

Deleuzian spectatorship

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Deleuze's writings have been received as important antitheses to the structuralist and psychoanalytic approaches to film studies of the 1970s and 1980s, the kind of work made famous in Anglo-American film studies by this journal. At one level, Deleuze was felt to have introduced a perspective on film studies that was at odds with *Screen Theory's* insistence on the *passivity* of the cinema spectator, the latter being a notion indebted to theories of psychoanalysis and articulated in various ways by Christian Metz, Laura Mulvey, Stephen Heath, Peter Wollen, Colin MacCabe, Jean-Louis Baudry and others (and not just in *Screen*, but in also *Film Quarterly*, *Afterimage* and *Camera Obscura*). Rather than spectators passively deprived of their bodies and held in thrall to an ideological apparatus, Deleuze's writings gave rise to the possibility of spectators who engaged their bodies and senses in ways that made *Screen Theory* seem incorrigibly shortsighted. And yet, if Deleuze seems to offer something beyond the notion of a passive spectator, what kind of spectator does he presume? Does Deleuze demonstrate some of the *active* capabilities of the cinema spectator? Or, more pertinently, does Deleuze even have a notion of a cinema spectator – a viewer or audience member who watches and listens to a film – at all? Does he envisage things called *subjects* which are engaged in a cinematic situation? These are somewhat difficult questions, and if Deleuze has answers to them they are not at all straightforward.

My aim here is to put forward a number of propositions on Deleuzian spectatorship which might seem a little strange to some readers. These propositions are made against the backdrop of *Screen Theory*. I make them in order to foreground what is arguably essential to a Deleuzian

1 Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 1: the Movement-Image*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam (London: Athlone Press, 1986); *Cinema 2: the Time-Image*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Robert Galeta (London: Athlone Press, 1989).

2 Steven Shaviro, *The Cinematic Body* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1993).

3 Barbara Kennedy, *Deleuze and Cinema: the Aesthetics of Sensation* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000); Patricia Pisters, *The Matrix of Visual Culture: Working with Deleuze in Film Theory* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2003); Laura Marks, *The Skin of the Film: Intercultural Cinema, Embodiment and the Senses* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1999).

4 Stephen Heath, 'Film performance', in *Questions of Cinema* (London: Macmillan, 1981), p. 129.

conception of cinema spectatorship. Disconcerting for many readers might be the fact that I consider Deleuze's spectator to be one that eschews activity – or, at least, for Deleuze the spectator is someone whose circumstances are very much at odds with what film studies, in the wake of *Screen Theory*, has defined as the activities of film viewing. In short, I believe Deleuze's spectator to be something which (or someone who) is ineluctably passive; that this passivity signals something definitively radical in Deleuze's approach; and furthermore that this conception of passive spectatorship allows some access to understanding Deleuze's overall project in the *Cinema* books.¹ This might seem like a lot to address in a short essay, but I hope if nothing else at least to chart the course of some future research.

As I already noted, one way in which Deleuze has been taken up by film studies is as a way of repudiating some aspects of *Screen Theory*. Thus, for example, we have Steven Shaviro's groundbreaking *The Cinematic Body*, which uses Deleuzian philosophy to open up new cinematic territories beyond the ocularcentric, psychoanalytically focused discourses of *Screen Theory*.² Arguing quite explicitly against *Screen Theory*, Shaviro focuses on the cinematic realms of affective and bodily sensation found in Deleuze's works. Shaviro's work is echoed in a number of subsequent books – Barbara Kennedy's *Deleuze and Cinema*, Patricia Pisters's *The Matrix of Visual Culture*, Laura Marks's *The Skin of the Film* – all of which foreground the body's cinematic possibilities by way of Deleuzian theory, as against the all-seeing, subject-centred approaches of *Screen Theory*.³

