EIGHT

Ineluctable Modalities of the Televisual

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> . . . contemplating under Eros the feat of prose abstracted to a point where no image track occurs.—William Burroughs, *The Ticket that Exploded*

Gilles Deleuze and the Natural History of Images

From the start, Gilles Deleuze announces that his books on cinema—*Cinema 1: The Movement-Image*[1] and *Cinema 2: The Time-Image*[2]—should not be mistaken for a history of cinema. And, although he does not say it as clearly, he also refuses to offer anything like a "film theory," if by that we mean an interpretive framework for the analysis of cinematic texts. What his books declare, then, is a "philosophical theory" of images that understands cinema as a kind of thought in its own right. Deleuze is not interested in how films *work* but in how they *think*. The project may be more difficult to locate on our intellectual maps than this description suggests. Deleuze does not want to treat films "as if" they are philosophical texts, since that way of putting it already privileges philosophy as the only discourse capable of formulating thought. Nor does he want to isolate films in a sterile formalism of aesthetic devices. His books, on the contrary, classify cinema's thoughts according to its own specific preoccupations and problematics. Deleuze claims that his texts serve as a conceptual "illustration" of specific films, as opposed to theoretical readings that only offer analogies between cinema and some other discourse (such as linguistics or psychoanalysis).[3] Nevertheless, Deleuze cannot escape the temptations of either history or film theory, each having already entered the hall and taken a seat before he got there. As always, his inclination is inclusive: Deleuze finds ways to incorporate the most diverse materials into his patient philosophical spadework, acting as a friendly host who secretly sets out to have his way with everything he touches.

In this spirit—a poststructural pragmatism—I want to use Deleuze to explore the components of the televisual electronic image. It will not be a simple task, however, to locate this image in the massive typological and protohistorical edifice Deleuze has built. The conclusion to his second volume just barely reaches the moment of video before closing down in a mood of vague expectation. It is clear from his closing speculations that video cannot provide the model for an understanding of television, just as cinema cannot finally include all other kinds of image as logical extensions of its laws. When Deleuze claims that television's image "remains so regrettably in the present unless it is enriched by the art of cinema," he does not so much disqualify television from his study of images as indicate an unsolved problem, for it is by no means obvious how images can "remain" in the "present."[4] Indeed this comment suggests that television exceeds, without entirely including, the work of cinema. Television is both more profane and more profuse than cinema or video. The study of television cannot then proceed entirely through a series of great works or emblematic moments; it must be forced instead to explain the modulation between its interminable present tense (which has to be maintained by specific kinds of images) and a fleeting capacity to achieve other kinds of time, based, like cinema, on the fundamental characteristics of its machinery.

In terms of Deleuze's own project, however, television remains an animal that cannot think for itself, however much it scavenges from cinematic ideas (not to mention other fields of thought). If we were interested in proving television's aesthetic worth, Deleuze's negative remarks might be discouraging. But there seems little point in concluding that television is indifferent to thought or in forcing Deleuze to say that television might be as profound as cinema; we can take and leave his tangibly cosmopolitan tastes while still affirming that television produces its own kind of image-thinking. After all, "cinema" has been for a long time more a category of taste, evaluation, and marketing than a term designating distinct

practices or operations. Even in Deleuze's usage, "cinema" designates a radical program of "aesthetic research" carried out by a small fraction of filmmakers. Although adjacent to this ongoing practice, television can only be specified within different coordinates: its systematicity—social and temporal—alone defines it. Its intricate stasis of instantaneous multiple transmissions, its tendential synchrony, its impure and inaccessible "present": these are powers that the cinematic image does not possess. And while television blocks the temporal complexities of cinema, video already surges onward without any guarantee that its discoveries will be passed back to its ancestors. Together, television and video come both before and after Deleuze's cinema. They are the unthinking and not-yet-thought image-regimes that oversee his project from the outside. It would seem that only the exteriority of television allows us to think cinema as a history and film theory as a historical discourse in the first place.[5] It can be no accident that Deleuze will locate the fundamental moment of crisis in cinema at a point just when television appeared on the scene.

Deleuze assigns a new set of coordinates to the perennial question of television's relation to cinema. No longer a matter of aesthetic demarcations, the issue here turns around two distinct axes, extensive and intensive. The first axis—the properly discontinuous or circuitous historical vector—indicates to what extent cinema prepared the way for television, projecting and subdividing a space of images and linkages that would be rearranged under new laws of transmission. Alternately, we might ask whether cinema has not always been compensating for its incapacity to transmit images—if, in other words, the dream of television as simultaneous inscription and diffusion has not haunted all cinematic forms from the beginning. Along the second axis—the intensifying vector—cinema's linkages or relays cluster around two mutually reinforcing functions: the formation of subjectivities along with the projection of visible spaces in an "assemblage" of images with changing external limits and variable densities.[6] Since television arrives after cinema has already broken up the strongest relays between subjectivization and visibility, it never takes up the problem of such linkages. Television refuses the modes of relationality and combination with which cinema continues to experiment, to the point where the necessity of linkages between images is itself suspended.

