gosling, 2000.

times similar to hyperchaos, times "for which nothing is or would seem to be, impossible, […] something insensible, and capable of destroying both things and worlds, of bringing forth monstrous absurdities, […] of realizing every dream, but also every nightmare, of engendering random and frenetic transformations" (Meillassoux, 2008, p. 64). Even when restricting our examples to horror as a representative genre, the list of possible changes in the laws of physics that films have explored would be endless. However, nobody steps into horror by chance, nor without having broken first a more or less implicit rule that keeps chaos away from the world. The emergence of vampires, werewolves or zombies and of their supernatural powers always has a reason that originates in one or many of the transgressions that *Gremlins* (USA, Joe Dante, 1984) expresses in its straightforward postmodern way: if you want Gizmo to stay a nice, cute pet (i.e. if you want to consolidate a clear distinction between *us* and *others*, and the stability of family values, private property and capitalism), don't feed him after midnight, don't get him wet and don't expose him to sunlight. Rules, when broken, start processes that emphasize the reason upon which nature and societies build their stability. They can either confirm that the laws of nature are transcendent (breaking a law destabilizes the balance of the world and creates threatening monsters) or immanent (breaking laws is the price to pay to experience new hybridations, becomings and assemblages) (Powell, 2005), but fundamentally, in both cases, the changes experienced have a reason.

Conversely, taken seriously, *Rubber*'s strong statement in favour of the unreason experiments with a very different environment, deprived of the principle of sufficient reason, and similar to hyperchaos. Furthermore, the principle of unreason is kept until the end, and the film does not volunteer any resolution nor explanation of the life that animates the tyre. By filming how an object, when becoming alive, becomes a body, *Rubber* addresses fascinating ethical questions that I will consider now, first from a cinematic, Spinozian, Deleuzian perspective (we don't know what a body can do) and then from the precise perspective of hyperchaos, from a Meillassouxian perspective.

3.2.3 An ethics of becoming a body

The scene in which life emerges ex nihilo in the tyre happens just after the credits, which develop as a succession of sixteen close shots on various scattered junk abandoned in the desert. Sinister music score reinforces the apocalyptic atmosphere in which land, plants and objects seem lifeless and abandoned. The music stops and the rhythm of the quick succession

of close shots freezes with a wide shot of a desert landscape featuring rocky hills and a ruined shack. The words "A Film by Quentin Dupieux" appear, and then disappear, and the shot continues for a few seconds before the camera starts tilting down and reveals in the foreground more discarded objects, among which an old tyre, partially buried in the sand. Nothing happens for another few seconds, when slowly the tyre starts moving, rotating on itself to disengage from the ground. A medium shot, and then a close shot show the tyre trying to extract itself from the matter of which it was a part a few seconds ago. Against all the laws of nature, it eventually manages to get up. *Rubber*'s resonance with hyperchaos is thus twofold. At the level of the narrative, it presents the emergence of life in the tyre as a sudden change in the laws of nature happening for no reason. At the level of the cinematography, it presents this event in a single shot, as a time – i.e. a continuity – with no becoming, in which life emerges ex nihilo, uncaused, unrelated to chains of causes or quasi-causes. Furthermore, the fact that Rubber passes from unanimated to animated in a single shot stresses that events comparable to Hume's changes in the laws of nature are not a catastrophe yet to come, but happen in our time, for no reason, and are part of our environment.

Rubber's documentation of the tyre's exploration of the powers of its life continues through a series of shots that might remind us of animal documentaries, and show the tyre finding its balance, rolling, falling down, getting up again and slowly mastering its motion. It learns. It is no longer an object, but a body that has affects, i.e. that affects and is affected by his environment and has the possibility of becoming according to its affects. During all these scenes, we witness the tyre discovering itself as a body, and experimenting with what a body can do when learning how to roll and discovering various ways of relating to its environment – in other words, the basis of an ethics according to Deleuze, reading Spinoza. I discussed such an ethics centred on affects and becoming in Chapter 2 when analysing Guillaume,[76] and I will highlight here what *Rubber* adds to the discussion. All these shots explore how the tyre experiments with what is now its body, how it affects and is affected by the world and how, through this body, it correlates with the world. What is at stake here is the evaluation of the potential for novelty of a specific assemblage: "whether relations (and which ones?) can compound to form a new, and more extensive relation, or whether

[76] Cf. Chapter 2, pp. 137.

capacities can compound directly to constitute a more ‘intense’ capacity or power” (Deleuze, 1988, p. 126). These questions are especially interesting when the body at stake used to be an object, and when the film takes some time to document this embodiment. Specifically, in the first phase of its discovery of motion, Rubber encounters obstacles and resolves them by reversing or crushing them (an old plastic bottle), or, when confronted by harder objects (a glass bottle), it tests their resistance. The film documents precisely how, through these contacts, Rubber discovers its body, by focusing on its general perceptions in a very haptic manner. With very close shots, the camera explores the texture of sand, its various sounds, or quality of the physical contact with the glass bottle, the sound made by dry plastic being crushed. When Rubber’s soft body experiences that the hard glass bottle resists its contact, it discovers the ability of its flexible body that, when vibrating, can send radio-like waves that have the power to make anything explode (power that becomes quickly its signature, and that he experiments with on a rabbit, a raven and various people’s heads). *Rubber* does ethics when it endorses Deleuze’s famous paraphrase of Spinoza, “we do not know what a body can do” and explores how an object, becoming a body, enters into assemblages with, and develops powers from, its environment.

Furthermore, these scenes are fascinating since they specifically explore how Rubber and the camera, as a both obvious and invisible actor of this environment, enter into filmic assemblages or, in other words, question how the camera and the living tyre, as two distinct correlating correlates, can correlate. In the first shots that document Rubber becoming alive and experiencing its body, the camera tests various ways of filming it, either from the side, or at its point of contact with the ground, from its back, as if wondering how to link with such a body. When the camera tries to follow Rubber’s sometimes erratic movements, this leads to shots in which Rubber can be either focused or blurred, either an object distinct from its environment, or that blends with the world. It appears as an entity that either the camera can focus on, or that resists the dialectic process of subjectification and objectification that the camera tries to establish with it. The shot during which Rubber crushes the plastic bottle epitomizes this resistance. In this very close shot, composed to provide a very shallow depth of field, the bottle appears focused only at its point of contact with the tyre while Rubber is completely blurred. As I mentioned earlier, the scene in which Rubber touches another object for the first time is very haptic. It conveys the relation between the pressure exerted by the tyre and the bottle’s ability to resist, the crumbly substrate of sand, the weight and the flexibility of Rubber’s soft body through sounds and visual touch. The audience can

experience the pleasure that the tyre discovers in this contact, crisp sounds, play with elasticity to the point of rupture. However, Rubber's blurred body, the fact that only the bottle is sharp at this point of contact, conveys the impression that the camera cannot organize this encounter as a dialectical subject/object relation. Beugnet explains that in such a shot in which the point of contact between two bodies is blurred, "if touching means experiencing a border and coming into contact with the limits of a solid body, then the evidence of an effective contact withdraws from sight when blurred[77]" (2017, p. 50). In this specific shot, therefore, while Rubber performs one of its first statements of its subjectivity by enjoying crushing the bottle, the camera both documents the process but does not provide any evidence of this contact, as if the tyre's subjectivity was in excess of the camera's ability to correlate with it.

3.2.4 An ethics of hyperchaos cinema

The resistance of the camera to engage with Rubber's subjectivity, which I will discuss further in this section, highlights the tyre's status as an alter. The emergence of life in the tyre that takes place both in the continuity of time and in the non-whole of the time without becoming (the emergence ex nihilo) illustrates that hyperchaos is a process of *alter*ation of the world in which the "alter" must be taken very seriously. Nancy, in *Being Singular Plural*, defines the alter as the singularity that challenges the dialectical subject/object organization. He writes that what is at stake when dealing with processes of alterity "is not a question of an aliudor an alius, or an alienus,[78] or an other in general as the essential stranger who is opposed to what is proper, but of an alter, that is one of the two" (Nancy, 2000, p. 11). The camera watches Rubber as an alter, as a faceless correlating correlate whose origin is singular but whose very presence changes the world. Interestingly, the camera develops with Rubber a relation of coordinating attention and can understand what the tyre focuses on and provides objective shots in which both the gazing tyre and the object of its gaze are framed together. However, as I mentioned earlier, this very relation between object and subject is often questioned, either actually, literary blurred, or flattened when the tyre and the object of its attention are framed in the same shot and, thus, equally objectified by the camera.

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[77] My translation: "Si toucher c'est faire l'expérience d'une frontière, être au contact de la limite d'un corps solide, alors le flou dérobe à la vision la preuve d'un toucher effectif."
[78] In Latin, Aliud is "the other" as a neutral subject or an object; alius is "the other" as the masculine subject. Alienus is the adjective that is possessed by another, suspicious, inimical, unfriendly.

Furthermore, the camera never suggests subjective shots in which it attempts to deliver an experience of the world similar to Rubber's, considering that the tyre's mode of correlation can be witnessed but is impenetrable.

Rubber therefore provides an example of how hyperchaos cinema does ethics as defined by Braidotti as "the practice that cultivates affirmative modes of relation, active forces, and values. The ethical good is that which acts as empowering modes of becoming" (2009, p. 46). Consequently, hyperchaos cinema does ethics when evaluating its capacity to speculate how the world exerts its power of performing an absolute alteration of the state of things as we know them, to bring forth a contingent advent of absolute novelty. This ethics does not deal with the modalities of the actualization of the virtual, and of the becoming-other of immanence, but with the questions raised by the alteration of the virtual, and the other-than-becoming of contingency. The tyre is not an other, not a singularity understood as one of the uncountable forms through which A Life (Deleuze, 2005; Braidotti, 2009) expresses and develops itself as becoming. It does not develop through a relation of actuality/virtuality in which the other is a virtual realization of the actual. The tyre is an alter, a life that appears out of becoming, out of all the processes through which organic life develops, and this very life is vibrant of the unthought of the world itself. *Rubber* exemplifies the ability of hyperchaos cinema, as a digital hybrid, to offer images (such as the alter) that challenge our anthropocentric perception of the world as *necessary* with/for us. Hyperchaos cinema does not meet our needs for a correlation that matches the world with the experience of our becoming with the world. Its post-cinematic images have the ability to suggest a non-correlational perspective on the world, to put correlation out of joint. As Shaviro argues, hyperchaos cinema certainly does not have the power to "alienate ourselves from ourselves in order to look at correlationism from a non-correlational perspective and understand how the world exists apart from us" (Shaviro, 2014, p. 111). However, it might be one of the rare tools that humanity has created that help us to alienate ourselves from ourselves just enough to understand *that* the world exists apart from us. Hyperchaos is the time that celebrates the necessity of contingency. This is not our human time, the time through which we become, persist and insist with the world, no longer the time of the world with us, but the time of a world that is indifferent to us. Reflecting on this time, hyperchaos cinema develops an ethics that refuses both the possible transcendent legitimation of our presence in the world (no reason) and the necessity of the becoming of the world through immanence (alteration). This ethics evaluates our capacity not to restrain the world's absolute power of creation.

3.3 *Bird People*

Bird People is a singular film, both part of and distinct from the other examples of hyperchaos cinema that I analyse in this thesis. I defined hyperchaos cinema earlier as a medium that reflects and reflects on the loss of human subjective centrality in a post-cinematic environment, in which other correlating correlates participate, from their non-human perspective, in our human experience of the world. I detailed how the loss of central subjectivity is intimately linked with the loss of causality, expressed in the principle of unreason or factiality. *Bird People* definitely engages with such a cinema, even though in its first part it develops as a psychological drama. The second part of the film, however, follows another character, who transforms, for no reason, into a sparrow and focuses on her experience of the world as a bird. *Bird People* therefore engages with the principle of unreason, and, mainly in the first part, with the issues of the post-cinematic experience of the world when following the burnout of a successful young engineer. In this section, I will mainly develop further some of the ethical perspectives that Meillassoux draws from hyperchaos and expand my discussion of the ethics of hyperchaos cinema.

Before discussing how *Bird People* does ethics, a brief presentation of its narrative and structure are useful. Most of the film happens in the Hilton hotel of the Paris Charles de Gaulle airport, or in and around the airport. It follows two main characters: Gary (Josh Charles), a computer and industrial engineer staying as a guest in the hotel, and Audrey (Anaïs Demoustier), who works there as a cleaner. Both characters experience, each in their very specific way, a similar change in their life. Gary, while on a business trip, suddenly decides, after a meeting in Paris, not to take his next plane that would take him to another meeting in Dubai. From his hotel room, he resigns from his entire professional duties and breaks up with his wife and family life on Skype. Audrey has stopped her studies, works in the hotel and lives an alienated life. She transforms into a sparrow and spends a night living as a bird. The film is structured in five main parts. In an introduction, the camera starts with wide high-angle shots in a busy train station and slowly approaches the travellers in a series of closer shots. In a train we have brief portraits of different characters, and we can hear what they are saying or thinking. All the travellers are focusing on their personal problems, oblivious to the world around them. One of them, Audrey, is calculating how many hours of her life she's wasting in commuting. While she's meditating on these forty hours a month, she looks outside the window. For the first time in the film, the camera gives a subjective

shot of the flock of sparrows feeding on the platform. One of them flies up and perches on the train window. Audrey and the sparrow look at each other and the film constructs a series of shots/counter shots. When the train starts again, Audrey's smiling face fades to black and the title "Bird People" appears in white. The next part constructs in parallel the arrival of Gary and Audrey at the hotel, where he stays and she works. While Gary gets prepared for an important meeting, Audrey starts her workday as a cleaner. Gary attends a difficult meeting that raises many problems he will have to solve the next day in Dubai, and from the taxi that drives him back to the hotel he looks at the wreck of cars involved in an accident earlier. Audrey comes back home at night, has a difficult phone call with her father, and sits in front of the window watching the people in the building that faces hers. The image fades to black and the title "Gary" appears as "Bird People" did earlier. After a sleepless night, Gary decides not to fly to Dubai and resigns from his professional engagements. He makes different phone calls to his colleagues and lawyers. During the following night, he has a long Skype conversation during which he breaks up with his wife. His idea is to leave everything behind and stay in Europe. After a long night of discussion, when his wife asks him what she should say to their children, he suggests telling them the truth and adds "I can't keep on living my life like this. I feel like a lump of sugar dissolving at the bottom of a cup."[79] He then sits in an armchair and starts crying. The image fades to black and a new part called

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[79] Gary's burnout is dramatically summarized in this sentence in which he expresses that he is not in a subjective position, but suffering from his experience of being one of the objects of the whole and caught in a wider process that he does not control. Obviously, this resonates with Bergson's example, analysed by Deleuze in Cinema 1 (Deleuze, 1986, pp. 8–9). Bergson explains that if he wants to drink a glass of sugared water, he must wait until the sugar melts in the glass, in other words wait for the end of a movement of transformation of the whole in which water, sugar, glass and himself (at least) are involved. Deleuze explains that this slow, invisible transformation bears witness to the constant transformation at stake in the whole. Gary's sentence is thus interesting, first because he expresses that, as a participant of the contemporary neoliberal economy, he does not feel as the human subject preparing himself a drink and through this, understands the whole, but, conversely, as a human object dissolving in a drink prepared for the un/inhuman market and through this, suffering from the whole. Secondly, his urge for a rupture appears philosophically radical. Like the speculative realist philosophers, he wants to challenge the whole and the metaphysical belief in the fact that there is no alternative.

"Audrey" starts. This part focuses on Audrey and her work at the hotel. We follow her in her daily work of cleaning; we see how she is pressurized to work more, to add more workload to her daily schedule and work on weekends. She transforms into a sparrow, enjoys a night of freedom, and then transforms again into her human self. In the conclusion of the film, while going back to the changing room, she meets Gary who is leaving the hotel. They have a brief discussion, introduce themselves to each other, he calls her by her name, and they shake hands.

