

Cinema for a Missing People: Gilles Deleuze's Crystal Image and Alexander Dovzhenko's *Zvenyhora**

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IN HIS TWO BOOKS DEVOTED TO FILM, French philosopher Gilles Deleuze theorizes the distinction between classical and modern cinema. To each of them he dedicates a separate volume of his diptych and assigns a separate concept-term, the *movement-image* and the *time-image*, respectively. Although Deleuze's theory of cinema has not been accepted into the typical film studies curriculum, this part of his oeuvre has always drawn the attention of philosophers and media scholars, and has polarized opinions. Even among Deleuze scholars there is no consensus on this question: for some, the *Cinema* volumes are the weakest part of the philosopher's body of writings, whereas others hail them as important works owing to the perspective they offer on such questions as temporality, movement, assemblage, affect, notions of active and reactive, actual and virtual, and others.¹ This essay engages with Deleuze's work by investigating a single example among many that the philosopher chose for his version of cinema theory: Deleuze's reading of Ukrainian director Alexander Dovzhenko's film *Zvenyhora* (1928). To my knowledge, this instance has never attracted the attention of scholars who worked with the *Cinema* volumes. I argue that *Zvenyhora* is a *minor* work, in the Deleuzian understanding of the concept, and as such it sheds light on the complex relationship between the movement-image and the time-image. Whereas the former insists on imposing a continuous linear vector on the historical narrative, which is crucial for the formation of national identity, the latter destabilizes consistency and continuity through flashbacks, ruptures, and the folds of repressed collective and individual memories.

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THE MOVEMENT-IMAGE AND THE TIME-IMAGE

One way to think about Deleuze's two-volume *Cinema* project (1983 and 1985) is of it being an extensive commentary on Henri Bergson's philosophy of time, movement, memory, and change. According to Bergson in his early work, cinema offered new ways of thinking about motion: cinema, he argued, is not simply a succession of separate stills, but rather a whole moving image.² In *Cinema I: The Movement-Image*, Deleuze discusses Bergson's *Matter and Memory* (1896) and its thesis that "movement is distinct from the space covered."³ Thus, Deleuze claims at the beginning of his book that "space covered is past, movement is present, the act of covering," in which "each movement will have its own qualitative duration."⁴ "In short," he concludes, "cinema does not give us an image to which movement is added, it immediately gives us a movement-image."⁵

Deleuze traces cinema, and the movement-image in particular, back to the beginning of the perforation of celluloid strips for recording and projecting; this technique, he explains, makes cinema "the system which reproduces movement as a function of any-instance-whatever that is, as a function of equidistant instance, selected so as to create an impression of continuity."⁶ Although continuity is punctuated by breaks between frames and cuts between shots, cinema is the assemblage of the mechanical and the human: the projector, light, human eyes, and memory, as well as the projection speed, are all interconnected and actively engaged with each other.⁷ Yet, as we see in *Cinema I*, Deleuze is less interested in the prehistory of cinema; rather, he looks at the filmmakers whose work moved beyond protocinema and the early genre of "actualities," where footage filmed by a stable camera usually remained untouched. Because Deleuze's movement-image is constructed by means of editing, in the *Cinema* books he discusses those directors who represent different schools of montage: "The organic-active, empirical, or rather empiricist montage of American cinema; the dialectical montage of Soviet cinema, organic or material; the quantitative-psychic montage of the French school, in its break with the organic; the intensive-spiritual montage of the German school, which binds together a non-organic life and non-psychological life."⁸ As much as these schools are different, Deleuze argues, they all share the classical type of film narrative organized according to the sensory-motor scheme. This is the common-sense rationalized mode or view of the world in which "human beings function through sense-stimulus and motor-response, definable action and dependable reaction" and which Deleuze takes to task.⁹ The sensory-motor link is formed by the relationship within the circuit of several types of images: the perception-image (a long shot of what we see on the screen), the affection-image (a close-up that often occupies the entire screen and expresses a feeling or an emotion), and the action image (a medium shot that shows the action in its duration). The circuit produces continuity and meaning in this manner: perceptions cause affections that, in their turn, cause actions. In other words, Deleuze

suggests that a film “image” is not limited by an individual film frame: it is a complex assemblage of the different types of image that enter different relations and exhibit different temporalities. As Dyrk Ashton explains,

A film “image” can be any and all elements within a shot (such as an object or person), a portion of a shot, an entire shot, a group of shots, a scene, a group of scenes, or even an entire film. An image can also be visual or auditory, or a combination of both. In addition, shots or images within shots can be separated in chronological or linear time—for example one early in a film, one later in a film—yet for Deleuze they can form, or exist, as one image.¹⁰

However, cinema mutates. Although the break between classical cinema and modern cinema may seem to be historically determined or, in other words, caused by an external change, such a reading profanes the basic premises of Deleuze’s thought. If the two are different, D. N. Rodowick writes, “this difference marks equally a transformation in the nature of signs and images, and how the cultural image of thought evolves.”¹¹ This is because for Deleuze, image practices are “social and technological automata where each era thinks itself by producing its particular image of thought.”¹² In *Cinema 1* there are enough examples of the movement-image that reveal the inconsistencies of the sensory-motor mode as well as the internal changes within classical cinema. Therefore, despite the attempt at continuity and meaning, the cinematic image that prevails in cinema before the Second World War is hardly an ideal sensory-motor unity. Even then, it is already a complex “system of the relationships between its elements, that is, a set of relationships of time from which the variable present only flows.”¹³ And yet, before the “organic” regime yields to the “nonorganic” crystalline regime of the time-image on a broad scale several decades later, we see a gradual transformation of the internal processes within the movement-image. As Rodowick clarifies, classic cinema is “organic,” as it is constituted by “movement [that] is recorded as successive and continues segments” and where “time is subordinated to movement and represented only indirectly through the agency of movement.”¹⁴ the movement-image gives us an indirect image of time, the time-image gives us a direct image of time.¹⁵