However, the first point to be made about each of these books and their focus on Deleuzian aspects of the cinematic body is that they in no way stand as repudiations of the main tenets of *Screen Theory*. *Screen Theory* was as set against ocularcentrism as it was against the notion of an all-seeing, masterful subject. Put simply, the only reason *Screen Theory* ever articulated a notion of passive spectatorship was in order to be resoundingly critical of that passivity. *Screen Theory* was dedicated to finding modes of audience engagement that were not passive; and thus if Deleuzian approaches to cinema are critical of passive modes of spectatorship in favour of 'bodily' modes of engagement, then they are merely criticizing precisely the same things as the *Screen* theorists were. Also, if *Screen Theory* did use psychoanalysis, then to some extent it did so in order to invent ways of providing a cinematic body. As Stephen Heath put it emphatically in his essay 'Film performance', at least one aim of *Screen Theory* was to define a cinema that 'makes a body'.⁴ So, a first point, then, is to realize that much of the work on Deleuze that has purported to redirect the debates that informed *Screen Theory* are not really repositioning such debates. Instead, it is actually replaying those debates. This is only a first point, however, for what is even more intriguing about the work alluded to above is that it relies for the most part on Deleuze's non-cinematic writings. Instead of turning to his *Cinema* books, this work tends to rely on the reformulations of

5 Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Robert Hurley et al. (London: Athlone Press, 1984); *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1987).

6 D.N. Rodowick, *Gilles Deleuze's Time Machine* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1997); Ronald Bogue, *Deleuze on Cinema* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2003).

7 Rodowick, *Gilles Deleuze's Time Machine*, p. xi.

psychoanalytic theory that Deleuze undertook with Félix Guattari.⁵ It is hard to understand quite why film scholars felt they could ditch – or at least sidestep – Deleuze's *Cinema* books in favour of his other formulations.

Perhaps such research has avoided Deleuze's *Cinema* books because those books are exceptionally difficult, especially inasmuch as they discard most of the language traditionally associated with film studies. Deleuze simply ignores the language associated with *Screen Theory*: suture, gaze, ideological apparatus, reality effect, and so on. Even the two fine English-language exegeses of the *Cinema* books, by D.N. Rodowick and Ronald Bogue, tend to remain reluctant to pull Deleuze's classifications into too close a contact with other strands of contemporary film studies.⁶ Rodowick claims early in his book, for example, that 'Rather than trying to incorporate Deleuze in the extant schemas for understanding the historical development of anglophone film theory, I believe that *The Movement-Image* and *The Time-Image* are more productively read as a challenge to those schemas'.⁷

So Deleuze remains strangely out of position in mainstream film studies. There is, I believe, a very specific reason for this: Deleuze has no explicit conception of the *cinema spectator*. His discourses and categories seem bereft of any thoughts about viewers, beholders or audiences – the people who go to the cinema. When so much of the study of cinema has been devoted to questions of spectators and audiences – for *Screen Theory*, yes, but also for movements that have claimed to supplant *Screen Theory*, such as cognitivism, cultural studies and the various modes of reception theory – Deleuze's failure to have a theory of spectatorship places him quite simply out of the loop in the major conversations of film studies. Nevertheless, I do believe an implicit theory of spectatorship can be found in the *Cinema* books.

Perhaps the most significant aspect of Deleuze's spectator is that she/he is passive in a way that even the worst excesses of *Screen Theory* would never have dared consider. *Screen Theory* – generalizations are necessary here – typically posited a distinction between two types of cinematic engagement: one which was passive and another which was active. Passive spectators were the products of mainstream, orthodox, Hollywood cinema, while active spectators were the hoped-for products of an avant-garde cinema. This formulation was indebted to Brecht, and is one that remains somewhat in vogue even today. In one of *Screen Theory*'s classic articles, an essay by Colin MacCabe on 'The politics of separation', the words of Brecht are directly quoted, words which posit the grave sin of a spectator's fusion with the action of a play in a way that served as a template for *Screen Theory*'s derision for the cinema spectator's fusion with the screen:

The process of fusion extends to the spectator who gets thrown into the melting pot . . . and becomes a passive (suffering) part of the total work of art. Witchcraft of this sort must, of course, be fought against. What

8 Quoted in Colin MacCabe, 'The politics of separation', *Screen*, vol. 16, no. 4 (1975), p. 48.

9 Across the *Cinema* books Deleuze refers to such states as ones of a 'spiritual automaton', while in a late interview he declared a preference for terms such as *pre-individual singularities* or *non-personal individuations* instead of 'subjects'. See Deleuze, 'Response to a question of the subject', in *Two Regimes of Madness: Texts and Interviews, 1975–1995* (New York, NY: Semiotext(e), 2006), p. 351.