I will argue that *Bird People* is a film that does ethics by giving Audrey justice through her hyperchaotic transformation into a bird, and not a day of mere fun, freedom or well-earned compensation. In order to develop this idea, I need to first unpack some of Meillassoux's implications of hyperchaos and his theorization of an ethics related to the emergence of a fourth[80] World of justice.

3.3.1 Ethics for a World of justice

In *Quentin Meillassoux, Philosophy in the Making* (2011), Harman publishes extracts of *L'Inexistence Divine*, the yet unpublished book in which Meillassoux elaborates on a speculative philosophy that endorses absolute contingency. In a few words, in this book Meillassoux does not engage with the world as we know it, in its stable, scientifically predictable state and with the possible changes that might happen in our specific situation, but speculates on the changes that would have the most important ontological impact for us. Unlike philosophers who speculate on the current ontological becoming of the actual world (Bennett, 2010; Morton, 2013), Meillassoux focuses on the changes that hyperchaos could bring and roots an ethics for our time in these changes that have statistically an infinitesimal chance of happening. Meillassoux roots this in the problem of "essential spectres" and

[80] For the sake of brevity, I will not develop Meillassoux's theory of the three Worlds in detail as it does not relate directly with my thesis. In a few words, he argues that hyperchaos has already produced three fundamental ontological changes. The World of matter emerged ex nihilo, then the World of life, followed by the World of thought. Meillassoux argues that each of these Worlds brought up an absolute novelty (matter, life, thought) that were not contained in the previous World. The claim that thought did not emerge *from* life but *after* life as an independent and radically unconnected "advent" is one of Meillassoux's ideas that is difficult to endorse and that has been harshly criticized (Hägglund, 2011; Shaviro, 2011). (I follow Meillassoux's usage and write World with a capital W when referring to one of these ontological stages, mainly in the next section, to the World of justice.)

"essential mourning" that he addresses in *Spectral Dilemma* (Meillassoux, 2008b). Essential spectres are

> those of terrible deaths: premature deaths, odious deaths, the death of a child, the death of parents knowing their children are destined to the same end – and yet others. Natural or violent deaths, deaths which cannot be come to terms with either by those whom they befall, or by those who survive them. (Meillassoux, 2008b, p. 262)

Essential spectres haunt us, and the question of their mourning has been addressed by Derrida as "the injunction of a justice which, beyond right or law, rises up in the very respect owed to whoever is not, no longer or not yet, living, presently living" (Derrida, 1994, p. 120). Meillassoux examines the conditions that could turn this injunction into a celebration, turn mourning into a living relation with the victims of odious death, and bring forth what he calls an essential mourning. Essential mourning

> assumes the possibility of forming a vigilant bond with these departed which does not plunge us into the hopeless fear – itself mortifying – that we feel when faced with their end, but which, on the contrary, actively inserts their memory into the fabric of our existence. To accomplish essential mourning would mean: to live with essential spectres, thereby no longer to die with them. (Meillassoux, 2008b, p. 262)

Meillassoux takes the idea of "living with them" instead of "dying with them" quite seriously and roots the realm of justice in this absolute ontological change. He argues that the completion of mourning demands that essential spectres resuscitate and live an eternal life in a state of equality of all humans, or "justice" that he defines as understood as an eternal truth, i.e. "indifferent to differences" (Meillassoux, 2011a, p. 191). Meillassoux demonstrates that neither religion nor an atheist position can provide the framework of such a completion of mourning and that only a hyperchaotic change of the very nature of the real could resuscitate the dead and provide what our ontological state of the world is missing: absolute justice. In a few words, in *Spectral Dilemma*, Meillassoux argues that the atheist position suggests that we must accept that we cannot bring justice to essential spectres, and that we have to live and die with it. The religious one demands accepting the unacceptable idea that justice will come from a god that endorses injustice. He therefore defines "spectral dilemma" as an aporetic alternative in which "we oscillate between the absurdity of a life without God, and the mystery of a God who calls 'love' his laissez-faire and production of

extreme evil: the double form of a failure to accomplish essential mourning" (Meillassoux, 2008b, p. 266). The beauty of his resolution of the spectral dilemma through hyperchaos does obviously not reside in the speculation that a World of justice could emerge from absolute contingency, but in the impact of such a faint potentiality in our daily life. In order to understand this postulate, and its relevance when discussing *Bird People*, I need to briefly unpack three major points. First, since Meillassoux roots his demonstration in hyperchaos, there is no becoming at stake, no possible link of causality between the current state of the world and the emergence of a World of justice. The second point is, thus, that absolute justice is not a higher intensity of our relative justice but, as the indifference to difference, a state of the world absolutely novel that cannot be found in our current human realm. Third, and this is the main point, it could, however, not be justice if we had not longed for it and worked towards the realization of something like it, while living, mourning and dying in our actual ontological state. Indeed, Meillassoux argues that if the emerging new World is not charged with memory, it cannot be a World of justice; the disappearing of unjust deaths and of suffering would be a mere improvement of our current situation, and resuscitating in such a World would be a mere luck. Without memory, this World would upgrade but not surpass ours, and humans would live the felicity of demigods, unaware of their privilege. This is therefore our present fight for an absolute justice that Meillassoux describes as a desire of thought, which does not exist out of us, but only inside us, that can transform the World of lucky demigods in a World of justice.

> It is the existence of a present hope that offers the order of justice a new but non-objective determination (one that is not presented simply in the world, but in our connection with the world): a beauty that arises as a gift of the just made across time. (Meillassoux, 2011a, p. 220)

Meillassoux introduces here the possibility of a history in hyperchaos. Even though the changes produced by absolute contingency are unpredictable, uncaused and unaffected by our thought or behaviour, we have the power to speculate about the role of thought in the emergence of justice, and to lead lives that long, love and care for the World and humanity in our present condition, since "it is henceforth impossible to hate or regret the present World, which opens up the very possibility of a history" (ibid., p. 221). With this in mind, I will now discuss how *Bird People* performs an act of justice that resonates strongly with Meillassoux's ethics.

3.3.2 *Bird People*: Ethics in the making

In the previous section, I presented Meillassoux's resolution of the spectral dilemma, i.e. the fact that, if hyperchaos could bring an ontological change in which all humans resuscitated and lived for ever without suffering, there would be no justice in this World unless we had previously thought, practised and longed for something like this justice. Interestingly, *Bird People* sets a filmic device that highlights a fascinating problem of film-philosophy that can be formulated as such: is the freedom that Audrey experiences when transformed into a sparrow mere luck or, conversely, an act of justice? I will argue that Meillassoux's resolution of the spectral dilemma provides the framework to argue that the part of the film in which Audrey is a bird performs justice.

During the first 78 minutes of the film, before her transformation, Audrey is an alienated character. The hotel works as a structure that performs control on her, and expects her to show the flexibility that Shaviro analyses as the quintessential demand of control in society and neoliberalism (2010, pp. 14–15). She is asked to change her schedule at short notice. She must work both more and less – her line manager asks her to work an extra hour and to clean two more rooms, while rebuking her for refining the work she is doing too much. She must be both always visible (she is told off by the same line manager because the door of the room she is cleaning is not wide open) yet unnoticed (the film starts with a discussion in the locker room about a cleaner who has been suspended because of "body odour"). In order to provide this constant flexibility, she has to compromise her integrity. She lies to her employers and pretends to have exams when asked to work an extra day, even though she has actually abandoned her studies. She also lies to her father, who thinks she works part-time in the hotel while pursuing her studies. This appears as another demand of flexibility that is difficult to fulfil since, as the opening scenes state, she has to spend 40 hours each month commuting. Her alienation is therefore the result of various social pressures (work and family) with which she struggles on a daily basis and she appears as a lonely character who likes to watch her environment but is mostly unnoticed (I noted earlier that in the opening scene, she is the first to actually pay attention to her environment, and is the only character with whom the film enters a dialectic relation in a shot/countershot, subjective/objective gaze sequence). Her transformation into a bird supersedes these various forms of alienation. During this night that she experiences as a sparrow, she is granted to explore the airport and its surroundings freely. She engages with human and birds, she can

see people and be seen, as for instance in one of the key scenes in which as a starved bird, she flies into the room of one of the hotel guests who feeds her crisp crumbs. He is an artist and makes various sketches of her while she is eating. She then flies around him and he makes more sketches of her flying. The film beautifully enters the rhythm of their relationship, and while the camera follows the bird flying, it freezes for some moments in which we see details that inspire the artist's sketch. When he is done, the bird stays and the artist shows her the sketches. The cutting alternates between shots of the bird and the various sketches, in which, as in a sort of Lacanian mirror scene, Audrey can consider her bird body as recovered integrity, before flying away. This scene grants Audrey what she was refused when a woman working in the hotel: attention, interaction, care, generosity, integrity. Furthermore, she even becomes independent from the gaze of the camera that liberates her from the subject/object dialectical relationship in which she was an object of the gaze and whose subjective position was accessible to and made accessible through the camera. Audrey's transformation starts a new relationship with the camera. While Audrey *becomes a bird* in hyperchaos, *the camera becomes bird*,[81] or, more precisely, she is the agent who sets in motion the becoming-bird of the camera. To follow her life as a bird, the camera becomes bird with her, flies and traces sparrow lines. It does not become one with Audrey, does not provide subjective shots of her bird experience, but becomes her alter. It is a presence that becomes in the world and interacts with space as she does, while, nevertheless, not merging with her subjective perception. This is obvious in shots in which the camera skydives and flies in what first seems to be subjective shots of Audrey's perspective, but finish with Audrey's bird body entering the frame, flying faster than the camera, and challenging the reterritorialization of her gaze.

Undoubtedly, this part of the film gives Audrey what she did not have earlier: agency, freedom, integrity and the ability to engage in rich interactions with human and non-human actants. The question that needs addressing from a perspective of ethics is under which conditions her transformation can be considered as justice instead of injustice – i.e. mere luck. I will immediately disregard any reading of the film that assumes that her transformation comes from an immanent justice, according to which she deserves such an experience. She does indeed, but no more than any other characters in the film, namely her

[81] See pp. 125–6 for the distinction between becoming-animal and becoming an animal according to Deleuze and Guattari.

colleagues, Gary, his wife or children. The fact that only she gets the chance to experience what she lacks and to come back to her human form regenerated is an absolute injustice. As I discussed in the previous section, both Braidotti and Lieutenant Chad would argue that justice has nothing to do with this transformation that happens for no reason and that this event has to be depersonalized. Furthermore, the film disregards the possibility of explaining the transformation by referring to a good-willing transcendent force. This is addressed by the film when, after having enjoyed being a bird for a few hours, Audrey goes back to the place where she first transformed in order to recover her human form. She waits, wonders how people do in fairy tales, but does not transform into human Audrey, and continues her night as sparrow.

Endorsing a hyperchaotic reading of Audrey's transformation allows us to argue that the film performs an act of justice. Obviously, *Bird People* does depict an ontological change of the real; the transformation does not bring forth the advent of a new World, but affects only temporarily a single entity. However, the filmic device makes the audience first think, and long for, the possibility of Audrey's freedom, and then allows them to experience it with her. Indeed, the section of the film tagged as "Audrey" consists of two parts. In the first part, Audrey works, and for more than 15 minutes, the film focuses exclusively on her professional routine, follows her making beds, cleaning, negotiating her schedule with a pressurizing line manager, etc. In the second part, she transforms and enjoys freedom. During the scenes that follow Audrey working, the film creates sympathy and empathy through what Robert Sinnerbrink describes as "reaction shots" (2015, p. 94) in which the editing orchestrates what the character sees and how she reacts to what she sees. When, from the non-diegetic real, we see the character reacting to her situation from a peripheral perspective, we see her being affected by the situation and feel sympathy for her. Furthermore, when we see from a subjective, central perspective what she can see, we feel empathy; we suffer with her and from the same perspective. The film therefore gives Audrey an extradiegetic dignity by centring our attention on her, her work and working conditions and makes us think about the kind of justice she deserves. However, instead of sending the audience back to their daily routine with this in mind, *Bird People* performs justice, and quite exceptionally, a justice that transcends the diegetic/extradiegetic one-way logic, according to which the audience is affected by the film. In *Bird People*, both the diegetic and extradiegetic actants are involved in the process of justice. When watching the cleaning scenes, I long for a justice that does not exist in the extradiegetic world, i.e. the fact that

airport hotel staff could escape the neoliberal injunctions towards flexibility, and could transform the airport into, and occupy it as, a space of desalienation. However, I appreciate that my sympathy and empathy, my feelings, cannot affect the film. When the film produces events that, on the one hand, are uncaused and produced by absolute contingency, and that, on the other hand, fulfil my longings, I know there is no causal relation between what I think from my side of the screen and what happens on the screen. Nevertheless, it is because we have given Audrey attention, watched her when she was transparent and longed for her desalienation that the freedom that she acquires for no reason is justice. We bring into the assemblage that the film constructs between Audrey, the camera and the audience the memory[82] that transforms a mere contingent event into an act of justice, a parataxis into history. Audrey is not just a lucky chick, but the recipient and agent of a justice that grants an experience of freedom to the assemblage that involves both her becoming a bird, and the becoming-bird that the audience and the camera experience.

In order to conclude this section, I want to examine briefly how using Meillassoux's resolution of the spectral dilemma and of the speculation of the fourth World as a framework for discussing *Bird People* resonates with *Rubber*. Both films have in common the ability to engage with the issue of hyperchaos and justice in a way that both resonates with Meillassoux's speculation on a fourth World and dissociates from his focus on humanity. Both films manage to think a justice that could involve not the eternal resurrection of humanity but either a temporal embodiment as an animal (the sparrow) or the resurrection of subaltern forms of being that have no possibility to free themselves by thinking their alienated condition (the tyre). Both films show that hyperchaos cinema can think a non-anthropocentric outcome of hyperchaos (the resurrection of tyres instead of humanity or a renewal as a bird) and speculate on an ethics that does more than "staging encounters with modernity's excluded others" (Martin-Jones, 2016b, p. 80) (e.g. low-skilled workers, animals, objects) since it actually performs acts of justice towards these. From a strictly Meillassouxian perspective, however, the resurrection of tyres and their reterritorialization

[82] Interestingly, Audrey, in her bird stage, slowly loses her human memory. While in the first hours of her bird experience, she comments widely about what she feels when becoming a bird, these comments become scarcer with time, and finally stop. This slow vanishing of her human consciousness expresses itself through a farewell to both language and memory. She first does not recognize her colleagues having a cigarette break, and when she sees one of them sleeping later, her last words are: "What is it? It's a man." The following morning, she wakes up in a tree and joins a flock of sparrows and becomes unidentifiable, or more accurately, imperceptible. In these last scenes of her becoming a sparrow, it is therefore fundamental that the audience remembers her human past in order to make of her absolute freedom, of her becoming-imperceptible, an act of justice.

of the world would not bring the advent of a fourth World, since it would not bring into the world something that does not exist yet. *Rubber* speculates that tyres could become alive, but life exists already; that they could think, but thought exists already; be self-conscious, but consciousness exists already. The resurrection of tyres would be an injustice to us humans, who have been longing for a justice that does not exist in our World but that we can think about. Furthermore, there would be no justice at all in granting eternal felicity to a category of entities that could not think and long for it before their resurrection. *Rubber* helps us then to radicalize Meillassoux's idea and shows that we can long for, and think *now* a justice that does not exist but could be performed by the continuity of thought in the case of a radical ontological change brought forth by hyperchaos. If hyperchaos can make old tyres think, as *Rubber* suggests, then we must long for a justice that could be perpetuated by thought itself and for thought itself, independently from the entity that thinks. It is not enough to long for and think a justice that would be granted to those who actually think in this actual World. In order to guarantee that a fourth World in which tyres would become alive and think, and that could be a world of justice, we must desire and think that justice – the indifference to difference – should be given to anything that *could* think, i.e. every possible entity that exists in the world. Thus, in our third World of thought, we should long for the resurrection not only of humans, but of the world itself. Not only mourn those who have suffered injustice, pain and odious death, but include in our mourning, and let ourselves be haunted by, those who could become conscious of having had such fates. In other words, we should develop an ethics for the Anthropocene. Furthermore, hyperchaos cinema suggests an ethics that eschews both the anthropocentric and anthropomorphic resolution of the question of the aporia of thought that I discussed earlier. On the one hand, hyperchaos cinema challenges Meillassoux's perspective that humans only deserve justice because they can think it and suffer from its absence. On the other hand, it challenges the immanent, subjectalist position that I critiqued when discussing Shaviro's anthropomorphic turn, according to which we think because everything thinks to a certain degree. *Rubber* shows that if we agree *with* Meillassoux that thought came to humanity for no reason (against anthropomorphism), we must accept *against* Meillassoux that humanity has no supremacy (against anthropocentrism), and that the fourth World of justice depends on our ability to think a justice for whatever could think, without implying that everything can actually think. The ethics of hyperchaos cinema is therefore twofold: against anthropomorphism, it welcomes the ability of the world to develop in ways that do not comply with our human perception of the world, and against anthropocentrism, it suggests a justice yet to come that

demands from us now to think a justice for, and mourn the injustice made to, anything that might think in an uncaused future. This ethics that considers both the contingency of our access to thought and the possibility that, while we think, we are responsible for mourning the injustice made to anything that could think is the third, and perhaps highest, joy of factiality.