Instead of rational and measurable temporal linkages between shots that dominate in classical movement-cinema, modern time-cinema, the subject of Deleuze’s second volume, *Cinema 2: The Time-Image*, constructs a rather dispersive reality of vacant and disconnected spaces. As a result, the narrative form is no longer linear; moreover, it encompasses several different, nonlinear, multilayered narrative forms in one cinematic work. Often, a narrative contains multiple folds—stories within a story—that open into different time frames of the past, present, and future, as well as mythological time, that coexist without a causal relation. It is

a journey into the realm of one's fantasy, emotions, memories, and traumas, the complexities and contradictions of which are represented by the twisted topology of modern films. Their temporality is not simply determined by the increasing number of interruptions of the linear narrative—by flashbacks, for example. It concerns, rather, the profound changes in addressing and expressing the logic of causality itself: the time-image is the cinema of disproportions where, according to Rodowick, “small causes initiate massive and unpredictable consequences,” and “the past is felt as an intangible origin, incommensurable with the present; the emergence of the future seems unpredictable and undetermined by the present.”¹⁶

RANCIÈRE'S CRITIQUE

In the following I will address a discussion around Deleuze's work on cinema that includes Jacques Rancière's critique of his theory and Agustín Zarzosa's defending response. In his essay “From One Image to Another? Deleuze and the Ages of Cinema,” Rancière takes to task Deleuze's “attempt at the classification of signs.”¹⁷ As Rancière sees it, one of the problems in the books is Deleuze's historical model of classification; another is the inconsistency in the series of examples discussed in *Cinema 1* and *2* that altogether undermine the very idea of a rupture between classical and modern cinema.¹⁸ Although Rancière's essay illuminates a number of tensions within Deleuze's project, his overall argument is itself problematic.

Regarding the first point of his critique, Rancière is hardly correct in identifying the movement-image and the time-image as two “ages.” As mentioned earlier, Deleuze never insists on any historical logic foregrounding his classification. Responding to Rancière's essay, Zarzosa points out that such a “perspective [would have been] foreign to Deleuze's ontology.” Zarzosa continues: “The concern with social history doesn't involve the whole of the *Cinema* books but only the passage from the movement-image to the time-image.”¹⁹ To be fair, Rancière does not entirely dismiss Deleuze's classification; instead, he is concerned with “fixing” it by offering ways to resolve the paradoxes of division between classical and modern cinema. Thus, Rancière suggests that the movement-image and the time-image are simply “two different points of view on the image.”²⁰ He also likens the two to his own notions of the representative and aesthetic regimes of artistic modernity. Rancière suggests that the representative regime “understands artistic activity on the model of an active form that imposes itself upon inert matter and subjects it to its representational ends,” while the aesthetic regime “rejects the idea of form willfully imposing itself on matter and instead identifies the power of the work with the identity of contraries: the identity of active and passive, of thought and non-thought, of intentional and unintentional.”²¹

In *Cinema 1* Deleuze describes the movement-image as based on action and its intervals. Intervals occur between the perception-image (long shot) and the action-

image (medium shot). The affection-image (close-up) bridges the gap between them and, by doing so, immediately restores the continuity of the “distribution of the points of a space or of the moments of an event” that, for the moment, threatens to rupture this continuity.²² Further in the book Deleuze explains the function of the affection-image: it is “what occupies the interval, what occupies it without filling it in or filling it up.”²³ Thus, the affection-image is “the final avatar of the movement-image”: “This is the origin of Bergson’s wonderful definition of affection,” Deleuze notes, “as a kind of motor tendency on a sensible nerve,” that is, a motor effort on an immobilised receptive plate.”²⁴ Therefore, as Zarzosa also observes, “The affection-image lies at the heart of the time-image not as a phantom but as the rarefied space that makes possible a reversal toward the interval.”²⁵ At the very least, this demonstrates that the dynamic of the relationship between Deleuze’s two cinematic models is more complex than its two-part structure may suggest. And, despite his critique, Rancière is well aware of that: the movement-image and the time-image are neither a binary nor an opposition, but an infinite spiral.²⁶

His attempt at smoothing out the logic of the *Cinema* books also concerns Deleuze’s exemplification, which Rancière finds inconsistent:

The very same images examined in the first book as components of the movement-image reappear in the second book as the constitutive principles of the time-image. It seems impossible, in other words, to isolate in the model filmmaker of the “time-image” any “time-images,” any images endowed with properties that would distinguish them from the “movement-image.”²⁷

It may be difficult to disagree with Rancière’s observation, but only until one realizes that consistency could have been achieved only if Deleuze had indeed meant to map the division between classical and modern cinema onto a historical scheme, which, again, contradicts the logic of his work. To reiterate, reading Deleuze’s work historically would be incorrect because it would unfairly flatten his multidimensional theory of cinema. In order to cope with the complexity of his theoretical assemblage, Zarzosa insists on distinguishing multiple layers²⁸ and on acknowledging the dialectical relationship between the image and the fable, which “derives not from a different ontology as much as from a political philosophy that privileges aesthetics.”²⁹ Zarzosa concludes by bringing together Deleuze’s theory of cinema and his philosophy of becoming: “What appears at first as a matter of theoretical commitments—a choice between a strict ontology of images and a political theory founded on aesthetics—devolves into a matter of taste—a choice between a becoming-image of the fable and a becoming-fable of the image.”³⁰ In this essay, I use Rancière’s critical reading to situate the object of my own discussion, Alexander Dovzhenko’s film *Zvenyhora*.