10 See Deleuze, *Cinema 1: the Movement-Image*, pp. 57–8.

11 Gilles Deleuze, 'The brain is the screen', in Gregory Flaxman (ed.), *The Brain is the Screen: Deleuze and the Philosophy of Cinema* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), p. 366.

is intended to produce hypnosis, is likely to induce sordid intoxication, or creates fog, has got to be given up.⁸

Passive spectators are emphatically what must be avoided, for such spectators can only be the subjects of witchcraft and hypnosis. As an antidote to this passive intoxication, the aim of a positive or progressive cinema is one of an active spectatorship where spectators remain in control of their senses and thoughts. Very few scholars in film studies have ever defended a passive spectator, from the politically motivated call for active responses to society's contradictions, through David Bordwell's defence of the active cognitive activities of the beholder, to cultural studies' articulations of the complex interactions of which viewers are capable.

What, then, is Deleuze's spectator? First of all, Deleuze's spectator cannot be said to exist prior to a film. Rather, it is created almost entirely by the film. There is no prior 'subject' to be posited as existing anterior to the happening of the filmic event; or if there is, then this subjectivity is thoroughly dismantled by the film that unfolds in front of this spectatorial entity which, for all intents and purposes, is a 'non-subject'.⁹ Deleuze's articulations of this position are somewhat obfuscatory, but they can be found at the beginning of *Cinema 1*, where he pits the philosophy of Henri Bergson against the conceptions of phenomenological philosophy. He sums up the conflict by declaring that for phenomenology consciousness is *consciousness of something*, whereas for Bergson *consciousness is something*. Instead of consciousness being separated from that of which it is conscious, Bergson, and Deleuze after him, conceive of consciousness as something that is conjoined with those somethings with which it comes into contact. Consciousness therefore does not conceive of things by *becoming conscious* of them, but instead, *consciousness is itself formed by things*.¹⁰

If we extend this understanding of consciousness to the cinema – as Deleuze does – then our engagement with a film is not a process of becoming conscious of what is happening in a film, but, rather, *our consciousness is formed by what happens in the film*. (Another way of expressing this problematic can be found in Deleuze's claim that 'the brain is the screen': 'The circuits and linkages of the brain don't preexist the stimuli, corpuscles and particles [*grains*] that trace them'.¹¹) All of this is really one way of saying that, for Deleuze, the spectator is *fused with* the film; there is no spectator who watches (and listens to) a film, for the spectator is only ever *formed by* watching (and listening to) a film. One might say that for Deleuze there are no subjects who go to the cinema; the identities, backgrounds, tastes and predilections of those who might presume to go to the cinema are irrelevant. Rather, there are only subjectivities *formed by* the cinema, by the act of going to the cinema and experiencing a film. This is indeed a process of fusion, a fusion between spectator and screen, in the worst ways that Brecht or any *Screen* theorist might have been able to imagine. From Deleuze's point of view,

however, all of the negative terms employed by Brecht can be taken as positives: cinema is a kind of witchcraft that induces hypnosis, intoxication and fog. Quite contrary to Brecht and *Screen Theory*, these, for Deleuze, are some of the positive things cinema can do.

One way to characterize broadly the difference between *Screen Theory* and Deleuze's approach to cinema is to see the difference as one between theory and philosophy. The project of *Screen Theory* was inspired by an Althusserian commitment to 'Theory' as that which precedes and designates what any practice is capable of achieving. Theory was therefore conceived as an essential ally of and precursor to practice, so that the abiding aim of *Screen Theory* was to designate the parameters of a new cinema, a cinema primarily based on the experiments of the avant garde. In addition to this, for *Screen Theory*, the invention of a new cinema was a necessary step in the invention of a new society; a society which, by definition, would be composed of human beings who could no longer be called 'subjects' (in the sense specifically given to this term by Althusser).¹² By contrast, Deleuze's cinematic philosophy is an attempt to chart some of the consequences to which cinema has given rise. Those consequences are 'blocs of sensations'¹³ – something Deleuze ascribes generally to works of art – or, more explicitly in the case of cinema, the determination to uncover the 'unthought' in thought (to think that which is unthinkable).¹⁴ For Deleuze, such sensations or thoughts are not things that can be possessed by or attributed to subjects, for they are, Deleuze writes (with Guattari), 'independent of a state of those who experience them'.¹⁵ If the project of *Screen Theory* was one of transforming subjectivities so that they would no longer be subjects, then Deleuze's cinematic philosophy is from the beginning one which tries to go beyond subjectivity.