3.4 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have argued that films can think a non-anthropocentric time that resonates strongly with Meillassoux's hyperchaos. I have suggested analysing, under the generic term of hyperchaos cinema, films that reflect and reflect on events and changes that happen for no reason, and thus fundamentally challenge our understanding of the laws according to which the world emerges and develops. The principle of unreason, keystone of hyperchaos and endorse in the foreword of *Rubber*, relates strongly to issues of epistemology and ethics. It celebrates the experimental power of films and their ability to reveal the absolute contingency of the events with which they engage. This contingency supports an ethics that disregards any metaphysical attempt to commodify negative affects but, conversely, celebrates affirmative transformations. *Rubber* experiments with both of these. On the one hand, it explores film's ability to engage with a time rooted in both becoming/continuity and absence of continuity/emergence of events and entities ex nihilo. On the other hand, it experiments with its ability to engage with such an entity and with the changes that it brings into the world. For instance, from its post-cinematic perspective, *Rubber* tests ways to record how an object becomes a body when acquiring life, how this body renegotiates dialectical relations of subjectification and objectification, and how the camera can and cannot correlate with this alter correlating correlate. *Rubber* does ethics when speculating about the power of the universe to create novelty beyond our human perception of its laws and limits, when launching affirmative affects that the universe could not express within the limits of the non-cinematic real. Cinematic thought, from within the circle of correlation, can thus engage with absolute contingency, which Meillassoux analyses as an absolute knowledge of the characteristic of the world itself.

While *Rubber* develops its experimentation according to a quite radical protocol, *Bird People* roots similar hypotheses and investigations in a more mundane, daily setting. By contrasting two ways of expressing similar affects, both films celebrates film's ability to locate the principle of no reason within human experience. Hyperchaos strips the reason

through which humans express changes in their daily lives and empowers them with pure affirmative affects. Whereas *Rubber* suggests that hyperchaos cinema engages in a regime of correlation with the entity emerging from changes ex nihilo characterized by an objective distance, *Bird People* suggests that hyperchaos cinema allows us to transcend the boundaries between diegetic and extradiegetic actants in order to perform an act of justice. Both films have a strong ethical grounding. *Rubber* advocates a film ethics that liberates the power of creation of the world and frees it from our human limits. *Bird People* goes beyond processes that produce empathy and sympathy in order to perform justice by linking together our actual experience of the world and hyperchaos. Finally, I have argued that hyperchaos cinema can radicalize Meillassoux's thinking and suggest an ethics that takes into consideration not only everything that thinks, but everything that could think.

Chapter 4: Hyperchaos, non-whole and time without becoming

In the previous chapter, I established that cinematic thought can think the principle of unreason that Meillassoux considers to be an absolute characteristic of the real. I analysed how films can engage with a filmic time in which events happen for no reason and how such a time affects and challenges the subjective organization of correlation. In this last chapter, I develop further my exploration of hyperchaos cinema by analysing two films, *Holy Motors* and *Réalité*, that share with *Rubber* and *Bird People* some key elements (principle of no reason, post-cinematic context, post-digital aesthetics and refutation of dialectical organization of subjectivity). I will focus on these films' ability to think hyperchaos by their specific engagement with the concepts of non-whole and times without becoming.

In the first section of this chapter, I discuss how in *Holy Motors* the screen on which the film is projected becomes hyperchaotic, disrupting the syntax of film and various operations performed by the credits by welcoming contingent images in the continuity of the filmic time. I discus these images, including images that do not belong, ontologically to moving images. I show that the specific images (clips of Étienne-Jules Marey) that predate cinema were already questioning the possibility to step outside of movement in order to understand movement and to step outside of correlation to understand correlation. This question is at the centre of *Holy Motors*, which reflects and reflects on issues of post-cinematic identity and the necessity of an observer to access the real or possible correlation with digital images. Finally, I argue that *Holy Motors*' most distinctive feature is its construction of a time that develops as a non-whole, an experience of the world in excess of the unity of becoming.

With *Réalité*, I address how cinema can produce a structure that develops a time without becoming in which sets emerge, repeat and change contingently. This time can produce actualizations without virtual that put correlation out of joint. Finally, I analyse these events in view of anxieties related to, on the one hand, the techno-human assemblages specific to our digital age and, on the other hand, the Anthropocene.

4.1 *Holy Motors*

In this section, I discuss *Holy Motors* from two main perspectives. After some general remarks concerning its critical reception and complex structure, I discuss how *Holy Motors* develops a filmic device that puts correlation out of joint by disrupting the automatisms that

are at the core of the filmic processing of the real, and the very possibility to merge the camera's subjective presence and the subjectivity of the characters that they film. In the last part of this section, I discuss how *Holy Motors* creates a time without becoming and presents Oscar as a character who changes without becoming with the world.

4.1.1 Preliminary remarks

4.1.1.1 Literature review

Surprisingly, *Holy Motors* has received little academic attention so far. In *B is For Bad Cinema* (Perkins and Verevis, 2014), Claire Perkins and Constantine Verevis analyse how *Holy Motors* was received as an "event film" that critics epitomized as an archetype of either good or bad film. They note that *Holy Motors* was described by the most enthusiastic critics as an example of films that convey a surrealist shock that forces the audience to think, which they link with what Deleuze describes as "a sublime conception of cinema"; however, they emphasize how Deleuze describes such a perspective as specific to an obsolete phase of film theory and practice (Deleuze, 1989, pp. 156–157, in Perkins and Verevis, 2014, pp. 4–5).

Erick Neher, in *In Praise of Boring Films* (2013), discusses *Holy Motors* briefly, and states that he associates it with "surrealist confusion" (p. 228) and describes it as a "phantasmagoria on identity, masquerade, and the nature of work in the postmodern world" (ibid., p. 231). Neher also emphasizes that *Holy Motors* develops as an enigmatic structure "with no accompanying explanation or motivation. The viewer is left to puzzle out the meanings without clear cues from the filmmaker, and the result is often confusion" (ibid., pp. 231–232). This idea resonates with Adrian Martin, who dedicates a section of his article *Where do Cinematic Ideas Come From?* (2014) to *Holy Motors*, which he described as a labyrinth of references that loses the viewer in a complex game of cinematographic hints, dead ends and bewilderment. The idea of the labyrinth is shared by Saige Walton (2014), who offers quite an interesting analysis in which she links *Holy Motors* to a baroque film tradition, focusing on the pleats of its "delirious embodied aesthetics that is steeped in infinite movement, materiality and multiplicity" (p. 245).

Raymond Bellour, in *Homo Animalis Kino* (2017), reads *Holy Motors* as "a film about the destiny of cinema" (p. 191) in which the hero finds the part of himself that exceeds his role in his animality that resonates with "the animal dimension of the cinema-machine" (ibid.).

Finally, Johannes Pause echoes this meta-cinematic perspective in his film review *Cinema's Journey into Homelessness Leos Carax's Holy Motors* (2014). He argues that "cinema is itself a part of modern mobilization, an art that is able to infiltrate and to analyse all spheres of life" (ibid., p. 134) to such an extent that attempting to make the difference between reality and fiction, film and life, acting and living becomes meaningless.

Even though these analyses read *Holy Motors* from different theoretical perspectives and frameworks, many of them resonate with what I established as the characteristic feature of hyperchaos cinema, the principle of unreason and cinema's ability to put correlation out of joint and to reflect on the possibility to correlate with other correlating correlates. Building on this, I want to argue that *Holy Motors* suggests a radical post-cinematic environment that allows observation and analysis of the issues of the inaccessibility of the world itself and the anxiety raised by the multiplication of modes of correlation and their possible interactions.

4.1.1.2 Film structure

In order to support the film analysis, a brief description of its structure is necessary. *Holy Motors* develops into eight main components more or less loosely connected together. It starts, quite traditionally, with the credits; however, they are disrupted in a way that I will analyse as the first event of hyperchaos in the film. It continues with a prologue in which the director, Leos Carax himself, appears on-screen and leaves a film theatre in which the audience is asleep or dead, which can be interpreted as a symbol of the post-cinematic context in which the action of the film develops. The main body of the film follows a character, Oscar (Denis Lavant), and his driver and assistant, Céline (Edith Scob), during one day of their professional activity. The exact nature of their mission is never explicitly revealed, but the film alternates scenes in which Oscar performs various roles during what they call "appointments" and scenes in which they drive, in a large white limo, from one appointment to the other (from now on "transitions"). During these transitions, Oscar and Céline perform different actions and interactions: Oscar rests, eats, constructs the next characters by learning lines, changing clothes, putting on make-up and prostheses, and enters into exchanges with Céline both professionally and in a socially distant but caring manner. Various elements scattered through the appointments and transitions reveal that Oscar and Céline work for an organization that plans and schedules the appointments. Oscar is given scripts and dialogues that he needs to memorize before each appointment, which happen on location and, most importantly, are filmed by invisible cameras. Furthermore, we know that

Oscar does not have "a life of his own", but that he works 24/7 and spends each night in a different home, acting as a different person. However, whether Oscar interacts only with fellow actors (only two people are clearly identified as fellow actors during two different appointments) and/or whether he is a double for "real" people in some aspects of their daily lives is an unresolved enigma. Furthermore, even though we learn that an audience watches his performances, the context and conditions in which his work is broadcast are never explained.

For the sake of clarity, below is a brief description of the appointments:

Appointment 1: Oscar is a banker who leaves his house, works while being driven to his office, phones a friend and colleague and makes an appointment for an evening drink.

Appointment 2: Oscar is an old Romanian woman who begs on a busy bridge, ignored by the crowd.

Appointment 3: Oscar is an actor in a motion capture outfit who performs three scenes: a martial arts sequence, movements of a soldier running and fighting, and a love scene with a female colleague that is digitalized as two dragons mating.

Appointment 4: Oscar is Merde, a character that Lavant played in Carax's segment of *Tokyo!* (Joon-Ho Bong, Leos Carax, Michel Gondry, France/Japan/South Korea/Germany, 2008), who comes out of the sewer system and into the Pere Lachaise cemetery where he causes his usual havoc. He interrupts a fashion shoot and kidnaps the model, whom he takes into a mausoleum where he transforms her dress into a burqa.

Appointment 5: Oscar is a father who picks up his teenage daughter who was attending her first party. Driving back home, he scolds her harshly when he discovers that she lied to him when pretending to have enjoyed the party while she spent the evening alone, locked in the toilets.

Appointment 6: the intermission. Oscar is an accordionist who leads a band of musicians who play while walking through a church.

Appointment 7: Oscar is a gangster who kills a man by stabbing him in the throat and transforms the dying body, with make-up and prostheses, into a double of himself. When the

operation is finished, the dying man stabs his killer in the throat. The two identical bodies die in a pool of blood.

Appointment 8: Oscar is an old man, Mr Vogan, who dies, supported by his niece.

Appointment 9: Oscar is a man coming back home late at night, with great news for his wife and child, both of whom are chimpanzees.

While some scenes are easy to categorize as either appointments or transition, others play with the grey areas of the post-cinematic "neither film nor real" and are much more difficult to assess. I briefly describe two of these scenes here, but will precisely analyse these later.

Between appointments 7 and 8, in the limo, an important[83] dialogue happens. Oscar discovers the presence of the mysterious "man with the birth mark" and they have a conversation about Oscar's job. A few minutes later, Oscar suddenly asks Céline to stop the car. He takes a gun and puts on a hood, runs down the street and charges towards the banker who is having a drink with his friend, as planned during the first appointment. He shoots the banker in the head before being shot by the banker's bodyguards. Céline arrives and reminds Oscar's dead body, lying down on the pathway and covered in blood, that they shouldn't be late; she apologizes to the crowd which has gathered around them, and helps Oscar to stand up.

Between appointments 8 and 9, while Oscar, still wearing the old man's white wig, pyjamas and overcoat, is removing the old man's wrinkles from his face, the limo has an accident with the limo of an actress, Jean (Kylie Minogue), who is arriving at one of her appointments. He walks her to her next appointment through the empty space of the former store of La Samaritaine, where she starts singing a song about their ever-lost identity ("who were we, when we were who we were back then?"). He leaves her on the roof terrace of the building where she has arranged to meet her partner. She walks towards the edge of the building and prepares to jump. When going down the stairs, Oscar hides from a man who climbs up the

[83] This dialogue is important for two reasons: it reveals that Oscar is continuously filmed by invisible cameras, and it finishes with a question that resonates strongly with Meillassoux's concept of the Ancestral. This scene is discussed further pp 198-9.

stairs calling "Jean, is that you, Jean?" Oscar leaves the building and runs past Jean's crushed body on the ground, together with the man's body, before rushing into his limo, yelling.

Holy Motors ends with a scene during which the limo is parked in a large garage with other limos; the cars talk to each other about their workday and their fear of being made redundant soon by humans who do not want visible machines any more. One says that people don't want "motors"[84] nor "action" any more, both terms that resonate strongly with a supposed end of cinema. Finally, the film hosts the work of two experimental image makers: eight clips of Marey's chronophotographs either disrupt this already loose structure, or comment on the action,[85] and two scenes are datamoshed by video artist Jacques Perconte.

4.1.2 Étienne-Jules Marey: When cameras disrupt correlation

4.1.2.1 In Holy Motors*, why are the credits suddenly interrupted by chronophotographs made in the 19th century by Étienne-Jules Marey? – No Reason*

As in most French films, before the credits and on the black screen, the three logos of the main production companies emerge, for this film namely Wild Bunch, Les Films du Losange and Arte. They lay the first claim to the origin of the film, but, according to a well-established cinematographic ritual, they also ensure a transition between the non-diegetic and diegetic world. The names of the producers stand out for a few seconds, in white letters on the black background: "Martine Marignac, Maurice Tinchant, and Albert Prévost présentent [present]". The film expresses its first statement of singularity through the acknowledgment of the names of its producers, when suddenly the syntax of the credits is disturbed. On the screen, a boy enters from the left, running, and then he suddenly turns and exits the frame from which he had appeared, in just a couple of seconds. This is a black-and-white, scratched clip of a film, or more precisely of a chronophotograph, by Étienne-Jules Marey, one of the pre-cinematic experimenters of live-action footage. Then the credits continue, interrupted again by two other clips of Marey's studies, one of the same boy

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[84] "Moteur!" is, on a film set, the French equivalent of "Action!"

[85] For instance, in the middle of the film, a scene signed as "Interval" follows Oscar playing music with a band in a church. A quick shot by Marey, of a pianist's hand stretching before playing, is inserted between a shot of a partition, titled "Interval", and the beginning of the shot in the church.

running, from the right of the screen this time and turning his back to the camera, and then of an adult man throwing an object on the ground, this one repeated, looping three times. For no reason, the frame appears in its hyperchaotic reality, as a space in which images, shots, clips and films shift from one to another, a space indifferent, in its materiality, to both the Chronos and Cronos[86] that films project on it.