There are several examples in both *Cinema 1* and *2* that Rancière considers

the most problematic. One is the case of French director Robert Bresson, whose films, mentioned in both volumes, make the distinction between the movement-image and the time-image even more opaque. Rancière also questions Deleuze's reasons for using Tod Browning's film *The Unknown* as "an emblem" of the crystal image, despite the fact that the film was made in 1927. Here, according to Rancière, the failure to represent modern cinema is only partly related to the date of the film's release: the main problem, he argues, is that Deleuze identifies it as a time-image not on the basis of the properties of the shots and their assemblage, but "because the film allegorizes the idea that artistic activity is a surgery of thought: the thought that creates much always self-mutilates its arms, in order to thwart the logic by which it invariably takes back from the images of the world the freedom that it restitutes to them."³¹ For Rancière, such a move signals the flaws in Deleuze's classification, in which theoretical arguments are based on inadequate material. Dovzhenko's *Zvenyhora*, discussed in *Cinema 2*, could have been one such inadequacy. However, instead of weakening Deleuze's argument, I argue that *Zvenyhora* invites a reading of Deleuze's theory of cinema based on a consideration of the concepts he introduced in his *Cinema* books.

DOVZHENKO WITHIN THE SOVIET SCHOOL OF MONTAGE

From the point of view of traditional film theory and in comparison to the other two films in Dovzhenko's trilogy, *Arsenal* (1929) and *Earth* (1930), narrative conventions in *Zvenyhora* are considerably violated. All three Dovzhenko films are discussed in Deleuze's *Cinema* books. They first appear in *Cinema 1*, where Deleuze elaborates the specifics of the movement-image in the Soviet school of montage.

According to the theorist of dialectical montage, Sergei Eisenstein, there is a tendency of perception to connect such cinematic elements as sound, movement, color, space, voice, and image, so that their ensemble, or "an unexpected juncture," evokes a specific emotional reaction.³² In this way films are meant to facilitate the process of an active engagement of viewers with film in order to challenge their sensory perception by means of dialectical montage,³³ where a synthesis of juxtaposed shots is meant to "evoke in the perception and feeling of the spectator the most complete image of the theme itself."³⁴ Eisenstein was certainly aware of Lev Kuleshov's earlier experiment, known as the "Kuleshov effect," which he demonstrated to students at the Moscow Film School in the years 1910–1920. Kuleshov assembled shots of the impassive face of silent film actor Ivan Mozhukhin and intercut them with shots of different objects, such as a plate of soup, a woman's figure, and a dead body.³⁵ Depending on its placement in a sequence, the initially "blank face" would become the surface on which the viewer transfers the emotion, feeling, or meaning associated with the preceding shot,

for example “sorrow” (the dead body), “enjoyment” (the woman), or “hunger” (the soup). The experiment supposedly demonstrated not only that viewers are active participants of cinematic meaning making, but also that the very process of meaning making can be manipulated.³⁶ It is in this sense that Kuleshov’s experiment influenced Eisenstein’s montage theory with its basic composition rule as the “collision of independent shots—shots even opposite to one another [according to] the ‘dramatic’ principle”³⁷ by which Eisenstein broke with Kuleshov’s linear relation between shots and introduced a multidimensional nonlinear structure of vertical and horizontal montage as well as the techniques of sonic, tonal, rhythmic, metric, and intellectual montage. Such a “collision of shots” is organized dialectically: “synthesis—arising from the opposition between thesis and antithesis.”³⁸ This structure works like a language; or rather, it *is* a language.

According to Eisenstein, cinema is simultaneously affective and cerebral: “Montage is in thought ‘the intellectual process’ itself, or that which, under the shock, thinks the shock,” as Deleuze explains.³⁹ In Eisenstein’s montage and production of the movement-image “the shock has an effect on the spirit, it forces it to think, and to think the Whole. The Whole can only be thought, because it is the indirect representation of time which follows from movement. It does not follow like a logical effect, analytically, but synthetically as the dynamic effect of images ‘on the whole cortex.’”⁴⁰ In other words, Eisenstein aims to produce a cognitive synthesis by means of emotional shock: “While the conventional film directs the emotions, this suggests an opportunity to encourage and direct the whole thought process, as well,” he states.⁴¹ This method, he argues, will lead “towards a purely intellectual film, freed from traditional limitations, achieving direct forms for ideas, systems, and concepts, without any need for transitions and paraphrases. We may yet have a synthesis of art and science.”⁴² It is not surprising, therefore, that Deleuze calls Eisenstein a “cinematographic Hegel.”

Although Dovzhenko also belongs to the Soviet school of montage, Deleuze singles out his original view of the cinematic dialectic in the context of other Soviet directors: “Dovzhenko is a dialectician in another way, obsessed with the tragic relation of the parts, the set and the whole. If there was ever a director who knew how to make a set and the parts plunge into a whole which gives them a depth and extension disproportionate to their proper limits, it was Dovzhenko to a far greater extent than Eisenstein. This is the source of the fantasy and enchantment in Dovzhenko.”⁴³ Here Deleuze refers to the numerous nondiegetic elements of *Zvenyhora* that punctuate the film’s continuity and pose an obstacle for viewers to follow the narrative, as the director leaves them without offering any theory of meaning making, any lead through the crystalline structure of his film. By introducing his sophisticated multilayered dialectical structure of montage, Eisenstein complicates the movement-image and develops it to the extent where movement is fetishized and oscillated. Dovzhenko does the same to time.