What can Deleuze hope to gain from such formulations; and, furthermore, what can *we* hope to gain? When so much theorization in the humanities has been predicated on finding ways in which viewers, readers, beholders or listeners might critically analyze their own responses to cultural objects or novels or paintings – that is, to engage critically in reflective thought processes about the objects with which they come into contact – what can it mean for Deleuze to promote such thoroughly non-reflexive, passive, uncritical responsiveness? In order to understand Deleuze's intention, we need to make an important distinction in the way we think about the spectator's relationship to any film. This distinction is one between *absorption* and *immersion*.

The mode of absorption is one in which the spectator *goes into* the film – that is, is absorbed in or by the film – whereas in the mode of immersion the film *comes out* to the spectator so as to surround and envelop her/him. These are different kinds of movement – one in which the spectator is drawn into the film, and an opposite one whereby the film comes out towards the spectator – and each offers a significantly different mode of engagement. Absorption is a term used most famously in recent times by the art historian Michael Fried. Fried utilizes the

- 12 See Louis Althusser, 'Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses (notes toward an investigation)', in *Lenin and Philosophy, and Other Essays*, trans. Ben Brewster (London: Verso, 1971), pp. 85–132.
- 13 Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *What is Philosophy?*, trans. Graham Burchell and Hugh Tomlinson (London: Verso, 1994), p. 164.
- 14 Deleuze, *Cinema 2: the Time-Image*, p. 169.
- 15 Deleuze and Guattari, *What is Philosophy?*, p. 164.

- 16 Richard Rushton, 'Early, classical and modern cinema', *Screen*, vol. 45, no. 3 (2004), pp. 226–44.
- 17 I am avoiding recourse to current theorizations of immersion, quite simply because they are so disparate and inexact. However, some readers might wish to consult the following: Oliver Grau, *Virtual Art: from Illusion to Immersion* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2003); Ron Burnett, *How Images Think* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2004); Martin Reiser and Andrea Zapp (eds), *New Screen Media: Cinema/Art/Narrative* (London: British Film Institute, 2002); Oliver Grau (ed.), *MediaArHistories* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2007).
- 18 Henri Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, trans. Nancy M. Paul and W. Scott Palmer (New York, NY: Zone Books, 1988), p. 58.
- 19 Michael Fried, *Courbet's Realism* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1990), p. 153.
- 20 T.J. Clark, 'The special motion of a hand: Courbet and Poussin at the Met', *London Review of Books*, 24 April 2008, p. 6.

notion of absorption in order to denote the mode of address central to the history and conception of modernist painting. The term, for Fried, means something like the depiction of a world from which the viewer is excluded but whose effect and success relies on the viewer believing or imagining that she/he is in fact included in that depiction of a world. If this term can be made useful for describing a certain kind of cinematic engagement (as I have argued elsewhere¹⁶), then perhaps the absorptive experience can be reduced to offering the feeling that while watching a film, '*you are there*', while simultaneously producing the acknowledgment that '*you cannot be there*'.

Immersion is something rather different. Instead of feeling, as with absorption, that you are entering the film, with immersion comes the sensation that the film is *entering your own space*, perhaps even that it is entering your own body.¹⁷ This way of conceiving of film has become a very popular mode of contemporary theorizing, whether one is writing of expanded cinema, new media, high octane blockbuster cinema, horror or 'body genre' cinema or even, it must be added, Deleuzian conceptions of cinematic engagement. Much has been made of Deleuze's notions of affect and the affection-image, for the definition he gathers from Henri Bergson states that affect is 'that part or aspect of the inside of my body which we mix with the image of external bodies'.¹⁸ Most commentators seem to have taken this to mean that for affection, external bodies come out towards me so as to mix with my own body. They have thus equated Deleuze's conception of affect with what I am here calling immersion.