For no reason, these images interrupt one of the main laws of filmic time: no film can start without being first claimed by its owners through the various operations of territorialization of the screen space, operated by the ritual of the credits. Screens are vacant spaces that are occupied by a specific film that usually start with various claims: producers claim ownership, directors claim authorship, actors claim their identity. *Holy Motors* disrupts this law in a way that is both similar to and different from what Jennifer M. Barker calls "the occasional crisis" of cinema in *The Tactile Eye* (Barker, 2009, p. 129). Barker discusses those moments when the smoothness of the filmic continuity is disrupted by all the events in which "the cinema's internal body comes hurtling forward to our conscious attention (and its own) in a moment of crisis" (ibid.). Barker includes in these moments of crisis technical incidents such as a fibre caught in the projector's gate (ibid.), the burning of the celluloid (ibid., p. 130) or voluntary effects such as stop-motion animation and its reiteration of stillness into movement[87] (ibid., pp. 137–144). From her phenomenological perspective, Barker argues that, since these moments reveal a dysfunction in the film's organic mechanism that affects the totality of the film and viewer assemblage, they can bring to our consciousness the normally inaccessible visceral functions of our body, and the illusion of continuity of our presence in the world. Because they "can remind us of the discontinuity at the heart of our body and the film's when our perceptual attention is so clearly directed away from it" (ibid., p. 129), films can reveal what is usually both unthought and inaccessible. However, the film/spectator assemblage expresses itself not only as a body, but as a thought as well. In *Cinema 2*, Deleuze argues that the cinematographic automatism "is the material automatism of images which produces from the outside a thought which it imposes, as the unthinkable in our intellectual automatism" (1989, pp. 178–179). Cinema has a subjective position in the world very similar to ours, but only more effective, and it projects its thought from outside

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[86] The two times that Deleuze refers to in *Cinema 2*. Cf. pp114-5.

[87] One of the most beautiful and impressive examples of such a voluntary event being perhaps the bicycle scene at the beginning of Godard's *Sauve Qui Peut La Vie/Slow Motion,* Jean-Luc Godard, France/Austria/ Germany/Switzerland, 1980).

on our thought, itself automatic, in a seamless correlation. Rushton explains that, for Deleuze, if "natural perception constructs reality in much the same way as cinematographic perception does […] the perceptions that the film-camera-projector provides for us are more accomplished than our own, human capacities for perception" (Rushton, 2011, p. 129). Occasional crises reveal the processes that the making of the real usually hide. By disrupting the automatic flow of the film, they expose the various elements that participate in the audience and film assemblage: a screen, pixels or celluloid, a heart, a liver or kidneys, thoughts. This molecularization of the materiality of the filmic subject as assemblage caught in the act of the making of the real can be seen as the possibility of putting correlation out of joint, or to "alienate ourselves from ourselves, in order to look at correlationism from a non-correlational perspective" (Shaviro, 2014, p. 111).[88]

When *Holy Motors* disrupts the credits, it accomplishes a crisis that reveals a dysfunction that is nevertheless specific. While Barker refers to internal and invisible or unperceived functions becoming suddenly external, visible and perceptible, *Holy Motors* disrupts the process of territorialization by shots that are external to *Holy Motors* itself. The crisis does not come from within, from the organs that constitute the film-spectator body, but from the irruption of the outside. These shots resist the operations of reterritorialization that are being performed since *Holy Motors* cannot claim their ownership, authorship and identity. Secondly, Barker's crisis disrupts the unity of the film-viewer's body in order to reveal this very unity as what is usually unexperienced, as hiccups reveal the usual unawareness of breathing. Conversely, this crisis affects the very possibility of the construction of the film by and for the viewer, as a smooth and stable unity. These clips claim, from the very first seconds of the film, that the structure of filmic time is contingent, that the best-established laws, even those that state that nothing can happen unless ownership and authority have been established, can be disrupted by sudden bursts of free images. The contingency of filmic time is thus revealed by these clips that are in excess of the film unity, both in and out of the film material, completely unrelated and indifferent to the film as becoming. From this perspective, they put out of joint the Deleuzian correlation with the outside of thought. When

[88] I quote Shaviro here, perhaps insolently, out of its context, in order to endorse what this quote initially disregards. In his book about speculative realism, Shaviro actually summarizes Meillassoux's realist project with this sentence, in order to highlight "the impossibility (or even absurdity) of the task" (Shaviro, 2014, p. 111). Against Shaviro, I want to argue that hyperchaos cinema can put correlation out of joint and allows us to think the facticity of correlation.

Holy Motors' credits are cut by Marey's films, the film does not merely quote nor borrow images from other films, but actualizes on the screen images that do not belong to cinema. Marey's films are indeed not cinema, not only because they predate the official invention of cinema, but also because they are ontologically non-cinematic since, as I will develop further in the next section, they are photograms that were not meant to be projected as moving images. The interruption of the credits with Marey's clips is hyperchaotic, therefore, because from the very beginning, it breaks the process through which a stable, single, continuous filmic time reterritorializes the screen, and disrupts the process through which a single, stable cinematic thought establishes the primacy of its relation to and construction of the real. *Holy Motors* therefore exemplifies cinema's ability to subsume, within a specific filmic time, times that differ ontologically and that do not emerge as expressions of a same, shared becoming. As in Meillassoux's hyperchaos, time in *Holy Motors* can, for no reason, change the laws according to which the real emerges. Obviously, as viewers, we will construct meaning afterwards: we will make sense of the encounter of Marey's clips and the credits as a meaningful event; we will reterritorialize chaos and, by counting, naming and listing the ghosts that haunt the film, we will map its virtual. Our viewing experience, however, starts with two affects that resonate with hyperchaos. First, cinematic time can be contingent, can be changed and change any law, be it natural, temporal, physical, social, cinematographic, syntactic or semantic, and for no reason. Secondly, these changes reveal the absolute contingency of frame and screens that nevertheless make filmic correlation possible; they are part of the itself of the filmic world, indifferent to our projections and to the meaning that we build in and through it.

4.1.2.2 What can cinema see that we can't see with cinema? Marey and the question of correlation

With the screening of Marey's clips, the question of the possible knowledge of the access to the real engulfs itself in the film. In order to unpack this question, I will now briefly discuss the work of Marey, which engages with the ability of chronophotography to provide scientific knowledge about movement, and resonates with fundamental questions related to cinematic correlation. Marey's position as a scientist and inventor, who both established some of the technologies used by early cinema and discredited the use of cinema in science, has been widely commented on, notably by Bazin (2005a) Deleuze (1986) and Doane (2002). They all highlight how Marey, in constant interaction with the research of his time

and focusing on the recording of movement, developed instruments that could allow him to study the various phases at work in a movement but showed little interest in the instruments that could reproduce these movements. While he was convinced by cameras' ability to produce images that de-synthesize movement, he was reluctant to grant cinema-like projections the ability to offer relevant analytical support for these images. To see what the human brain–eye assemblage cannot see, in other words, in order to escape from the human synthesis that substitutes general movement to specific punctual phases, he needed to decompose movements in a succession of instants and recompose them in an alternative mode that substitutes distinct phases for movement. However, he did not consider that putting these back in movement – i.e. cinema and, more generally, projection – could have any scientific interest.

> Cinema produces only what the eye can see in any case. It adds nothing to the power of our sight, nor does it remove its illusions, and the real character of a scientific method is to supplant the insufficiency of our senses and correct their errors. To get to this point, chronophotography should renounce the representation of phenomena as they are seen by the eye. (Marey, in Doane, 2002, p. 61)

Most of his work consists, therefore, in the production of chronophotographs, the decomposition, in a single still image, of the movement of objects, human or non-human animals, in front of a black background. In his latter works, he even put light spots on various key joints of his subjects, producing still images of movement as waves of light. One of Marey's most pragmatic uses of this technology is illustrated by his collaboration with the French Army, for whom he analysed the walk of equipped soldiers in order to improve the ergonomics of their packs (Braun, 1992). *Holy Motors* might pay tribute to this historical fact, in the scene of the third appointment where Oscar works for the digital motion caption industry as a fighter running on a treadmill.

Marey's preoccupation and our contemporary realist speculation address similar questions: Can we know the world independently from our subjective position? Can we step outside of movement in order to understand movement? Can we alienate ourselves from correlation in order to understand correlation and the world in itself? Is the presence of a beholder necessary to the emergence of the real?

4.1.2.3 And if there's no more beholder?

This question of the necessity of the beholder in the constitution of knowledge, that terminates Oscar's conversation with the mysterious man with the birth mark, is asked in the middle of the film, and constitutes its core. Furthermore, it resonates strongly both with Marey's questioning about the ability of cinema to provide positive knowledge about the real, and with Meillassoux's concept of the ancestral. In other words, *Holy Motors*' question can be unpacked as one of the main problems that hyperchaos cinema addresses: post-cinema has deterritorialized the gaze, does not watch any more, for us, the world for us but watches us from an absolutely exterior perspective, with which we might, or not, correlate. What can we learn from this about the real?

Discussing the scene in which Oscar talks with the mysterious man will help to understand how *Holy Motors* sets this problem. Although the film never reveals why Oscar is filmed, it makes clear that the extradiegetic audience sees what the diegetic invisible cameras film for a hypothetical diegetic audience. The dialogue confirms that in all the narrative part (the scenes featuring Oscar's appointments and transitions), humans are shot by invisible cameras and the man warns Oscar that "some of us" do not believe in his work any more. The following dialogue develops:

> Oscar: I miss the cameras. They used to be heavier than us, then they became smaller than our heads, now you can't see them at all. So sometimes I too find it hard to believe in it all.
> The man: Isn't this nostalgia a bit sentimental? Thugs don't need to see the security cameras to believe in them. […] What makes you carry on, Oscar?
> Oscar: What made me start, the beauty of the act.
> The man: Beauty? They say it's in the eye, the eye of the beholder.
> Oscar: And if there's no more beholder?

The invisible presence of the cameras holding an external gaze on the action is central to the dispositive of the entire film, and strong mis en abyme during this discussion. This scene both endorses and disrupts the convention of the shot-reverse shot, by filming the two men facing each other from both sides of the compartment of the limo, but from a non-human perspective. While it is one of the most emotional scenes in the film, one of the rare occasions

in which Oscar seems to own and share a personal, proper emotion, it is nonetheless shot from a non-emotional, mechanical perspective. The gaze of the camera appears insensitive to the tension, the game of power at stake, and to the way in which the two men both challenge and confide in each other. Although each of them is filmed while speaking, their speaking turns do not give its rhythm to the editing; they are shot by cameras that slowly dolly towards them, at a regular, mechanical speed, insensitive to the emotions of the characters. In this dispositive, two cameras claim both their presence (the space is mediated by their progression towards the character they film) and their absence (they are "visibly invisible" in the space that they mirror, while the two characters are specifically debating about the power that this very invisibility gives to the camera). As noted by Shaviro, in the cinema of the twenty-first century, the shot-reverse shot convention "is a formalist cliché, […] entirely empty because it implies a human reciprocity that no longer exists in the commodified mediatized world that the movie reflects back to us" (Shaviro, 2010, p. 126). However, *Holy Motors* highlights that hyperchaos cinema deconstructs not only any possible human reciprocity, but drastically deconstructs the human/film reciprocity and the claim that we can access *the world that the movie reflects back to us*. *Holy Motors*, as a cinematic dispositive that gives us images filmed by absolute, external, invisible cameras, challenges any possible adequation between the real as synthesized by cameras, by the characters and by the spectators. The diegetic filmic scheme appears then as a process of recording in which both possible beholders are absent. On the one hand, cameras are invisible (they are no longer in the dialectical relation described by Sobchack, nor correlating correlates) and, on the other hand, no audience might watch their recordings. Similar to the surveillance cameras that the man refers to, the cameras' role does not consist in recording the real, but in making it happen, and shaping it, which does not require a spectator. They are the problematic beholder that is present but whose presence both impacts Oscar's entire life and is inaccessible to him.

4.1.3.4 Live performance or performed life: The nature of the real

The problematic presence/absence of the beholder is crucial in a film in which the constant presence of invisible cameras is part of the diegetic world in which, consequently, the boundaries between the lived and the performed, the real and the film are indistinguishable. *Holy Motors* radicalizes some of the questions raised by films that experiment with situations that blur the distinction between film and life, such as *The Truman Show* (Peter Weir, USA,

1998) or *C'est Arrivé Près de Chez Vous*/*Man Bites Dog* (Rémy Belvaux, André Bonzel, Benoît Poelvoorde, Belgium, 1992). Weir's film opposes the real life of watchers and makers of the show and the fake life of Truman, in a vibrant call for freedom, understood as the transformation of the hero from an object of the gaze to a gazing subject. When Truman ceases to be an object interacting directly with the objects of the world, in order to become a subject who acquires a distance through which the world is mediated, he understands that reality is not directly accessible. Truman's quest involves gaining subjectivity, i.e. accepting his facticity at the price of abandoning a relation of object among objects, extracting himself from a world in which he shared a similar ontology with all its elements, and of which he could have a direct knowledge. Conversely, *C'est Arrivé Près de Chez Vous*, a found-footage mockumentary that follows a film team documenting the exactions perpetrated by a serial killer, offers a subjectivist perspective on the nature of the real. The killer and the film crew co-construct a reality that subsumes the series of their subjective positions, and in which the crimes become a collective creation in which they participate equally. However, *Holy Motors* does not follow either of these positions: it never reflects (for us) the world (-for-us), nor constructs an *us* that would include all the perspectives of the world in a single shared experience. Instead, *Holy Motors* sets a filmic device in which the gaze of cameras is radically external and irreducible to the gaze of humans, who can never reterritorialize the camera's digital gaze.

The narrative of Oscar's workday is exclusively made of shots taken by the diegetic invisible camera or supermediatized by screens embedded inside these shots. An example of the latter feature can be found in the limo scene that takes place between the second and third appointments. The camera films Oscar, still wearing the attire from his previous appointment, taking some rest, opening the car window and looking outside, but without giving us access to what he sees, through a subjective shot taken from Oscar's perspective. Conversely, we can share his experience of the external world as indirect, and mediated, when, later in the same scene, he looks at the scenery through a digital mirror, which is then filmed by the camera. In this case, the shot does not pretend to see the world from Oscar's perspective, to merge the two human and camera gazes in a common experience of the world, but is the direct quote of another digital device.

In *Holy Motors*, cameras see people, look at what they see, but never see for them, always keep them outside their gaze, as is exemplified by a long shot at the beginning of the

father/daughter appointment. The camera shoots an empty street with a wide angle and the father's car appears at the end of the street and parks just in front of the camera. When Oscar ducks in order to look up, the camera follows his gaze and goes up along a building's facade and stops on a flat glimmering with lights, dance music and balloons, then goes down along the wall to the door of the building, catches the daughter exiting the building and follows her to the car, where she sits and starts a discussion with her father. This specific shot emphasizes the strong cinematic statement expressed by *Holy Motors* according to which the film does not, cannot and, perhaps, refuses to pretend to see what the characters see;[89] it does not share the human perspective, and does not synthesize the world like we do. By putting the viewer and the viewed in the same external reality and, thus, by excluding themselves from the construction of the human-like subjective position, the invisible cameras of *Holy Motors* challenge cinema's construction of the real as a shared correlation. In other words, from its exterior position, the camera refuses to merge, in a single common image or in a series of possible common images, its experience of the world, with the characters or the spectators.