ZVENYHORA'S CRYSTAL IMAGE

Intense intercutting, collage of heterogeneous shots, experiments with aperture, pace, slow motion, and double exposure—these techniques are typical of the majority of filmmakers of the Soviet school, including Dovzhenko. However, as is particularly evident in *Zvenyhora*, his most visually and intellectually challenging film, the Ukrainian director employs most of these techniques without the intention of establishing any cinematic literacy or code: the elements of a cinematic image, which create a conflict within a shot, do not aim for a synthesis that, according to theorists and practitioners of dialectical montage, must finalize the viewer's passing from perception to emotion, and then to cognition. In *Zvenyhora* Dovzhenko depicts real and imaginary "historical" events often separated by centuries from one another, yet uncannily synchronic and interconnected, so that describing their relationship as rhizomatic, rather than dialectical, seems absolutely appropriate. Dovzhenko was not only aware of his film's "stylistic disharmony," he considered it his achievement.⁴⁴ The director realized that the novelty of his style might be difficult for spectators to perceive adequately, hence his question: "What are audiences going to say when they see presented before them, in six reels of film, a thousand years? And, into the bargain, without any 'story,' without passion, without Asta Nielsen?"⁴⁵ A decade later, in his *Autobiography*, Dovzhenko confirmed that his artistic decisions were justified: "*Zvenyhora* has remained my most interesting picture," he writes. "I made it in one breath—a hundred days. Unusually complicated in structure, eclectic in form, the film gave me, a self-taught production worker, the fortuitous opportunity of trying myself out in every genre. It was a catalogue of all my creative abilities."⁴⁶ As Rodowick points out with regard to the crystal image, "Once chronology is pulverized, time is fragmented like so many facets of a shattered crystal. The chronological continuum is flayed, shaving past, present, and future into distinct series, discontinuous and incommensurable."⁴⁷ Thus, in introducing legends from Ukraine's past into the present—the Bolshevik revolution of 1917—*Zvenyhora* presents the nonlinear temporality of the whole Ukrainian nation and several particular individuals.

In referring to several Dovzhenko films in *Cinema 1*, Deleuze gives a description of the filmmaker's style, which I want to quote at length here:

Sometimes scenes can be static parts or disjointed fragments, like the images of poverty at the beginning of *Arsenal*—the prostrate woman, the immobile mother, the muzhik, the woman sowing, the glassed corpses (or, on the other hand, the joyous images of Earth—the couples who are immobile, seated, standing or recumbent). Sometimes a dynamic and continuous set [*ensemble*] can form at a particular place, at a particular moment, for example in the "taiga" of *Aerograd*. Each time, we can be sure that a plunge

into the whole will connect the images with a millennial past, like that of the Ukrainian mountain and the treasure of the Scythians in *Zvenigora*; and with a planetary future where aeroplanes bring the builders of the new city from all points of the horizon. Amengual used to speak of “the abstraction of montage” which, through the set or the fragments, gave the director the “power to speak outside real time and space.” But this outside is also the Earth, or the true interiority of time, that is the whole which changes, and which by changing perspective, constantly gives real beings that infinite space which enables them to touch the most distant past and the depth of the future simultaneously, and to participate in the movement of its own “revolution”: for instance, the grandfather who dies peacefully at the start of *Earth*, or the one in *Zvenigora* who frequents the inside of time.⁴⁸

In other words, this complex temporality has a crystalline structure. Hence it is no surprise that in *Cinema 2* Deleuze singles out *Zvenyhora* to illustrate the crystal-image. He explains: “In the cinema, there are perhaps three films which show how we inhabit time, how we move in it, in this form which carries us away, picks us up and enlarges us: Dovzhenko’s *Zvenigora*, Hitchcock’s *Vertigo* and Resnais’ *Je t’aime, je t’aime*.”⁴⁹ This passage is one of the more curious and important “achronicities” in the *Cinema* books: *Zvenyhora* was made in 1928, but it is mentioned here along with *Vertigo* and *Je t’aime, je t’aime*, both of which appeared several decades later, in 1958 and 1968, respectively. It is also noteworthy that the other films used to illustrate the time-image in the same chapter were all released, “as they should have been,” after the Second World War: Orson Welles’s *The Lady from Shanghai* (1947), John Huston’s *Moby Dick* (1956), Krzysztof Zanussi’s *Camouflage* (1976) and *Imperative* (1982), Joseph Losey’s *Eva* (1962) and *The Servant* (1963), Federico Fellini’s *Amarcord* (1973), Andrei Tarkovsky’s *Solaris* (1972), *Mirror* (1975), and *Stalker* (1979), and finally, Wim Wenders’s *The State of Things* (1982). The majority of these films were released years after Dovzhenko’s death in 1956, and yet Deleuze considers 1928 film *Zvenyhora* in this context. Is this achronicity intentional?