One might perhaps more fruitfully conceive of such affective participation in an *absorptive* way; that is, in terms of the way that a body can be imaginarily projected into the image. This is the direction in which I prefer to take Deleuze's analyses. I tend to feel that Fried's formulations on absorption can take us a long way towards understanding the position Deleuze occupies. For example, at one point in his book *Courbet's Realism*, Fried discusses the extraordinary canvas *The Wheat-Sifters* (figure 1). He convincingly argues that the figures in the painting are in some sense surrogates for those viewing the painting, but also that the two sifters who are engaged in the activity of sifting are not there merely to *represent* those people and those actions. In other words, they are not merely there to be looked at. Rather, Fried claims that the type of engagement a viewer has with this painting and with these figures is 'no longer one of beholding but a mode of identification in which vision as such is all but elided'.¹⁹ This is one of the astonishing aspects of absorption: not merely that one can be looking in on another world, but also that one can have the sensation of bodily occupying that space in another world, the sensation of occupying the space of another being. To put it bluntly, one of the possibilities which absorption holds forth is *the possibility of being another being*.

Another art historian, T.J. Clark, has recently tried to call this 'the moment of otherness' in Courbet's paintings: 'the moment of otherness and matter-of-factness, of objectivity and self-loss'.²⁰ What absorption

Gustave Courbet (1819–77), *Les Cribleuses de blé/The Wheat-Sifters* (1853–54). Nantes, Musée des Beaux-Arts. (C) RMN / © Gérard Blot.



encourages in the beholder is a sensation that one is no longer oneself, that one has lost one's selfhood in order to become something *other*, that one has lost the coordinates by which one's subjectivity can be defined in order to occupy a position that is in some sense objective rather than subjective (I become an object rather than a subject might be one way to think of it).

Absorption, I would argue, goes some way towards describing Deleuze's approach to cinema spectatorship. For him, cinema is a matter of placing oneself where one is not, of becoming someone or something one is not. That is, cinema, for Deleuze, offers the possibility of becoming other than what one is, of being someone (or something) else.

Immersion is somewhat different from absorption. Instead of the promise of becoming other which is offered by absorption, immersion offers only the option of remaining firmly within the bounds of one's own selfhood. A mode of immersion is one where the film comes to me so as to attract me, arouse me, solicit me; and it can do so only on the basis of an agreement or contract – it can canvass me only insofar as an accord is struck and consent agreed. At all times the immersive situation is one which is provided for me and whose defining presence is to make me part of its *raison d'être*. In other words, if it is immersive, the film is there *for me*; not to offer the possibility of my becoming something or someone else, but to offer only the affirmation of the me that is me. (What I am calling immersion is roughly equivalent to what Fried calls *theatricality* in the history of art.²¹)

The trajectory of Laura Mulvey's work offers an interesting case here, for she moves from the (in)famous active–male/passive–female split of 1975's 'Visual pleasure' article through to a dazzling kaleidoscope of

21 See Michael Fried, 'Art and objecthood', in *Art and Objecthood: Essays and Reviews* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1998), pp. 148–72; *Absorption and Theatricality: Painting and Beholder in the Age of Diderot* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1980). I should stress that *immersion* is a term I am using in my own way, for Fried often uses 'absorption' and 'immersion' interchangeably. See, for example, his short essay on Douglas Gordon and Philippe Parreno's 2006 film, *Zidane: a 21st Century Portrait*, 'Absorbed in the action', *Artforum*, vol. 45, no. 1 (2006), pp. 333–5, 398.

- 22 Laura Mulvey, *Death 24 x a Second: Stillness and the Moving Image* (London: Reaktion Books, 2006).

- 23 Laura Mulvey, 'Notes on Sirk and melodrama', in *Visual and Other Pleasures* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1989), pp. 39–44; and 'Delaying cinema', in *Death 24 x a Second*, pp. 144–60.

spectatorial terms in her most recent work: a deciphering spectator, a pensive spectator, a possessive spectator, an alert spectator – any kind of spectator, it seems, so long as this spectator is *doing things* and is not in any way passive. Even more important, perhaps, in Mulvey's recent *Death 24 x a Second*,²² is the sense of an historical shift, a belief that up until the 1970s the grounding of the cinematic experience in a theatrical setting – of spectators in a theatre – facilitated modes of spectatorship that were inherently passive, whereas contemporary technologies – video and DVD – break apart the confines of that necessary passivity and give the viewer a freedom to navigate, interact and engage with cinema's images in an entirely active manner.