Therefore, the film is no longer a celebration of the emergence of the real, as the world for us, resulting from the interaction of the possible subjective perspectives of the camera, the characters and the spectator in the cinematic assemblage in a shared becoming. By contrast, hyperchaos cinema celebrates the emergence of the non-all, the non-whole, of the presence, in the assemblage, of cameras as actants that do not claim to see for us nor with us, while, paradoxically, mediating our access to the real. The issue of the necessity of a subjective being in the emergence of the real is, therefore, central to *Holy Motors*. It is not only a theme discussed by the characters, as in the scene with the man with the birth mark, but it is also an enigma rooted in each and every single shot of the film. If beauty (among any others its specificity) is not a characteristic of the world itself, but of our subjective perspective on the world, and if the images made by cameras exist, independently of a human perspective, then cinema is no longer the technique that repeats the world like/for/with us. They repeat that an excessive real and inaccessible access to this real spring from the cinematic images, beyond the beauty that we might see in them. Hyperchaos cinema, therefore, puts correlation out of joint by disarticulating the assemblage of the world, the digital images and our human

[89] I discuss a similar relation between the camera and *Rubber* in Chapter 3. Cf. pp. 173-4.

consciousness, and speculating that they might be independent realities. The cinematic assemblage no longer performs the correlation of the correlates by defining the real as the subsumption of the world, the cinematic perspective and the spectator perspective in a coherent singularity. Conversely, it claims that there are two presences in the assemblage that exceed our consciousness: the world itself and the cameras. While gazing at us from outside, and giving us various contingent perspectives from the world for-not-us, it challenges our inability to alienate ourselves from ourselves and to understand that the world exists apart from us. Hyperchaos cinema does not reveal this world, since we are blind to what the cameras see, and we see only our image in their images, but sometimes distorted in its time. At a minimum, it operates what Deleuze calls a nooshock, a shock of the thought through which we might start thinking, and think anew, which, in this specific case, requires a questioning of the absolute truth of cinematic correlation.

4.1.3 Non-whole

In *Holy Motors*, everything starts with Marey, the non-cinematic real that predates cinema, which resonates with Meillassoux's enigma of the arche-fossil, the unwitnessed real that disturbs correlation from a time that predates correlation. Important parts of the film, such as the beginning and the interlude, are announced by an eruption of Marey. I will thus invite Marey (or more precisely, Deleuze's reading of the work of Marey) into the beginning of this new section, dedicated to discuss *Holy Motors*' non-whole. Deleuze highlights that, for Marey, breaking motion into units was a useful strategy for building a syntax of movement; putting the units back in motion was of little use for gaining new knowledge, and could provide nothing more than a confirmation of the validity of the general theory of movement. In the *Movement Image*, Deleuze reminds us that Marey, as a scientist studying movement, was interested in identifying specific moments in a movement, "remarkable occasions […] which belong to movement" (Deleuze, 1986, p. 6), to freeze critical points of articulation, of change, that regulate the economy of balance and unbalance in motion. The fundamental idea on which the two cinema books unfold (the first idea developed in the beginning of the first book) is the affirmation of the necessity of movement for cinema, and for the whole, the world itself. For Deleuze, the specificity of cinema is not to investigate what pre-exists movement. Marey, for instance, films birds landing on a tree to study the phases through which every single bird goes when landing, i.e. the critical points that are identical to, and repeated in, every occurrence. To these transcendental "remarkable occasions", the eternal

truth of science that focuses on what does not change in movement, Deleuze opposes the immanent "any instant whatever", on which cinema reflects the real nature of movement, as production of novelty. These are moments that share the single characteristic of being equidistant in time and that allow films to reveal the whole, as the elements of the world in relation, moving together in duration. Deleuze establishes here not only two distinct perspectives on the world, but two ways of constructing the real, when he states that "the first perspective encloses the world in a giveable whole whereas the second offers a whole that expands, transforms and changes qualitatively" (Deleuze, 1986, pp. 10–11). However, these two perspectives are obviously not self-exclusive when considering the latter as the whole (i.e. the infinitely extensive becoming of everything that is) and the former as a set within the whole (elements caught in the act of their becoming). Deleuze defines a paradigm in which closed sets of objects or distinct parts are impacted by two movements: movements in space in which sets modify their relation by translation, or movements in time (or duration) in which the whole insists, persists and changes according to the relations of its elements. By conceptualizing the whole itself as movement, Deleuze claims the necessity of movement, theorizes the creation of novelty in the world as becoming, and reterritorializes cinema by movement, either as translation (movement-image) or duration (time-image).

4.1.3.1 Non-whole and characters without becoming

Hyperchaos cinema offers a radically different perspective characterized by the fact that it speculates a non-whole. While the whole is the necessary process of becoming in which all entities are involved, the real can produce processes and entities that cannot be subsumed in a single ensemble, nor as a single whole.[90] Indeed, we must remember that Meillassoux argues that the only necessary principle of the world is contingency, the fact that any law

[90] Deleuze is aware of the problem that Meillassoux raises here, the Cantorian axiom according to which the set of all sets is not a whole. In *Cinema 1*, he precisely comments on this:
"We know the insoluble contradictions we fall into when we treat the set of all sets as a whole. It is not because the notion of the whole is devoid of sense; but it is not a set and does not have parts. It is rather that which prevents each set, however big it is, from closing in on itself, and that which forces it to extend itself into a larger set. The whole is therefore like thread which traverses sets and gives each one the possibility, which is necessarily realized, of communicating with another, to infinity. Thus the whole is the Open, and relates back to time or even to spirit rather than to content and to space." (Deleuze, 1986, pp. 16–17)
For Deleuze, the whole is not a sum, but the very process through which the world becomes. Deleuze expresses here the perspective that Meillassoux describes as "subjectalist": everything that is necessarily involved in the whole is understood as the processes of becoming through which the real emerges. From this perspective, correlation is the absolute since nothing else than what is becoming with thought is thinkable. Meillassoux considers this whole as a mere law that the necessary contingency can change, and thus allows us to think that entities or processes could occur out of the whole, out of becoming.

can change at any moment and for no reason and that, in hyperchaos, becoming is contingent. From such a perspective, the Deleuzian whole, in which movement is necessary, must be considered a mere set of particular – but contingent – laws. The Deleuzian whole appears as a stabilized phase of the universe that expands and develops as long as contingency does not change its rules. After Lacan and Badiou, Meillassoux opposes the non-whole to the whole and specifically contests the very possibility of thinking the whole – even an expanding whole – emerging from the relations of the sets. He refers to Cantor, who established that from a mathematical perspective, the universe is non-totalizable under a given universal, or in other words, that the set of all sets does not constitute a whole. Meillassoux explains this in a few words:

> Take any set, count its elements, then compare this number to the number of possible groupings of these elements (by two, by three – but there are also groupings "by one", or "by all", which is identical with the whole set). You will always obtain the same result: the set B of possible groupings (or parts) of a set A is always bigger than A – even if A is infinite. (Meillassoux, 2008a, p. 104)

From this, he develops the idea that "the (quantifiable) totality of the thinkable is unthinkable" (ibid.). The Deleuzian whole, understood as the expansion of the universe through processes of becoming, appears only as one possible configuration of the laws of nature among many, actually a set, and the very notion of the reality of a thinkable whole needs to be challenged.

With this in mind, it is possible to read *Holy Motors* as a film in which neither the characters nor the roles they play are seen from the perspective of a totalizing whole that could subsume their presence in the world as either subjectivity, identity, singularity or becoming. Recorded during the narrative part of the film by invisible, exterior cameras, Oscar and his roles appear as changing contingently, challenging any attempt to build up a narrative that could grasp them either as a subject or as a becoming singularity. Their changes are contingent since they are not observed from/as a whole that expands from the relations they interweave, and that could be explored through various forms of narratives. Captured by the gaze of invisible cameras that do not engage with human perspective, with whom they do not enter into the process of common becoming, humans and their actions are apprehended from a non-human, mechanistic logic. For these inorganic gazes insensitive to life and becoming, humans, actors and characters are mere parts, matter or data that the cameras aggregate as clusters of

independent times. Each one of Oscar's appointments is therefore a unit of time, a set, which does not necessarily carry the seed of future developments, nor develop from previous relations between the elements interacting in each given set. Each appointment breaks the logic of a time developing as the actualization of the virtual and the virtualization of the actual, since the action neither emerges from the past of its elements, nor negotiates the possibility of their possible futures. Oscar does have a past which appears, for instance, with his acquaintance with the character of Merde, and his dislike towards the idea of performing[91] him again. He also has a future, as expressed after the death of Mr Vogan in the eighth appointment, when he leaves the partner with whom he has just performed a poignant scene, telling her that he hopes they will work together again. However, the film is insensitive to these human times, memories and desires, and to the questions of identity raised by human temporality. Oscar and his partners perform incessantly the transformations imposed by the central, as instructed in the folders that appear on the limo's seat, with no power to regulate the processes of identity, difference and repetition that pass through them. Insensitive to human times that anchor our experience of the world in translation and duration through which we construct our presence in and with the world, *Holy Motors* considers humans from a pure material perspective, as this absolute matter that appears when human temporality is out of joint. Indeed, as analysed by Claire Colebrook, temporality is the framework in which identity is reiterated.

> Temporality is that which is other than matter. We live and endure as the same bodies through time only as the re-iteration of an identity; […] there is always, in the subjection to identity, that which remains other than the normative matrix that recognises identity. Matter in itself would be imagined, mourned or figured as that strange non-identity beyond all relations of inside and outside, before and after. (Colebrook, 2011, p. 14)

Holy Motors offers the spectacle of this excess of matter from which temporality withdraws, and questions the possibility of a cinematic engagement with the persistence of matter in unrelated events. Oscar is such a non-identity, a cinematic matter that persists in the film

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[91] When discovering the accessories for his next role, Oscar recognizes the mask of Merde, he utters a "Merde" that can express either the fact that he recognizes the character that he calls by his name, and his resentment, since "merde" means "shit" in French. However, Oscar's expression of a personal, subjective position is rare, here encapsulated in a single, polysemic word.

through various reiterations of identities. In the seventh appointment, for instance, Oscar performs a fascinating scene in which the irresolvable matter of his body assimilates all the possible identities present in the scene. Entering a warehouse, Alex, his hair shaved and wearing a moustache, a tattooed heart on the forehead and a scar on his left eye, meets the long-haired and bearded Théo, and stabs him in the neck. While Théo is dying, Alex transforms him to his own image, shaves his hair, puts a fake moustache on his face, paints the same tattoo and carves the same scar with his knife. When both men look alike, Théo grabs Alex's knife and stabs him in the neck. Both men lay on the ground, bleeding to death. The next shot shows Oscar, staggering out of the warehouse and being helped back into the limo by Céline. The scene plays not only with the codes of action of gangster films but also with the various ways cinema addresses the real. The perspective of the camera and the editing of the scene offer two possible points of access to and thus constructions of the real that are layered in a way that makes them both perceptible and indistinguishable. The scene constructs the real as, on the one hand, what can be accessed from a subjective position, and, on the other hand, what is in excess of a subjective position, or the series of all the possible subjective perspectives. This paradoxical statement is built through the alternative shots that imply multiple actualizations of Oscar (shots, for instance, in which Lavant/Oscar is Alex while only the hands of a body double/Oscar/Théo shave Alex's hair) while others paste in the same frame Lavant/Oscar playing both Alex and Théo. This scene deconstructs any possible dialectical subject/object relations, both in its narrative (each character is a variation on the other and the objectivized one ends up killing the subject that he has become) and in its construction (Lavant is both more of each singular characters, and less since some shots exhibit a body double). However, at the end of the scene, when Oscar appears again, staggering out of temporality towards the limo, he is matter that eschews any assignable identity, an event of discontinuity in excess of the whole of the Alex/Théo scene. This scene reveals that cinema no longer develops from the correlational perspective of the either/or of the movement image (Massumi, 1992; Martin-Jones, 2006), nor from the both/and of the time-image, but from the "both either and nor neither" of hyperchaos.

Contrasting this scene with the films discussed in the first part of this thesis, and especially Guillaume, allows us to make a clear difference between a humanist digital film and hyperchaos cinema. Digital cinema allows Guillaume to express the complexity of his links with the world, and therefore features among what Braidotti calls "a variety of social practices of extended, fragmented, enhanced, or prosthetically empowered embodiments"

(Braidotti, 2010, p. 203) that allows him to construct himself through various flows of complex time. Guillaume was testing the limits of difference: How far can digital cinema repeat difference to express the complexity of his identity? Conversely, hyperchaos cinema contingently disrupts the flows of time and reshuffles prostheses and social constructions in an absolute difference that allows no repetition of identity. Oscar is a contingent transformation that does not become with the world.

4.1.3.2 Can humanity strike back?

The discontinuity and contingent reshuffle of matter through which *Holy Motors* constructs its time concerns not only Oscar and his fellow actors, but their roles as well. Even though the film does not volunteer any clear explanation about this point, the characters played by Oscar seem to persist in time. The banker, for instance, incarnated by Oscar in the morning scene, seems to have a diegetic reality that outlives Oscar's performance since he reappears in the evening, having a drink with his friend. When Oscar sees the banker, and perhaps remembers that he made the appointment in the morning while performing the banker, he jumps out of the limo to kill him. The banker, in the brief scene where we see him being shot, appears as the assemblage of clothes, wig prostheses and human actor, absolutely identical to the assemblage in which Oscar participated in the morning. While killing the banker, and being killed by his bodyguards, Oscar attempts to enter Cronos/Chronos. He suddenly escapes the tracing symbolized by the route of the limo that obeys the organization of the roles cast. He finds in Cronos the possibility to draw a line of flight through which he expresses, for the first time, a rebellion and a singularity. It is worth mentioning that this very scene offers the only occurrence of what could perhaps be a shot that equals Oscar's subjective perspective: three seconds during which the camera searches the terrace of the café and the clients at a height, position and speed that could match his gaze. However, we know that having his body riddled with the bullets of the banker's bodyguards does not kill Oscar, and the only concern expressed by Céline while bringing his bleeding body back to the limo relates to their schedule and how they should not be late. Oscar fails to change the real by exploring Cronos since the bodyguards do not kill him, and he does not kill the banker. From the perspective of the filmed world of *Holy Motors*, not only does Oscar's line of flight merely add spectacle to the spectacle and, therefore, celebrate the order that he intends to fight, but it also reveals a world insensitive to our exploration of it. In *Holy Motors*, the real does not emerge as the chronological development of molar organizations (the

banker is made of various, changing, distinct elements) nor by the rhizomatic connections of molecular assemblages (neither Oscar nor any of his roles are poles between which life develops in relation to each other) but the discontinuous reshuffle of a matter which remains insensitive to the attempts of its reterritorialization by human subjectivity.

4.2 *Réalité*

In the previous section, I discussed *Holy Motors* as a film in which hyperchaos develops in excess of the chronological workday routine of Oscar, as a non-whole that does not subsume as a coherent unity the various elements that emerge from its contingency. In this last section, I focus on *Réalité* and analyse its hyperchaotic construction of a narrative based on contingent segments of time that develop as a time without becoming.

4.2.1 *Réalité*: Preliminary remarks

To my knowledge, *Réalité* has received no critical attention so far, in spite of its fascinating structure that links in a contrapuntal mode the stories, roles and experience of various characters, all more or less involved in the film industry, and who explore the post-cinematic real they participate in. In spite of its nonlinear, non-chronological development, it is possible to isolate and describe its main narrative threads. I mentioned in the foreword of this thesis that a film producer, Bob Marshall (Jonathan Lambert), is working on the film about Zog (John Glover) who used to be a specialist in documentaries, but spent years being out of work. His project involves filming Reality[92] (Kyla Kenedy), a little girl, mostly when she sleeps. Jason Tantra (Alain Chabat) works as a TV cameraman but dreams of becoming a director, and of making a horror film in which TV sets become evil and start killing people by sending lethal radio waves to them. He contacts Marshall and presents his project to him. Marshall agrees to produce Jason's film under one condition: Jason has twenty-four hours to submit a sample of the groan through which he intends to express people's pain. It has to be the best groan in the history of cinema. Meanwhile, as a cameraman, Jason works with Henri (Eric Wareheim) who hosts, in a giant rat costume, a cooking show, but has to stop

[92] As a French film reflecting on its transnationality, *Réalité* plays with French and English languages. The action takes place in the United States, but Jason, his wife and Bob Marshall are French speakers. The title of the film is therefore in French, *Réalité*, while the character of the little American girl is called Reality, in English. In this section, I will therefore refer to the film as *Réalité* and to the character as Reality.

working since he develops an allergy to his outfit and develops an itchy rash that covers his body but that no one can see.