As mentioned earlier, Deleuze owes the concept of the crystal-image to Bergson’s notion of duration, according to which a simultaneous co-presence of different experiences occurs as an uninterrupted flow of sensations in our consciousness, which also constitutes memory. In Deleuze’s philosophy of time, “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 which is preserved.”⁵⁰ In Hitchcock’s *Vertigo* the “confusing” events are shown “through the eyes” of police detective John “Scottie” Ferguson (James Stewart), who suffers from acrophobia and depression.⁵¹ Similarly, *Je t’aime, je t’aime* is the story of a suicidal man, Claude Ridder (Claude Rich), who is selected to participate in a time-travel

experiment conducted by a group of scientists via the time travel machine they have invented—specifically because he had attempted to take his own life, and “therefore” for him, disappointed and depressed, his life has no value “anyway.” That is why in these films the nonchronological order of flashbacks and the subversion of causality of events in the characters’ memories are the results of Scottie’s temporary mental disability and Claude’s depression. In other words, in both films there is an attempt to justify narratively and rationalize the nonlinear fragmented temporality. Unlike *Vertigo* and *Je t’aime, je t’aime*, *Zvenyhora* does not offer any explanation of its complex temporal structure, in which the relationship between the past and the future is radically disturbed. By avoiding an explanation, Dovzhenko removes the mediator between the crystal-image of time and viewers by exposing them to overwhelming, immeasurable temporality and offering them this unmediated experience.

In the words of Vance Kepley, “Born of a society that often seemed to be frozen in time, reared into an age that seemed to know only upheaval and change, Dovzhenko existed at the site of historical conflict. His project entailed a troubled effort at reconciliation. It is precisely the troubled nature of his effort that most deserves our continued attention and study.”⁵² In *Cinema 2*, Deleuze writes, “What we see in the crystal is time itself, the gushing forth of time. Subjectivity is never ours, it is time, that is, the soul or the spirit, the virtual. The actual is always objective, but the virtual is subjective: it was initially the affect, that which we experience in time; then time itself, pure virtuality which divides itself in two as affecter and affected, ‘the affection of self by self’ as definition of time.”⁵³ The time of *Zvenyhora* is titanic—“Cronos, and not Chronos,” as Deleuze puts it; this titanic time is almost beyond human dimension: almost, but not entirely, as it is still a time of trauma, on a national scale.

MEMORIES OF THE MINOR

Another reason why *Zvenyhora* stands out in Deleuze’s discussion of the crystal image is that both *Vertigo* and *Je t’aime, je t’aime* belong to major cinemas, American and French, and were made by the major representatives of these national cinemas, Hitchcock and Resnais. The situation with Dovzhenko’s film is markedly different: although the director holds a special place within the Soviet school of montage, his film is deeply rooted in Ukrainian history, mythology, and the nation’s traumatic memories that were marginalized and repressed by the forceful rewriting of this history by the Soviet state. This film is the cinematic articulation of what Ray Uzwyshyn correctly identifies, following Fredric Jameson, as the “political unconscious.”⁵⁴ To quote Jameson himself, “history is *not* a text, not a narrative, master or otherwise, but that, as an absent cause, it is inaccessible to us except in textual form, and that our approach to it

and to the Real itself necessarily passes through its prior textualization, its narrativization in the political unconscious."⁵⁵ In this famous formulation, Jameson follows Louis Althusser's revision of the causal relation between the structure and the superstructure. Drawing on psychoanalysis of Jacques Lacan, Althusser (and Jameson) identify history as an "absent cause" similar to Lacan's "absent signified," which is only absent because it is not present empirically. However, it remains at the level of the real, or the realm of human psyche that, according to Lacan, resists symbolization, and as such, this signified is rather powerful in affecting the subject's life. If history is such "absent cause," our relation to it is unavoidably problematic. There is always too much to negotiate: from the historical inconsistencies to what appears too logical and clear. Although there is even more of what does not lend itself to negotiation: the unsayable, the repressed, and the denied—under the pressure of the ruling ideologies, social laws and demands of a certain historical moment that produces the subject and imposes occasional meanings by which the subject has to live.

The need for the cinematic articulation of trauma is not unrelated to Dovzhenko's status of the minor, which he experienced throughout his life. The minor, especially in the Deleuzian sense, is not the opposite of the major; instead, it dwells within the major and is sustained by its own impossibility. The minor is "no longer constituted on the basis of a possibility of evolution and revolution... but on impossibilities, in the style of Kafka: *the intolerable*."⁵⁶ A closer look at both Dovzhenko's self-portraits, often called "unfinished" by Soviet critics because of their fragmented (Cubist) composition,⁵⁷ and his diary allows us to see his feeling of fragility of the self and the instability of self-identification, which are expressed more directly than in his poetic films. Together they reveal the filmmaker's pain from dealing with the uncertainty and melancholia that were triggered by his feeling of not belonging and not being able to ever find a middle ground, quite literally, between Ukraine and the Soviet state.⁵⁸ In their book-length essay, *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature* (1975), Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari introduce the concept of *the minor*. The two philosophers theorize it as an instrument of *destratification*, which sets one against the organizing principle's production of major strata, such as "the organism, meaningfulness, interpretation, subjectivization, and subjection."⁵⁹ As Kylie Message explains, "These often forgotten journeys and the non-cognitive decisions that accompany our movements are precisely where a potential line of flight or becoming may be located, and in evoking largely taken-for-granted State systems, all processes of becoming occur—at least initially—within these systems."⁶⁰ While the State ideology and language construct a certain image of reality, the nondenumerable minority within it destratifies it. As such, the minor is at the same time impossible and necessary: the minor is sustained by its own impossibility—"the impossibility of not writing, the impossibility of writing in [the major language], the impossibility of writing otherwise. The impossibility of not writing because national

consciousness, uncertain or oppressed, necessarily exists by means of literature.”⁶¹ Therefore, for Deleuze and Guattari the minor is political, and becoming minoritarian is an ethical action: the minor is where even “the family triangle connects to other triangles—commercial, economic, bureaucratic, juridical—that determine its values.” Also in it, “everything takes on a collective value,” creating “the collective assemblage of enunciation.”⁶²