What the evolution of Mulvey's work entails is none other than a move from theorizing Brechtian distanciation and alienation to theorizing something approaching immersion.²³ For today – the main example of this occurs in her account of Sirk's *Imitation of Life* (1959) – analysis has moved from a Brechtian consideration of Sirkian melodramatic distanciation where, significantly, it was the structures and ruptures of the film's unfolding text that were central, to a point where the text itself becomes a plaything of the remote control. Now it is no longer necessary for the film itself to provide the ruptures and fissures of form, but instead it is the remote control which manipulates the DVD and which thus gives the viewer access to the intricacies of Sirk's subversive formal efforts. For Mulvey, it is now the actions, interactions and button-pushings of the spectator that offer ways of radicalizing filmic texts. The remote control, the pause and rewind of the DVD, offer the spectator the opportunity to halt any film – to 'delay' cinema, as Mulvey calls it – so that such films can be subject to the spectator's mastery: the film can thus be reconfigured by me in such a way as to be *for me*. With the DVD, as Mulvey manipulates it, and in the mode that I am here calling immersion, any film loses its autonomy, it loses its separation from me, it loses its challenge to me, and merely becomes an object *for me*.

Federico Fellini foresaw this evolution nearly twenty-five years ago in a cynically damning jibe at the conveniences of the television remote control. The point he wished to make is that, with modes of reception like immersion or interactivity, the cinema will no longer be able to offer any challenges to spectators. Any challenges can be instantly dismissed, obliterated, so that that the sanctity of any viewing subject will not be ruffled.

... how can one not consider that device which, by pressing a button, shows you forty films, one after another? Television, violence, the fear of thinking, of facing reality. How can one make a family leave their house? Father is in his underwear, the wife is in her slip, the children are sprawled on the sofa or on the floor, all in front of the television which provides them with films of every kind, the whole of cinema from its birth to the present day. What's more, there's the exaltation that pressing a button gives them, feeling that they are controlling the

24 Federico Fellini, 'The cinema is finished. But *The Ship Sails On* (interview)', in Costanzo Costantini (ed.), *Fellini on Fellini* (London: Faber and Faber, 1994), p. 124.

25 Deleuze writes that 'The screen, that is ourselves, can be the deficient brain of an idiot as easily as a creative brain'. Deleuze, 'The brain is the screen', p. 366.

world. Bergman has always intimidated them? Oh well, they press a button and cancel him, annul him. Antonioni has always made them uneasy? Well, they press a button and get rid of him. It is a deliverance from any kind of frustration, a celebration of the most brutal collective vendetta.²⁴

If writers are keen to promote immersion and a push-button realm of interactivity, then what they are desiring is a filmic object that will answer their own fantasies, fantasies that can only ever be drawn in their own image. Immersion is a certain refusal to go outside of oneself, a refusal of ecstasy, a denial of the possibility of becoming other; an attitude of maintaining the certainty of one's own thoughts and refusing the invitation to think another's thoughts or to experience another's sensations. One might consider this as a refusal of passivity: with immersion one must insist on one's self remaining active, in control, in order that one remain a self-certain self, reflexively, reflectively, endlessly folding back onto the oneness of a self.

In an intellectual environment where the dominant mode of theorizing a spectator's or reader's relation to a film, text or artwork has been all about defining and maintaining levels of self-control over what one sees and experiences – for *Screen Theory* as much as for cultural studies, whether one begins with Brecht, Barthes or Stuart Hall – Deleuze throws down a quite extraordinary and risky challenge: that we lose control of ourselves, undo ourselves, forget ourselves while in front of the cinema screen. Only then will we be able to loosen the shackles of our existing subjectivities and open ourselves up to other ways of experiencing and knowing. Of course, this is by no means a tactic free of peril – one can be as much absorbed by *Triumph of the Will* (Leni Riefenstahl, 1935) as by *Sans soleil* (Chris Marker, 1983); and films can deliver to us the brains of idiots as much as it can deliver the brains of inspiration or genius.²⁵ That, however, for Deleuze, is a challenge we should be willing to face.