All characters have to follow a personal quest through which they question the nature of the real. Jason accepts that the fulfilment of his dream relies on the recording of the performance of absolute human pain, Henri cannot share the reality that his senses produce with anybody, and Zog tries to document the dreams of a sleeping child. These general epistemological quests are epitomized by Reality's confrontation with the principle of no reason. The film starts with her father, a keen hunter, shooting a wild boar and bringing it back home. Reality is present when he cleans the hog, opens its belly, and notices a blue videotape mixed with the animal's gore. Secretly, she takes the tape and first tries to understand how it could end up in an animal's bowel. When she fails to get a possible answer through the immediate sources of a child's knowledge, her parents and school, she assumes that the only answer is in the tape itself, and that she needs to find an opportunity to watch it.

4.2.2 Reality, hyperchaos and time without becoming

These epistemological quests develop in a time that resonates with hyperchaos, in which the usual rules through which we correlate with the real are challenged, and in which the world itself does not match the world for us, neither our human embodied construction of Chronos, nor our human subjective construction of Cronos.[93] Furthermore, each of the main characters is confronted with the principle of unreason that expresses itself in various singular ways: a videotape for Reality, a professional outfit for Henri, the multiplication of his bodies or the existence of his film yet to be shot for Jason, etc. *Réalité* progresses in hyperchaos, depicted as loops of static moments, in which contingent events happen for no reason, and which, while looping, unpredictably meet and – sometimes – interact or transform. While such a narrative structure seems quite unique in films, I will argue that the emergence of the real in *Réalité* resonates with the way time develops in its musical score, Philip Glass' *Music with Changing Parts*, written in 1970, which occupies a central place in *Réalité* and in a specific place in Dupieux's filmography.

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[93] Cf. pp. 114-6 for a discussion of these Deleuzian times.

4.2.2.1 Changing parts: Soundtrack

Réalité shares with Dupieux's other films many similarities but is quite distinct on its musical score. Dupieux, himself a successful musician,[94] is usually involved in the composition of his films' soundtracks. However, for the first time, instead of composing the tracks himself, or asking musician friends to compose these, he uses extracts of Glass's composition that can be considered a classic of the American minimalists' repertoire. Mark Abel emphasizes that these musicians (including Glass, but also, e.g., Steve Reich, Terry Riley and La Monte Young) experiment with techniques through which they challenge the link between music and becoming. He states that their music,

> though pulsed, seeks, through the use of repetitive micro-patterns with their shifting accents, to avoid the measured regularity of metrical music. But these kinds of minimalist techniques also struggle to express time as becoming or development and instead achieve a sense of static time. (Abel, 2014, p. 103)

In other words, their music does not develop as a linear structure that links critical points, variations around a theme, or development of forms *in time*. However, it also does not develop, as Deleuze and Guattari state, "as a deterritorialised rhythmic block that has abandoned points, coordinates and measures" (Deleuze and Guattari, 1988, p. 296, in Abel, 2014, pp. 99–100) or development of forms *as time*. Conversely, *Music with Changing Parts* builds on the repetition by the musicians of a limited set of lines that accumulate without actually relating to each other. This is not a music that explores time as the whole that gives

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[94] Dupieux, aka Mr Oizo, is a famous electronic musician and DJ. In a 2013 interview for Comingsoon.net, Dupieux commented on his early unexpected and exaggerated success:
"If you know my story and my music, I did this stupid hit at the end of the 90s, 'Flat Beat' with the Flat Eric doll and I directed the Levi's commercial, too, and that was huge. In Europe, we sold three million copies of the record, we sold some puppets."
http://www.comingsoon.net/movies/features/101632-interview-quentin-mr-oizo-dupieux-cant-do-wrong (accessed 19/08/2018).
He is even more critical about his musical talent in a French interview (my translation):
"Music wise, I've always felt like an impostor because I started with this unexpected clip ('Flat Beat') that I achieved quickly. When listening to this now, thinking that it sold three million copies makes no sense. There is nothing more than some kind of a rhythm and a 'brbrbr' that loops, unbelievable! I should never have met such success with my music."
("La musique, j'ai toujours eu l'impression d'être un imposteur parce que je pars de ce tube improbable ['Flat Beat', ndlr] que j'ai fait vite. Quand tu le réécoutes aujourd'hui, tu te dis que c'est impossible que ce truc se soit vendu à trois millions de copies, ça n'a aucun sens. C'est juste un espèce de rythme avec un '*brbrbr*' qui se répète, enfin c'est fou quand t'y penses! Je n'aurais jamais dû être exposé à ce point-là dans la musique.")
http://www.konbini.com/fr/entertainment-2/quentin-dupieux-rencontre-wrong-cops/ (accessed 19/08/2018).

birth to events depending on the speed and slowness of their process, during which they exchange qualitative or quantitative positions, and express and celebrate difference, singularity or identity. Conversely, it develops as the repetitions of closed sets that build up in a non-whole, i.e. a superposition of repetitions in which each part emerges independently and in which the changes are autonomous, not contained in the past of the structure itself. The realization of this project is clearly described by Bob Gilmore:

> The music is laid out in four pairs of staves, so that there is a maximum of eight different musical lines happening at once (not counting the sustained tones). Any instrument or voice can play any line, and more than one player may play the same line. The musicians are expected to breathe and rest when they feel the need. This allows for an essentially unlimited variety of tone colour, as players move in and out of the texture or change from playing rhythmic patterns to long tones and back again. The piece consists of a total of seventy-six different repeating patterns of varying lengths, each of which may be repeated as often as the musicians wish – in performance, cues (usually in the form of nods) are given to signal a move from one pattern to the next. Some of the individual patterns are as brief as four notes, others as long as forty-eight. Most of them are a different length than the immediately preceding pattern, and have a different internal rhythmic structure, such that the changes from one to the next create an overall rhythmic flow that never becomes predictable. (Gilmore, 2018)

The piece is, therefore, built as a layering of static patterns whose variations are internal and contingent – each pattern can be played by a different instrument or musician, or repeated – but does not obey a shared, internal becoming shaping their form and providing a reason for their variations. Furthermore, the piece, as a structure, has no other aim than allowing the repetition of difference itself, as that which resists becoming.

4.2.2.2 Changing parts: Film structure

The structure of *Réalité* shares a similar repetition of static moments. This can be observed in the contrastive analysis of the repetition of one of the film's patterns, in which Bob Marshall and Jason watch Zog and his team leaving Marshall's villa. This pattern offers various moments that are repeated throughout the film, with changes in their setting, or length, as shown in the following table. The right-hand column features the first emergence

of the pattern, which happens when Jason and Bob discuss the pitch for Jason's film. The left-hand column features the repetition of the pattern that emerges at the end of the film, after a scene during which Reality has seen the videotape.

Table 2. Patterns in two scenes of Réalité

In the previous scene, Bob and Jason were in Bob's office. Bob wants them to continue the conversation on the terrace.	In the previous scene, Bob, Zog and his translator were in Bob's theatre where Zog showed the scene in which Reality, eventually, watches the video. The tape shows Jason, in a hospital, making a phone call. He calls Bob, who actually receives the call in the theatre. Bob engages in a conversation with the screened Jason, about the absolute groan they discussed the day before in Bob's office – i.e. the parallel scene.
Large low-angle shot, they step onto the terrace. Bob (in French): One minute please.[95] He addresses someone: Bob (in French): Hey, Zog!	Large shot from the terrace we see three people walking towards a parked car.
Large shot from the terrace we see three people walking towards a parked car.	Medium low-angle shot on Bob on the terrace Bob (in French): Hey, Zog!
Medium shot, two of these people, a man and a woman, walk towards the car and turn towards the house.	Large shot from the terrace, the three people turn towards the house.

[95] My translation
Bob: Tiens, attends-moi deux secondes. Hé Zog! Moins de pellicule!

Large shot from their perspective, looking at the house, Bob and Jason on the terrace. Bob (in French): Less film!	Medium low-angle shot on Bob on the terrace. Bob (in French): You're a fucking genius.[96]
Medium shot of Zog and his translator Zog (in English): What did he say? The translator (in English): He said less film Zog (in English): Tell him to go fuck himself. I'll film as much as I want. The translator (in English): Zog says he'll do his best.	Medium shot of Zog and his translator Zog (in English): What did he say? The translator (in English): He said you're a fucking genius. Zog (in English): Yeah. The translator (in French): Thanks.
Large shot of Bob and Jason on the terrace. Bob (in French): And we really need to know what's on the videotape. Jason (in French): Who's that? Bob (in French): A documentary veteran. I found him in the street. He was almost a tramp. Awkward to handle but really gifted. Right now he's making a great film.[97] Jason makes a frame with his hands.	Medium low-angle shot of Bob and Jason on the terrace. Jason (in French): His name is Zog? Bob (in French): Yes. Jason (in French): Just Zog? No surname? Bob (in French): Yes. Jason (in French): Who's that? Bob (in French): A documentary veteran. I found him in the street. He was almost a tramp.
The car framed in Jason's hands.	The car framed in Jason's hands.

[96] Bob: T'es un putain de génie!
[97] My translation:
Jason: Il s'appelle Zog?
Bob: Oui.
Jason: Juste Zog, sans nom.
Bob: Oui.
Jason: C'est qui?
Bob: Un ancien du documentaire. Je l'ai récupéré dans la rue, il était quasiment devenu clochard. Compliqué à gérer, mais très doué. Là, il est en train de faire un super film. Il a juste tendance à laisser courir la caméra pendant des plombes pour rien.

Bob (in French): He tends to let the camera run for hours for nothing.	Bob (in French): Awkward to handle but really gifted. He's making a great film right now.[98]
Large shot of Bob and Jason (still framing with his hands) on the terrace. Bob (in French): This being said, he's great. It's not really comfortable to talk, standing here, what do you think? Jason (in French): Well, I dunno… They go back in the room.	Large shot of Bob and Jason (still framing with his hands) on the terrace.
	Reality is in her living room, watching the videotape on the television. Zog's car leaves, framed in a very similar way to Jason's hand framing. The word "Fin" (The end) appears on the screen. Reality ejects the tape and puts it back in the bin where she found it.

The scene repeats, both changed and unchanged, as a pattern constituted of micropatterns that can happen at any moment of the film. The shots are not exactly the same, since some micropatterns vary both in details that might appear as insignificant ("right now" is placed at the beginning of Bob's line – "he's making a great film" – in the first occurrence and at the end of the second one) or in elements that resonate with their place in the film (Bob accomplishes his professional coaching either as a proactive prescriber – "We need to know what's on the videotape" / "Less film" – or as an enthusiastic supporter – "You're a fucking genius"). However, the repetition of the scene implements a non-human time, an absolute cinematic time for not us that eschews its reterritorialization by Chronos/Cronos. Such a

[98] My translation:
Jason: C'est qui?
Bob: Un ancien du documentaire. Je l'ai récupéré dans la rue, il était quasiment devenu clochard. Compliqué à gérer, mais très doué. Il est en train de faire un super film, là.

structure, based on repetition of patterns, obviously challenges our chronological embodied time, since the two similar events cannot repeat themselves in two consecutive days, but is nonetheless equally difficult to consider from Cronos. *Réalité* progresses neither as the linear development of Chronos that separates the truth and the false, nor as the bifurcation of Cronos that puts in series the possible actualizations of the virtual. In *Réalité,* cinematic time does not reflect these times-for-us, but suggests a time in which the processes of difference and repetition are contingent, which implies that they can actualize absolute difference (i.e. actualizations not linked to the virtual, as I will analyse in more depth in the next section). In such a filmic time, micropatterns (situations, interactions between characters, lines of dialogue, themes) can be randomly repeated, for no reason, with or without changes, and constitute macropatterns (as scenes) that can be repeated without being fundamentally changed, and articulated with other scenes. *Réalité*'s structure offers various examples of such repetitions of patterns (shots, scenes, sentences, characters' actions) that repeat with or without changes and do not belong to a specific time nor a specific location, to the scene in which they appear, nor to the character who performs them. They are not affects that could be experienced by a range of singularities, but are instead mere matter of facts that are randomly distributed and contingently repeated.

In *Réalité,* time does not develop as the whole caught in the act of its processes of becoming, but develops through contingent changes that are not conditioned by the necessity of a general becoming.

4.2.3 Non-whole and actualizations without virtual

Réalité develops, therefore, in a non-whole that expands as the infinite multiplicity of the possibilities according to which the elements of the world might enter into a process, or not. In *Réalité,* sentences, shots and scenes do not belong to a whole and, thus, are considered neither more or less correct, true, accurate, objective or subjective perceptions of the processes at stake in the development of real; they are also not considered to be the processes themselves through which the real is produced, as the series of infinite subjective perceptions. They are matters of time, moments can enter infinite assemblages or not, that are porous or not, that allow interaction between their elements or not, that can give birth to processes or not, and create events that do not emerge from past processes. Hyperchaos (as the time that states that the rule of cause and consequences is one of the possible sets through which the universe develops) threatens correlation that considers that the world for us, as

perceived by our subjective position, is the only world that matters for us, that we can interact with and think. As an example of this, I will now discuss Jason's epistemological quest, which develops as a nightmare, because he faces such a time without becoming, a time that produces contingent actualizations and puts correlation out of joint.

4.2.3.1 Watching a film that has not been shot, yet

An interesting example of the moments in which correlation stutters is provided by the scene in which Jason, struggling with his assignment to find the best groan in the history of cinema, decides to take a break from his research and goes to the cinema with his wife. In the foyer of the cinema, he is attracted by the poster of a film that has the same title as the one he is working on, *Waves*. They enter the room where *Waves* is being screened and he discovers that this is actually his film. When Jason understands this, he gets up and tries to stop the screening, and to explain to the audience that the film does not exist yet, that the groans are bad because he still needs to work on them, and that they cannot watch it now.

Obviously, *Waves* does not belong to Chronos, but establishing that it emerges from hyperchaos as opposed to Aeon needs some attention. I argue that *Waves* is an actualization without virtual because it is neither the future of Jason's present (what the film will be) nor the past of his future (the germ of a film yet to come). Conversely, it is the sudden advent ex nihilo of a film that, as Jason explains to the audience, "doesn't exist, yet, we haven't shot it yet". *Waves* is Jason's nightmare because it is actualized out of the processes through which a film emerges as becoming: its script has not been finalized, the groans have not been worked properly, the actors have not been hired, it has not been shot, etc. Hence, Jason is not entangled in the sheets of time, facing his film as virtual, yet to be and in the complexity of its emergence. He is confronted, in hyperchaos, with a random actualization of his project that was first actualized in the world, by himself, as the narrative of its pitch to Marshall, and that is now repeated as a film, projected in a movie theatre. *Réalité* plays quite consciously with the virtual and actual nature of *Waves*, which is first shown as virtual, when quoted, embedded in a larger shot of the theatre featuring the screen, the walls and the first few rows of chairs. The projected images look dark and saturated, mediatized in the shot as an element of the diegetic world, part of the subjective perceptions of the characters and therefore still virtual in the theatre scene that works as a Deleuzian crystal. When Jason is convinced that *Waves* is an actualization of his film, it becomes fully actual. A shot of *Waves*, in which two people run away from the killer TV sets, groaning and bleeding, is inserted full

screen, with an image quality indexed with the other shots of *Réalité*. In other words, this is a shot of contingent reality. The actualization of *Waves* appears as an event that plays with correlation by first deconstructing it, making it stutter, and then reconstructing it. *Waves* first deconstructs correlationism by giving evidence of contingency, of the presence of the world itself that can create absolute novelty through hyperchaos: the actualization ex nihilo of *Waves*. However, as soon as this evidence appears, it becomes part of the world for us – it is experienced *as* the world for us, reterritorialized by the circle of correlation. While *Waves* sweeps out the world for us, breaks in without becoming, without having become, carries in its flow possible evidence of the contingent emergence of the world, *Réalité* repeats its Ptolemaic revolution. When we are confronted with evidence of the contingency of the world, when *Réalité* puts shots of *Waves* full screen, in our face, cinema reinforces the overpowering illusion of our subjective position that organizes the world around us, makes it intelligible and disregards anything that does not enter this subjective ring. In the world necessarily for us, epitomized by our position of absolute spectator of *Réalité*, there is obviously no ontological difference between the shots, and only fools like Jason or desperate PhD candidates can claim that some films are actualizations without virtual.