This description of minor literature is also characteristic of minor cinema, represented in *Cinema 2* by the Filipino director Lino Brocka, the Québécois Pierre Perrault, the Brazilian Glauber Rocha, the Ethiopian Haile Gerima, as well as the African American directors Charles Burnett and Charles Lane, Black American cinema, and so on.⁶³ For Deleuze, minor cinema goes beyond such narrow and essentialist notions as “national identity” or “authenticity,” as it is “not singular, but shaped by complex and multiple connections established between local and international forces and conditions.”⁶⁴ He draws our attention to the fact that “Many third world films invoke memory.”⁶⁵ Deleuze’s notion of memory was influenced by Bergson, for whom every lived moment is at the same time actual (when we recall it) and virtual (having the potential to be actualized by recollection and to become conscious). This notion is important for reflecting on the ways in which minor cinema, or “the cinema of the limit,” challenges and changes the relationship between the past and the present, the border between the political and the private, the distinction between the individual and the collective,⁶⁶ and how such changes affect the very idea of a cinematic narrative. Deleuze explains,

This is not a psychological memory as faculty for summoning recollections, or even a collective memory as that of an existing people. It is... the strange faculty which puts into immediate contact the outside and the inside, the people’s business and private business, the people who are missing and the I who is absent, a membrane, a double becoming. Kafka spoke of this power taken on by memory in small nations: “The memory of a small nation is no shorter than that of a large one, hence it works on the existing material at a deeper level.” It gains in depth and distance what it lacks in extent.⁶⁷

This is why a minor cinema is political: for a people, it opens up the possibility of *becoming*, which, for Deleuze, signifies an ontological uprooting, a movement toward potential change. In the chapter “Cinema, Body and Brain, Thought,” Deleuze introduces a new criterion for distinguishing between classical and modern cinema, only, however, if they are political: “In classical cinema,” of which the Soviet school is an example, “the people are there, even though they are oppressed, tricked, subject, even though blind or unconscious;”⁶⁸ while in modern political cinema the people are missing. “The people are there” in Eisenstein, Vertov, and Pudovkin in several different ways: “The people already has a virtual existence in process of being actualized” or by means of a politi-

cal unanimity that “calls the different peoples into the same melting-pot from which the future emerges.”⁶⁹ Dovzhenko is also mentioned among these directors. However, I would argue that the Dovzhenko of *Zvenyhora* does not belong to the classical model: in this film, unlike *Earth* or *Arsenal*, the people are indeed missing. *Zvenyhora* is also different from the work of other representatives of the Soviet school: its world, “where oppressed and exploited nations remained in a state of perpetual minorities, in a collective identity crisis,”⁷⁰ does not lend itself to a consistent narrative of classical cinema.

We can agree with Verena Conley that “a language always has internal minorities,” that “minoritarian authors are those who are foreigners in their own tongue,” and that “a minority is not defined by the paucity of its numbers but by its capacity to become or, in its subjective geography, to draw for itself lines of fluctuation that open up a gap and separate it from the axiom constituting a redundant majority.”⁷¹ Conley’s discussion of the relationship between the concepts of the minor and the political in classical and modern cinema could have been bolstered by references to *Zvenyhora*, inasmuch as the film’s internal ruptures, nonlinear temporality, and the impossibility for the director to come to terms with his own fears and desires demonstrate how Dovzhenko’s case is truly reminiscent of Kafka’s.

Dovzhenko refers to the legendary past of the Ukrainian nation, but he does this from within the Soviet present and within the framework of Soviet ideology, and in order to promote the Soviet revolution. His intention is to establish a genealogy of the current revolutionary present in the legendary past. Not surprisingly, what happens is the opposite: the ideology of the Soviet regime is subverted and the distance to the remote legendary past is not eliminated, but reinstated. As David Martin-Jones incisively notes,

National identity was . . . maintained through a circuitous process in which the present was seen to be a continuation of a past, that was itself a construction of the present! In the present it is decided which “rhetorical figures” (which flags, salutes, wars, founding fathers, invasions, revolutions, religious allegiances, racial characteristics and so on) constitute the nation’s origins. However, those that are excluded or forgotten in the process still subsist, and await recall in the future should a change of origin become necessary. Such a change may be determined necessary by, for instance, a new form of government.⁷²

The cinematic crystal image does not establish continuity; on the contrary, it reveals its impossibility, as the sparkle jumps on the different sides of a crystal. The political unconscious opens up in those moments when all Dovzhenko wants is to be an oracle of the happy communist future. This explains why the minor, as Deleuze claims, cannot be associated with an *individual*: the minor is not individual or private, it is where the boundary between the private and the social,

the inside and the outside, collapses. An individual turns into a *schizophrenic* artist whose self and whose history are multiplied.

The political unconscious is messy. If Dovzhenko's *Zvenyhora* tells us anything, it is that a minor cinema has no outside that defines it or points to its origin. Impossibility constitutes the minor: "Sometimes the minority film-maker finds himself in the impasse described by Kafka: the impossibility of not 'writing,' the impossibility of writing in the dominant language, the impossibility of writing differently...and it is through this state of crisis that he has to pass, it is this that has to be resolved."⁷³

A minor cinema, and *Zvenyhora* in particular, "is not a renunciation of political cinema," Deleuze writes, "but on the contrary, the new basis on which it is founded, in the third world and for minorities"; and as such, it is the "acknowledgement of a people who are missing."⁷⁴ In a sense, "a missing people" might seem an unusual concept for Deleuze, who is resistant to the notion of a lack. However, it is entirely in accordance with his thought: this concept opens up a potentiality and anticipation of the new to evolve in the place of the missing. "Art, and especially cinematographic art, must take part in this task: not that of addressing a people, which is presupposed already there, but of contributing to the invention of people. The moment the master, or the colonizer, proclaims 'There have never been people here,' the missing people are a becoming, they invent themselves, in shanty towns and camps, or in ghettos, in new conditions of struggle to which a necessary political art must contribute."⁷⁵

Recently, a demand for political art, political philosophy, and political science has been voiced across many disciplines. However, the political in the Deleuzian sense, like the political of the minor, cannot be demanded; it is simply beyond the reach of demand as such and even more so, the demand of a "political everything." The Deleuzian political, which punctuates and subverts the majority's metanarratives, is the very impossibility of not writing, the impossibility of writing in the dominant language, the impossibility of writing differently—always unexpected, never timely, and persisting prior to any manifestation of a rationalized demand. The impossibility of filming differently, the impossibility of not filming as the political in *Zvenyhora* is related to Dovzhenko's powerful way of "show[ing] how we inhabit time, how we move in it, in this form which carries us away, picks us up and enlarges us."⁷⁶

Although so far away, we are still so much there, in the past that occasionally transgresses the present, but only to remind us that there is no way we can break through to a still-missing people—unless we realize that the missing people are we.

NOTES

1. In this essay, I discuss several accounts that represent two polarized approaches to Deleuze's *Cinema* books—specifically, a rather critical reading of Deleuze's writings on cinema by Jacques Rancière in his essay "From One Image to Another? Deleuze and the Ages of Cinema," in *Film Fables*, trans. Emiliano Battista (Oxford: Berg, 2006), 107–23; Agustín Zanzosa's defending response to Rancière in "Layering Images, Thwarting Fables: Deleuze, Rancière and the Allegories of Cinema," *Cinema: Journal of Philosophy and the Moving Image*, no. 2 (2011), accessed 11 August 2014, <http://cjpmi.ifl.pt/2-zanzosa>; and D. N. Rodowick's book *Gilles Deleuze's Time Machine* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1997), which offers a detailed and highly appreciative account of Deleuze's cinema theory, despite his reservations about certain aspects of Deleuze's argument. Among other important sources on the *Cinema* volumes are David Martin-Jones's *Deleuze, Cinema and National Identity: Narrative Time in National Contexts* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006), where he offers a productive critical reading of the French philosopher's "Eurocentric" cinema theory through the lens of postcolonial thought; Patricia Pisters's *The Matrix of Visual Culture: Working with Deleuze in Film Theory* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2003), where she discusses a number of contemporary films that exhibit characteristics of both the movement-image and time-image; Elena del Río's *Deleuze and the Cinemas of Performance: Powers of Affection* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2008), an elaborated exploration of the different levels of performance in film such as "the literal, narrative level of on-stage performance; the discursive level of identity performance/performativity; and the affective level" (p. 4) that demonstrates how performance mobilizes the circuits of affect; and the volume *The Brain Is the Screen: Deleuze and the Philosophy of Cinema* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), ed. Gregory Fluxman, which addresses the reception of Deleuze's *Cinema* books and includes a series of readings of the philosopher's contribution to film theory.
2. However, in his later works, including *Creative Evolution* (1907) and *The Creative Mind* (1934), Bergson was critical of the cinematographic mechanism, which he equated with "the mechanism of our ordinary knowledge" as opposed to intuition. See Henry Bergson, *The Creative Mind*, trans. Mabelle L. Andison (New York: Philosophical Library, 1946), 17–18. Cinema, according to Bergson, is an analytical attempt at recomposing an illusion of movement. "Instead of attaching ourselves to the inner becoming of things," he writes, "We take snapshots, as it were, of the passing reality and, as these are characteristic of the reality, we have only to string them on a becoming, abstract, uniform and invisible, situated at the back of the apparatus of knowledge, in order to imitate what there is that is characteristic of becoming itself"; Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, trans. Arthur Mitchell (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1913), 306.

3. Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 1: The Movement-Image*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam (London: Athlone Press, 1986), 1.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid., 2.
6. Ibid., 5.
7. For an incisive reading of a cinematic apparatus as Deleuze's human-machine assemblage, see John Johnston's essay "Machinic Vision," *Critical Inquiry* 26, no. 1 (Autumn 1999): 27–48.
8. Deleuze, *Cinema 1*, 55.
9. Dyrk Ashton, "Feeling Time: Deleuze's Time-Image and Aesthetic Effect," *Rhizomes*, no. 16 (Summer 2008), par. 3, accessed 25 July 2014, <http://www.rhizomes.net/issue16/ashton/>.
10. Ibid., par. 6.
11. Rodowick, *Gilles Deleuze's Time Machine*, 7.
12. Ibid., 7.
13. Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 2: The Time-Image*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Robert Galeta (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989), xii.
14. Rodowick, *Gilles Deleuze's Time Machine*, 9.
15. Ibid., 8.
16. Ibid., 16.
17. Rancière, "From One Image to Another?" 109.
18. Zarzosa, "Layering Images, Thwarting Fables."
19. Ibid.
20. Rancière, "From One Image to Another?" 122.
21. Ibid., 117.
22. Deleuze, *Cinema 1*, 7–8.
23. Ibid., 65.
24. Ibid., 66.
25. Zarzosa, "Layering Images, Thwarting Fables."
26. Rancière, "From One Image to Another?" 118.
27. Ibid., 112.
28. Zarzosa refers to these layers as "transcendental," "ontological," "regulative," and "semiotic." Every example of a film Deleuze uses in his books is engaged by all four layers.
29. Zarzosa, "Layering Images, Thwarting Fables."
30. Ibid.
31. Rancière, "From One Image to Another?" 119.
32. Sergei Eisenstein, "An Unexpected Juncture," in *Selected Works*, vol. 1, *Writings, 1922–34*, ed. and trans. Richard Taylor (London: BFI Publishing, 1988), 117.
33. The extent to which Eisenstein was correct in his observation may be questioned. Nonetheless, in many cases we can argue that his films did have the effect that Eisenstein describes in his theoretical writings.