4.2.3.2 Stories of correlations and videotapes

If we keep in mind that, for Meillassoux, correlationism is the conviction that the subject is central to the process of knowledge, the fact this scene takes place in a film theatre is quite relevant. Cinema, i.e. the process of watching a film in a movie theatre, epitomizes the subjective position in which we are at the core of the processes through which the world becomes the given. In cinemas, the screen subsumes the real, or as Deleuze famously and convincingly argued, “the brain is the screen” (Deleuze, 2006) and an other correlating correlate thinks in, like us, for us.

However, cinema makes us aware of the un/necessity of correlation, when documenting the processes at work in this continuous making of correlation, and when centring its narrative on characters for whom correlation is out of joint. Cinema is, indeed, the human technology that reproduces most efficiently the correlational essence of thought, and that can also produce affects through which humans feel that correlation is nevertheless a limited and limiting perspective on the real. This paradoxical power of cinema to think the unthinkability of the real is illustrated by the actualization of the shots of *Waves* in *Réalité*, and, from a different perspective, by the scene during which Reality eventually watches the videotape.

Réalité, like *Rubber*, is a digital film that develops in a tongue-in-cheek, post-digital world, full of videotapes, wired phones and celluloid films that, nonetheless, addresses directly post-cinematic affects through which we reinitiate the Copernican revolution. Indeed, Meillassoux stresses that the Copernican/Galilean revolution concerns not only the discovery of the fact that we are not at the centre of the world, but also that the world itself is mathematizable and therefore absolutely unaffected by our relation to it, and that it exists in itself, either in presence or absence of a thought that could think it.[99] The tape that Reality finds in the gore of a wild boar killed by her father resonates with some affects and philosophical questions addressed by classics of horror, such as *Videodrome* (David Cronenberg, Canada, 1983) and *Ringu* (Hideo Nakata, Japan, 1998), or its viral remake and their sequels. *Réalité* creates a time in which technologies, and the anguishes they carry and develop, anchor the presence of various pasts in the diegetic present. The eighties and their bulky VCRs and dial phones, the nineties and their wireless landline phones and the contemporary mobile phones communicate in a diegetic time non-assignable to any of these periods, but in which they are still nonetheless vibrating. The machine and human assemblages both celebrated and feared at the end of the previous century, their propagation spreading as contagion, challenged the traditional organization and reproduction of natural and social entities and have deeply affected the sense of our presence in the world.[100] The TV sets transformed into killers and the videotape, central to both *Videodrome* and *Ringu*, link *Réalité* to a tradition of films that explore how our techno/human assemblages impact on our correlation with the itself of the world. Kimberly Jackson, for instance, argues that *The Ring* (Gore Verbinski, USA, 2002) illustrates how we think the world as changed by technologies through technologies, or that the human/technology assemblage is both the subject and the object of our cinematographic experience.

> Once the human recognizes that its relation to technology is itself being perceived/represented through technological mechanisms (in other words, that human perception is mediated by/coupling with technology and the technological apparatus in order to produce and perceive these new technologies), these

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[99] Cf. pp. 58-60. for a review of Meillassoux's discussion of the Ptolemaic and Copernican/Galilean revolutions.

[100] For an excellent analysis of the links between the development of technologies and early films, see Doane, 2002. For an analysis of digital anxiety in horror and science fiction, see Grant, 2013, and in horror, see Reyes and Blake, 2015.

> mechanisms begin to leave their impression on the human's understanding of itself in relation to its world. (Jackson, 2010, p. 162)

Jackson offers a reading of *The Ring* according to which any knowledge reflects the means through which it is developed and that films, as technology, reflect and reflect on the way we correlate with correlating correlates. Since the reality of the impact of technology on the world can be accessed, and assessed only by technological means, every knowledge is thus necessarily a becoming. We make a body with the tools that help us to understand our technologized world, we develop technological organs and structures through which we explore not the world itself, but the mediation that these tools operate on the world. Understanding a world of technology implies becoming-technological, and every technology substitutes the world with its mediation. From *The Ring*'s perspective, once we have discovered the tape, it will kill us as long as we do not become part of its process. We need to make a copy and spread it in order to live, accept the necessity of correlation (there is no way to get out of the Ring) and celebrate becoming (expand the Ring by spiralling within).

Réalité partly resonates with *The Ring* and *Videodrome* when acknowledging the perenniality of our bio-technological assemblages, and "reloads" their concern in the age of the Anthropocene. In *Réalité*, most of the characters spend their life recording (sometimes themselves) and/or being recorded. Jason is a cameraman and captures on a voice recorder his attempts to express the perfect groan of pain, Reality is filmed by Zorg, Denis hosts a TV show, each recording featuring a possible pattern constituted of micropatterns that might be repeated and/or changed. However, the impact of the post-cinematic real is no longer a strictly human concern since it affects the environment. The videotape is thus both immanent and contingent. It spreads through a chain of both cinematographic and natural viral assemblages that develop intertextually and interspeciesly. However, it manifests itself as an event that takes a specific form in a specific place, that does not make a body with us, as part of our becoming technological (*Videodrome*), nor come to us through the human circuits of distribution of goods and knowledge and their transformations (*Ringu*, *The Ring*). For no reason, Reality sees the tape amidst the gore of the wild boar that her father is cleaning. While trying to understand how such a thing could happen, the little girl raises anxiety that resonates with questions about the emergence of the Anthropocene, the disappearance of the other than human, and the acceleration of the transformation of every event of the world as

the expression of the world for us. Her usual sources of knowledge are not only unable to provide an answer, but fail to acknowledge her discovery. Her parents and her schoolteacher are unable to let her discovery challenge the knowledge that they built from a well-established anthropocentric subjective position. When, in her family house decorated with a wide collection of stuffed animals, Reality asks her father, who is cleaning the dead hog, "What are the sticky things in the tummy for, Daddy?" He answers, "Nothing at all, that's why I'm taking them all out, Honey […] it's the same for all animals, inside serves no purpose." Later, at the dinner table, both parents try to rationalize the improbability of finding a tape in a wild boar and her mother transforms Reality's experience into a bedtime story that ends with the little girl having "funny nightmares". The following morning, Reality gets the tape from the bin where her father put the boar's viscera. Later, at school, during a science lesson about pigs and the concept of omnivores, the children learn to classify the elements of the natural world by organizing what pigs eat. Reality explains that "a pig can also swallow a videotape without damaging it" and the scene stops as her classmates laugh, yet without showing the teacher's answer to her discovery. However, Reality seems to be aware that she is facing an event that does not follow the laws of Nature. Her nightmare, like Jason's, results from the sudden hiatus created by an event actualized contingently by hyperchaos and the world constructed as a set of shared social conventions, of subject-centred knowledge. Reality assumes that the videotape is both the question and the answer, and thus that she must watch it, in other words, that she has to rebuild the ring that the tape has disrupted, to include the object that she found in the bleeding organs of a wild animal in her technologically mediated perception/representation of the world.

The scene in which Reality watches the tape is constructed according to the pattern logic that I analysed earlier. The sequence starts with Reality, in the living room of the house, inserting the tape in the VCR. She is filmed from the side, sitting in front of the TV set, so that we can see her but not share with her what is on the screen. Suddenly, the shot is seen from inside Bob Marshall's screening room, and we can see, on the screen, the previous shot of Reality watching a screen, while Zog and his translator are sitting in the front seats of the theatre. Bob Marshall first complains about the fact that this is a bad shot since he wants to know what's on the tape, and engages in a discussion during which Zog exhorts him to be patient. The scene cuts to a shot of Jason driving, arriving in front of a building and parking. A car similar to his arrives, parks and another Jason comes out of it. The first Jason enters the building which happens to be a hospital and he asks to be admitted. He explains that he

needs to rest since he is stuck in a nightmare. A nurse shows him to a room, and he gets onto a bed from which he dials a phone number. Back in the theatre, the screen displays the same shot of Reality watching the tape. Marshall's secretary enters the room with a phone, this is Jason calling Marshall, who takes the call. Jason negotiates a deadline extension for his groan, by explaining his situation. The scene is constructed with alterning shots of Jason in his hospital bed and Marshall in the theatre until a shot from the back of the theatre shows the screen. The shot has changed and we now see Reality watching TV, from behind: on the TV screen, Jason is in his bed, talking to Marshall, live, on the phone. Marshall is "flabbergasted" and tells Zog that he is a genius.

Marshall considers Zog to be a genius, not when he films Reality, as the singular experience of a little girl involved in a quest for knowledge, but when he films Reality as the subjective angle from which the gazes line up towards an object for us with which it is possible to communicate. *Réalité* offers here a beautiful concrete image of correlation in this shot where, from our subjective position of spectator, we can see, on our screen, the theatre with Zog sitting in the front right chair and his translator beside, both watching the screen on which we can see Reality watching her TV, on the screen of which we can see Jason in his hospital bed speaking on the phone. We are the centre of the ring, and at the centre of the circle of correlation. Jason is on the circumference and we communicate through the mediation of intermediaries that occupy the same subjective position all along the radius. This position is extraordinary in the film, and, as I mentioned earlier, it first happened when a shot of *Waves* was embedded on the screen, and it is developed here as the moment of epiphany in which the real *mise en scène* by Zog organizes chaos, albeit briefly. The old-school cinema, represented by Zog, had the ability to reinforce correlation, to make all the human experiences of the world communicate as a whole in which the simultaneity of all the times was processing the world for us, the Cronos/Chronos. Zog reconstructs a supersubjective world for us in which, as stated by Shaviro, writing about *Videodrome*, "media images no longer refer to a real that would be (in principle) prior to and independent of them, for they penetrate, volatilize, and thereby (re)constitute that real" (1993, p. 138).

However, the trick cannot last and quickly hyperchaos strikes again. After the screening, while Bob Marshall congratulates Zog, time stops and all the characters freeze in a still that lasts for more than ten seconds. Immobile in the progressing filmic time, they give an example of hyperchaos cinema to produce a time (the mechanical movement of the film) in

which the universe is motionless. Whereas in the Deleuzian time-image, the absence of movement was emphasizing the movement of the whole, giving a direct image of duration, *Réalité* suggests a time without becoming that flows without producing changes. Hyperchaos starts motion again and the film ends with a repetition of some of its main patterns (for example, the next scene is the second repetition of Marshall and Jason on the terrace, described earlier).

4.3 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have discussed two films that engage with issues specific to hyperchaos cinema, non-whole and time without becoming. With *Holy Motors*, I have analysed a filmic time in which the main character does not become with the whole of the universe, but, conversely, changes contingently and develops as an unstable, indefinite image. Furthermore, I have linked this regime of presence in the world to the post-cinematic context: as a 24/7 actor filmed by invisible cameras that do not enter subjective dialectic relations with him, for audiences whose existence is not clearly established. Oscar is thus both within correlation (filmed and acting) and in a position that puts correlation out of joint by developing as a consciousness in excess of the film's ability to record.

With the discussion of *Réalité*, I have established that hyperchaos cinema can develop a film structure according to a time without becoming, characterized by contingent repetitions of sets of time and actualization out of the virtual. I have discussed how *Réalité* also epitomizes other characteristics of hyperchaos, mainly the principle of unreason, discorrelation and motionless time.

Conclusion

This thesis has suggested a speculative realist film-philosophy for contemporary French cinema. I have established that Meillassoux's speculative realism on the one hand, and films and film philosophy on the other hand, each in their specific way, engage with problems that share some fundamental concerns. I have proposed the circle of correlation, facticity and hyperchaos as three examples of these philosophical problems, and hyperchaos cinema as a category of film that explores the time without becoming of an uncaused real in which multiple forms of consciousness partially correlate. I have argued that these questions are consubstantial with the post-cinematic context of the production of the films that constitute my corpus. All of them reflect and reflect on the new lines and boundaries that the constant presence and mediatisation of cameras and screens blur, erase and (re)draw. My analysis has focused mainly on epistemology by theorizing how filmic thought addresses the aporia of the real and speculates on the (un)thinkability of what is out of thought. I have also engaged with an ethics of hyperchaos cinema that weaves new relations between thought, world, films and audience. In this conclusion, I will examine how I have addressed these concerns in my thesis, and identify potential directions for future research.

I have first set the frame of my methodology in the contemporary context of post-cinema that substitutes for the transcendental subject of apparatus theory a mediatized and mediatizing subject/object. I have suggested that Meillassoux's problematization of correlation (i.e. the issue of access to the real for a consciousness), his taxonomy of philosophical paradigms considered from the perspective of their answer to this problem, and his project to overcome correlation from inside are helpful when analysing the relations between cameras, films, human beings and the emergence of the world. I have argued that Meillassoux's exploration of the relations of thought with itself and with the real (the issues of correlation) offers a framework which reveals that cinema reflects on its relation with its own thought, the world that it thinks, and its unthought. The films I have discussed all engage with issues related to correlation. The first chapter has focused on films that claim that cinema cannot think the unthought, and explore how film thought insists as the necessary presence of a subjectivity. The second chapter has discussed films that explore how cinema thinks the facticity of the categories through which it develops (time, space, causality), and think the facticity of correlation. The last two chapters

have analysed films that, more radically, put correlation out of joint, and explore the uncaused world (hyperchaos) that thought can speculate when accepting that correlation itself is contingent and non-necessary. Furthermore, I have argued that Meillassoux's problematization of correlation is helpful when analysing the relation between the various correlating correlates at work in the filmic experience. All of the films I have discussed reflect on their post-cinematic context from their twofold perspective of products emerging from such a context, and actors involved in negotiations of power within this context. This perspective engages with fundamental concerns of film studies and film-philosophy, specifically Sobchack's phenomenology of the correlation between films and viewers understood as an encounter between two viewed-viewers and Deleuze's analysis of film as thought and the question of its embodiment. My aim has been to analyse how digital cinema and its post-cinematic context repeat, rephrase, modulate and transform these issues. On the one hand, I have rooted my analysis in the fundamentally correlational essence of film thought, while attempting, on the other hand, to explore how correlation is cracked and put out joint by the multiplicity of subjectivities correlating correlates that interact in the post-cinematic world. From this perspective, I hope that this thesis has established that film-philosophy is a relevant interlocutor in the field of speculative realism.

My engagement in a dialogue with Meillassoux's speculative realism has been, therefore, as faithful as possible to his philosophical project. I have tried to explore whether, and under which conditions, cinematic thought could not only engage with the problematization of correlation, but overcome it from inside, as rational thought can. In other words, I have tried to eschew the two perspectives from which film studies have addressed his philosophy so far. The first one consists in endorsing a selection of his concepts (such as the arche-fossil or the ancestral and the great outdoors), without engaging seriously with his radical realist project of thinking what there is when there is no thought. The second one consists in considering this very project irrelevant in the context of film studies, which explore film as a form of thought which is fundamentally correlational. From this second perspective, film thought can explore its own limits, but not what is out of thought. Conversely, I have drawn on Meillassoux's speculative realism, to argue that, while film thought cannot picture the unthought, i.e. what there is when there is no thought, it can however speculate an absolute knowledge about the world itself, qua the absolute contingency of everything that is. Hence, part one has focused on

films that deal with the finitude of correlation, while the second part, has explored how film can think hyperchaos, as a world of uncaused, contingent processes and entities.