34. Sergei Eisenstein, "Synchronization of Senses," in *The Film Sense*, trans. and ed. Jay Leyda (San Diego: A Harvest Book, Harcourt Brace, 1975), 69.
35. To my knowledge, the material evidence of the experiment did not survive and was later reconstructed through the recollections of the participants of Kuleshov's workshop and of his assistant Vsevolod Pudovkin, one of the major representatives of the Soviet school of montage. See Lev Kuleshov, *Kuleshov on Film: Writings*, trans. and ed. with an introduction by Ron Levaco (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975).
36. Alfred Hitchcock, for example, used the "Kuleshov effect" successfully in many of his films. He spoke of this in the interview "A Talk with Hitchcock," with host-director Fletcher Markle, Canadian Broadcasting Corporation's television series *Telescope*, 1964. The best example is, perhaps, Hitchcock's *Rear Window*, in which the camera cuts between James Stewart's face and the neighbors that he is watching.
37. Eisenstein discusses his method at length in his theoretical essays "A Dialectic Approach to Film Form" (1929), "Methods of Montage" (1929), "Film Language" (1934), and others. This quote is from "A Dialectic Approach to Film Form," in Sergei Eisenstein, *Film Form: Essays in Film Theory and the Film Sense*, trans. and ed. Jay Leyda (New York: Meridian Books, 1957), 49.
38. *Ibid.*, 45.
39. Deleuze, *Cinema 2*, 158.
40. *Ibid.*
41. Eisenstein, "A Dialectic Approach to Film Form," 62.
42. *Ibid.*, 63.
43. Deleuze, *Cinema 1*, 38.
44. Jay Leyda, *Kino: A History of the Soviet Film; A Study of the Development of Russian Cinema, from 1896 to the Present* (New York: Collier Books, 1973), 242.
45. Alexander Dovzhenko, "Beginnings—Sources," in *Cinema in Revolution: The Heroic Era of the Soviet Film*, ed. Luda and Jean Schnitzer and Marcel Martin (New York: Hill and Wang, 1973), 156.
46. Alexander Dovzhenko, *The Poet as Filmmaker: Selected Writings*, ed. and trans. Marco Carynnyk (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1973), 14.
47. Rodowick, *Gilles Deleuze's Time Machine*, 4.
48. Deleuze, *Cinema 1*, 38–39.
49. Deleuze, *Cinema 2*, 82.
50. *Ibid.*
51. Scottie's latent acrophobia was triggered initially by the death of his fellow police officer during a rooftop chase of a suspect, and his own close brush with death in this incident. It was exacerbated by what he thought was the death of Madeleine (Kim Novak), the woman with whom he was in love. After her "death," Scottie suffers severe depression caused by the emotional shock.
52. Vance Kepley, Jr., *In the Service of the State: The Cinema of Alexander Dovzhenko* (Madison: Wisconsin University Press, 1986), 161.

53. Deleuze, *Cinema 2*, 82–83.
54. See Ray Uzwyshyn “*Zvenyhora* (1928): Ethnographic Modernism,” accessed 25 July 2014, <http://rayuzwyshyn.net/dovzhenko/Zvenyhora.htm>.
55. Frederic Jameson, *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act* (New York: Routledge, 1983), 20.
56. Deleuze, *Cinema 2*, 219.
57. See Bohdan Nebesio, preface to “The Cinema of Alexander Dovzhenko,” ed. Bohdan Nebesio, special issue, *Journal of Ukrainian Studies* 19, no.1 (Summer 1994): 1.
58. For discussion of how this issue is dealt with in his diary, see Svitlana Matviienko [Matviyenko], “U poshukakh utrachenoho chasu,” *Krytyka* 6, no. 56 (2002).
59. Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press, 1987), 159.
60. Kylie Message, “Stratification,” in *The Deleuze Dictionary*, ed. Adrian Parr (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010), 272.
61. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature* (Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press, 1986), 16.
62. *Ibid.*, 17–18.
63. Deleuze, *Cinema 2*, 217–22.
64. Constantine Verevis, “Minoritarian + Cinema,” in Parr, *Deleuze Dictionary*, 169.
65. Deleuze, *Cinema 2*, 221.
66. *Ibid.*, 218.
67. *Ibid.*, 221.
68. *Ibid.*, 216.
69. *Ibid.*
70. *Ibid.*, 217.
71. Verena Conley, “Minoritarian,” in Parr, *Deleuze Dictionary*, 167.
72. Martin-Jones, *Deleuze, Cinema and National Identity*, 33.
73. Deleuze, *Cinema 2*, 217.
74. *Ibid.*
75. *Ibid.*
76. *Ibid.*, 82.