In Chapter One, I have theorized the circle of correlation as the impossibility for thought to thinks its own absence, or, in other words, the fact that the unthought, i.e. the absence of subjectivity, is radically inaccessible to thought. I have discussed Meillassoux's critique of the Kantian necessity of the subject in the process of knowledge. Meillassoux argues that Kant substitutes a subject-centred world (the Ptolemaic revolution) for a decentred world (the Galilean-Copernican revolution). This has helped me to highlight that films and film theories which practise and discuss digital cinema as a realist and non-anthropocentric representation of the world, actually perform a subject-centred anthropomorphic turn. I have argued that *Enter the Void* epitomizes such a perspective, and that its purpose consists in the reterritorialization of the camera's discorrelated consciousness by human consciousness. My analysis of the film's general structure, of the narrative and of the camera work has highlighted *Enter the Void*'s fascination with the closed and centred figure of the circle. This is expressed at the level of narration as the eternal return, and at the level of cinematography, through various modes of POV that organise the world as that which develops around a central point in which the audience, the camera and the character's gaze are aligned. This centred, absolute subjectivity subsumes any possible subjectivity (the camera, the audience and the main character alive, stoned and dead) and cruises seamlessly in space through any possible object. The film, therefore, offers an experience in which the assemblage formed by the audience, the character and the camera transforms any reality into a circle, i.e. in which they experience consciousness as the becoming the centre of any circle whatever. Enter the Void offers thus a physical, affective and intellectual experience of the circle of correlation. It develops a single uncut shot, tracing a circular looping structure, it focuses on affects of enclosure and centrality, and claims that consciousness cannot think its disappearance and its absence. In such a dispositive, exteriority and novelty are developments inscribed within the circle of the human-centred experience of reality.

The anxiety of thought's incapacity to think its own disappearance and its resolution in the eternal return are at the core of both *Enter the Void* and *Vous N'Avez Encore Rien Vu*. However, Resnais's takes a completely different approach to filmic practice than Noé. While the latter subsumes all possible subjectivities into a singular, unique experience of the real, the former

explores how a definite set of affects develops into a multiplicity and produces novelty. I have analysed Resnais's engagement with the production of novelty through the concept of 'becoming-imperceptible' developed by Deleuze and Guattari, in which bodies and characters do not repeat their identity but open themselves to flows of becoming through which difference expresses itself. I have analysed how the film enables such flows through the dilution of authorship, the indistinguishability between actors and characters and the multiple embodiments of a single affect through various actors.

In the conclusion of this chapter, I have discussed the epistemological and political implications of claiming that such films suggest a non-anthropocentric realist vision of the world. I have argued that the strong correlationist perspective that these films develop cannot offer a satisfactory definition of the real. Epistemologically, both films avoid addressing the materiality of the world that they transform into thought. They promote a definition of the real in which the digitalization transforms its materiality into lines of codes, list of digits and flows of changing colours. Thought celebrates its finitude by reterritorializing the real as an expanding flow of elements in which nothing resists its transformation into fluid immaterial code and in which the exterior is nothing but an intensity of the interior, and the new a return of the old.

In Chapter Two, I have explored how cinematic thought, while endorsing the circle of correlation, can reflect and reflect on its facticity, and the facticity of the world. I have first highlighted the distinction that Meillassoux operates between contingency and facticity, i.e. between events whose absence or difference we can experience, and those whose absence and difference are beyond our experience of the world. I have suggested that film can think and provide experience of both of these, and that, cinematically, contingency could be understood as an excess of the actual, and facticity as an excess of the virtual. The excess of the actual consists in both the entity and processes that emerge in a given process, and the extensive series of the entities and processes that this event could have actualized instead. The excess of the virtual consists in the series of entities and processes that an event could not have actualized. While contingency explores the difference emerging from stable laws, facticity explores the instability of these laws.

I have theorized the body of becoming as the feature through which film thought explores facticity, and reveals the facticity of the space, time and causality through which characters develop in *Guillaume et Les Garcons, A table!,* and *NeTe Retourne Pas*. The first of these two films engages in a narration of a self that is unlocalisable, unassignable and inexhaustible, that refuses identity as the repetition of the same and develops as a singularity in which a world of differences is folded. Its cinematic unfolding proceeds through processes that challenge the way identity develops according to the social and natural laws that rule the extradiegetic real. Guillaume uses digital cinema in order to construct himself as a contradictory entity, both himself and other, from the same perspective and at the same time son and mother, adult and child. His mode of emerging, that transgresses, therefore, the laws according to which time, space and causality regulate the processing of actualization, highlights their facticity. *Ne Te Retourne Pas* develops a similar engagement with the excess of the virtual, but adds to the discussion the issue of the possible correlation between the subjectivities at work in the filmic experience, i.e. humans and cameras. The film deals with issues of the difference and continuity between these two subjectivities through technics that range from traditional excesses of the actual (one character played by two actors) and excesses of the virtual (techniques of morphing). This chapter concludes the first part by arguing that, while thinking within the circle of correlation, film thought can think the facticity of most rules through which the real emerges, except for becoming, which seems to resist and persist as the only necessary law.

The second part, dedicated to hyperchaos cinema, has focused on the power of films to suggest that the principle of unreason can challenge becoming when engaging with a non-causal emergence of the real. In Chapter Three, “Hyperchaos, Unreason and the Joy of Factiality”, I have first theorized hyperchaos as the time emerging from Meillassoux’s absolutization of contingency. Meillassoux radicalizes Hume’s problem, according to which reason cannot prove that any event will repeat itself in the same manner in the future and that stable laws regulate the emergence of the real. Hume concludes from this that we must accept our ignorance, or in other words, that these laws are inaccessible to reason. Conversely, Meillassoux concludes that we must draw from this the knowledge that no inaccessible reason, no necessary hidden law rules the world, and that everything can change at any moment and for no reason. He calls hyperchaos the time in which uncaused processes and entities can appear or disappear, a time in which both radical transformation and absolute changelessness are

equally possible. I have discussed how film and film theory have engaged with chaos, through chaos cinema and hypercontinuity, and how hyperchaos exposes the way in which these concepts endorse the necessity of, at least a single law, rooted in either an anthropocentric or anthropomorphic perspective. The anthropocentric perspective is epitomized by Matthias Stork's conceptualization of chaos cinema, who calls for a filmic thinking of time and space that mirrors our human perspective on space, time and causality. The anthropomorphic perspective is epitomized by Steven Shaviro's hypercontinuity, which calls for a filmic thought that applies the human conception of life as flow on the non-human, non-organic realm. I have argued that Meillassoux's hyperchaos, and hyperchaos cinema eschew both of these anthropocentric and anthropomorphic positions. I have suggested the generic term of hyperchaos cinema to describe films that experiment with non-causal modes of narration, and in which human subjectivity does not subsume each possible mode of being in the world. Generally, the latter part of the definition implies an acknowledgement of the diegetic real, and of the post-cinematic context from which these films emerge. These films reflect and reflect on the fact that humans and camera are various correlating correlates, various forms of consciousness that, while partially correlating, construct the real through their interaction.

Through *Rubber* I have discussed the principle of unreason as a powerful aspect of film's experimental essence, and of its ethical potential. I have argued that hyperchaos cinema's ability to focus on uncaused events suggests images of a world that exists apart from us. By not being restrained by our anthropocentric and anthropomorphic projections, the world of hyperchaos cinema can express its absolute power of creation. With the example of a tyre becoming alive, I have analysed how *Rubber* engages in an ethics that focuses on the ability of an object to become a body, and that discovers what this body can do. My analysis of *Bird People* has taken the ethical analysis further, by engaging with Meillassoux's concept of the "spectral dilemma". I have discussed the conditions under which *Bird People* is a film that does not deal with ethical issues, but actually *performs* an act of justice, in which both the diegetic and extradiegetic worlds are involved in a non-causal relation. In the conclusion of this chapter, I have highlighted that while on the one hand Meillassoux brings fascinating ethical consideration to film-philosophy with the principle of unreason and with the spectral dilemma, films on the other hand can radicalize Meillassoux's theory. I have shown how *Rubber* and *Bird People*, considered from the perspective of hyperchaos cinema, eschew both the

anthropocentrism and anthropomorphism claimed by film theory, and the anthropocentrism claimed by Meillassoux. This has epitomized film's ability to be a valid and relevant interlocutor in speculative realism.

Chapter Four has focused on hyperchaos cinema's ability to suggest a time without becoming that develops as a non-whole. I have first analysed *Holy Motors*, in which invisible camera incessantly film the main character, I have focused on the impossibility of establishing a subject/object dialectical perspective between humans and cameras in the post-cinematic environment. I have argued that such a dispositif, in which the perspective of the various correlating correlates never fuse in a common correlation, produces tensions that put out of joint the process of a common becoming of the real in, and as, a whole. I have analysed how the film plays with these tensions through the main character, Oscar, the actor whose roles and functions blur the boundaries between live performance and performed life. Although chronological, the time of the film follows that of his workday, develops as a series of contingent transformations through which, on the one hand, he does not become with the world, and, on the other hand, the world becomes independently of its actors.

With *Réalité*, I have theorized further such a non-whole. I have argued that the structure of the film resonates with the structure of its soundtrack, "Music With Changing Parts" by Philippe Glass, a work that music critics have described as an attempt to create a piece of music without becoming. The film develops as a series of micro and macro static patterns randomly repeated throughout the film, with or without changes. Such a structure produces a non-whole that expands through events that eschew any possible totalization, that interact or not, trigger processes or not and emerge from flows of causality or not. In *Réalité*, such events include the emergence ex nihilo of a film yet to be filmed, a video tape found in the gore of a wild boar, absurd business negotiations and the possibility of repeating an identity. Therefore, *Réalité* suggests a time that epitomizes hyperchaos' ability to produce any possible outcome, including random actualisation of entities, motionless, static moments, and even correlation.

Meillassoux has stimulated new perspectives on film-philosophy that might initiate further research addressing issues related to the discussion of film from a speculative realist perspective. As a specialist of French studies, I have focused on contemporary French cinema, but mapping what Martin-Jones calls "a world of cinemas", in search of films that deal with

the issues of correlation and hyperchaos would be a fascinating project. Films such as *Under the Skin* (Jonathan Glazer, Switzerland / Poland / UK / USA), *Her* (Spike Jonze, USA, 2013), *Dao Khanong*/*By The Time It Gets Dark* (Anotcha Suwichakornpong, Thailand / France / Qatar / Netherlands, 2016) and *Ouroboros* (Basma Alsharif, Palestine / Qatar / France/ Belgium, 2017) are examples of films that might bring interesting perspective into the discussion. This would require a clear rationale for using a French contemporary philosopher in the discussion of texts emerging from other cultural backgrounds and, perhaps, engaging other cinemas in the questioning, validating or reframing of the speculative realist perspective I have endorsed here.

Finally, this thesis has highlighted the concrete ethical and political framework that Meillassoux's speculative realism offers. The four films I discussed in the second part address political issues, both social and environmental, and I have shown that the principle of unreason is a powerful concept that challenges our anthropocentric and anthropomorphic assurances that 'there is no alternative'. Hyperchaos cinema can think alternatives and trigger uncaused events that perform acts of justice. Its films are thinking actors that, in the context of the Anthropocene, can help us to think, problematize and challenge human supremacy, in order to start the long overdue Copernican revolution.

Selective Filmography

A Bout de Souffle/*Breathless* Jean-Luc Godard, France, 1960

Arrival, Denis Villeneuve, USA, 2016

Back to the Future, Robert Zemeckis, USA, 1985, 1989 and 1990

Bad Boys II, Michael Bay, USA, 2003

Barque Sortant du Port/A Boat Leaving Harbour, Louis and Auguste Lumière, 1897

Beasts of the Southern Wild, Benh Zeitlin, USA, 2012

Bird People, Pascale Ferrand, France, 2014

C'est Arrivé Près de Chez Vous/*Man Bites Dog*, Rémy Belvaux, André Bonzel, Benoît Poelvoorde, Belgium, 1992

Dao Khanong/*By The Time It Gets Dark* (Anotcha Suwichakornpong, Thailand / France / Qatar / Netherlands, 2016)

Derrida, Kirby Dick, Amy Ziering Kofman, USA, 2002

Enter the Void, Gaspard Noé, France/Germany/Italy/Canada/Japan ,2009

Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind, Michel Gondry, USA, 2004

Gremlins, USA, Joe Dante, 1984

Her, Spike Jones, USA, 2013

Hiroshima Mon Amour, Alain Resnais, France/Japan, 1959

Holy Motors, Léos Carax, France/Germany, 2012

I'm Not There, Todd Haynes, USA/Germany/Canada, 2007

Interstellar, Christopher Nolan, USA, 2014

Irreversible, Gaspar Noé, France, 2002

It Happened Tomorrow, René Clair, USA, 1942

It's a Wonderful Life, Frank Capra, USA, 1946

Jacquot de Nantes, Agnès Varda, France, 1991

JFK, Oliver Stone, France/USA, 1991

L'Année Dernière à Marienbad/*Last Year at Marienbad,* Alain Resnais, France/Italy, 1961

L'Illusioniste/The Illusionist, Sylvain Chomet, France/UK, 2010

L'Intrus/The Intruder, Claire Denis, 2004

La Chinoise (Jean-Luc Godard, France, 1967

La Roue/The Wheel, Abel Gance, France, 1923

Ladri di Biciclette/*Bicycle Thieves*, Vittorio De Sica, Italy, 1948)

Les Garçons et Guillaume, à Table/Me Myself and Mum, Guillaume Galienne, France/Belgium, 2013

Les Statues Meurent Aussi, Ghislain Cloquet, Chris Marker, Alain Resnais, France, 1953

Lola Rennt/Run Lola Run, Tom Twyker, Germany, 1998

Melancholia, Lars von Trier, Denmark/Sweden/France/Germany, 2011

Mélo, Alain Resnais, France, 1980

Memento, Christopher Nolan, USA, 2000

Mon Oncle d'Amérique/My American Uncle, Alain Resnais, France, 1980

Ne Te Retourne Pas/Don't Look Back, Marina de Van, France/Luxemburg/Italy/Belgium 2009

Nosferatu, Eine Symphonie des Grauens/Nosferatu, F. W. Murnau, Germany, 1922

Ouroboros (Basma Alsharif, Palestine / Qatar / France/ Belgium, 2017

Psycho, Alfred Hitchcock, USA, 1960

Réalité/Reality, Quentin Dupieux, France/Belgium/USA, 2014

Ringu, Hideo Nakata, Japan, 1998

Rubber, Quentin Dupieux, France/Angola/USA, 2010

Sauve Qui Peut (La Vie)/*Slow Motion* (Jean-Luc Godard, France/Austria/Germany /Switzerland, 1980

Schindler's List (Steven Spielberg, USA, 1993

Sissi Die Junge Kaiserin/ Sissi: The Young Empress (Ernst Marischka, Austria, 1956

Sissi Schiksaljahre eine Kaiserin/Sissi: The Fateful Years of an Empress (Ernst Marischka, Austria, 1957

Sissi, Ernst Marischka, Austria, 1955

Smoking/No Smoking, Alain Resnais, France/Italy/Switzerland, 1993

Solaris, Andrei Tarkovsky, Soviet Union, 1971

Spider, David Cronenberg, Canada/UK/France, 2002

Sunset Boulevard Billy Wilder, USA, 1950

The Artist, Michel Hazanavicius, France/USA/Belgium, 2011

The Fly, David Cronenberg, USA/UK/Canada, 1986

The Jazz Singer Alan Crosland, USA, 1927

The Matrix: Reloaded, Lana Wachowski, Lilly Wachowski, USA/Australia, 2003

The Quatermass Xperiment, Val Guest, UK, 1955

The Ring, Gore Verbinski, USA, 2002

The Thing, John Carpenter, USA, 1982

The Tree of Life, Terrence Malick, USA, 2011

The Truman Show, Peter Weir, USA, 1998

Tokyo! (Joon-Ho Bong, Leos Carax, Michel Gondry, France/Japan/South Korea/Germany, 2008

Under the Skin, Jonathan Glazer, Switzerland / Poland / UK / USA

Videodrome, David Cronenberg, Canada, 1983

Vidocq (Pitof, France, 2001)

Vivre sa Vie, Jean-Luc Godard, France, 1962

Vous n'Avez Encore Rien Vu/You Ain't Seen Nothin' Yet, Alain Resnais, France/Germany, 2012

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