Deleuze, then, offers another way to pose the question of Derrida's "textual system," except that now many of the problems are simply can-

celled out. Instead of a deconstructive wrestling with the inevitability of representations and subjective recenterings, Deleuze can easily grant that representation "happens," but only in a kind of meteorological sense, as the movement of an unstable mass of force from one pressure zone to another. It would not be the concept of representation, its ontology, or its truth-claims that matter but the mapping of energies and actions that might be released with any given set of images. Both critiques have abandoned the search for a "ground" outside the commerce of representations, but each understands the constraints of textual programming in different terms. For Derrida the problem is recognizing the guiding hand of logocentrism with its covert essentialisms; for Deleuze the problem is identifying the mixed forces at work in each textual ensemble, which may or may not adhere to the classical binaries of metaphysics. (As this all too quick distinction suggests, any extended comparison of the two thinkers would have to be triangulated through Nietzsche.) Whereas Derrida proves useful in recasting the whole scenario implied by the concept of "communication," Deleuze serves on a somewhat different front, where a descriptive, evasive cartography takes the place of deconstructive reading and where "communication" is no longer a stake to be won or lost. But in the present context, we need not decide between the two, since each way of thinking can generate an image of "television" that does not rely on empirical or psychological essentialisms.

When Deleuze opens the archive of cinema, he discovers that its philosophical dimensions are given from the beginning: if the camera apparatus is supposed to duplicate human visuality, it faces a paradoxical task—how can it replicate a properly continuous movement by breaking it into frozen singular images? In specifying the terms of cinematic thinking, Deleuze warns against two false problems, that of the "realism" of the image and that of the unique or autonomous "perception" of the viewer. Both refer the definition of images to values and processes outside the cinematic situation. To forestall these theoretical temptations, Deleuze turns to Henri Bergson and elaborates his key concept, "the movement-image," from Bergson's *Matter and Memory* (1896).[7] There are several components to a definition of the movement-image. First, "images" are always relations of visibility rather than freestanding pictures or representations. In general, visibility becomes possible when there is a movement from the worldly aggregate of matter to a particular body possessing the capacity for memory. Memory makes it possible for a body to organize the images that pass through it in terms of its own interests and

actions. This alteration and reconfiguration of images occurs through one of three mental "powers": the *concept* that translates, the *percept* that contracts, and the *affect* that expands the force of a particular image in relation to the image of oneself.[8]

Just as Bergson understands human memory as part of the open universe of images, Deleuze will begin his analysis of cinema from the scandalous premise that the "viewers" themselves must always be considered images on the same plane as the filmic ones. There is no radical disjuncture, but only various types of movement, between the time and space "onscreen" and the time and space of spectatorship. Thus any contiguity or contact between images—the seen and the seeing—passes through a specific "kind" or type of manufactured image, a "cinematographic concept" whose many forms and permutations Deleuze will classify and describe.[9] At the same time, these relations of visibility can be reconstructed and charted only after the movement between images has passed: the gap between them may be spatial (say, the space of a theatre or the space of montage), but it requires a function of time to connect the points, to give the movement its chance to pass from one body to another. The two primary terms, then, will be movement (the spatial quality of an image-construct) and duration (time treated as a quality of image movements): together they articulate a Whole. The status of the Whole is in turn determined by the parts it allows to take shape as visible images.

Why does Deleuze resort to this Bergsonian language? The simple answer might be, to put phenomenology into reverse, spewing the inward out, forcing consciousness to become a wandering orphan among the things called images.[10] Whatever activities had been assigned to the mind and body—its inward "perception" and "affection" as well as its agency, "action"—now can be formulated as cinematic movement-images (whose three basic varieties bear those designations). (The most important bodily activity—thought itself—must await the crisis of the movement image before it can occur as such in the cinema.) In Bergson's discrediting of so-called natural perception and the ensuing exposition of a dynamic world, Deleuze finds a plane of relations consistent with his repudiation of all depth-hermeneutics. "Physical" and "psychic" realities must be seen in a constant process of combination.[11] What Bergson allows Deleuze to do, surprisingly, is totalize the field of images all the more completely, unhindered by the necessity to refer all images to a single point of reference (the ideal viewer, or Deleuze himself). Before embarking on his immense accounting of cinematic images, he rules out from the beginning several models and premises of contemporary film theory. There is no spectator's dialectic in Deleuze, no duality of projection and introjection, no axiology of experience. Remarkably, there is also no emphasis on "desire" here: coming from a coauthor of *Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, this absence does not mean that the idea has been written out of the account but that it has been written in at the most fundamental level. Whereas "desire" used to be expressed in terms of audiences, now it must be posited as the unifying force of the entire cinematic plane.[12]

Everything passes through the eye and the brain, which are nothing but contingently self-privileging images, really just angled movements, sites of constantly cycled actions and reactions.[13] The "viewing" image's privilege consists in a single aspect—that any movement through it involves an interval, a pause, between touching one of its facets and reaching another. (In the language of *Anti-Oedipus*, this would be called a "conjunctive synthesis.") The deflection of movement that occurs through the "living" image is the basis of subjectivity and the beginning of affect: but instead of allowing that image to assume sovereign powers, Deleuze argues that it constitutes nothing more than a second system of reference alongside the first one (the illimitable Whole of images), both of which belong to the same dynamic plane. Here he glosses Bergson on the two systems of reference:

> The thing and the perception of the thing are one and the same thing, one and the same image, but related to one or other of two systems of reference. The thing is the image as it is in itself, as it is related to all the other images to whose action it completely submits and on which it reacts immediately. But the perception of the thing is the same image related to another special image which frames it, and which only retains a partial action from it, and only reacts to it mediately.[14]

The image "in itself" moves like an atom, striking and colliding with other images in the "objective" universe. The living image then enters that flux by cutting, framing, and selecting other images in accordance with "needs and interests" it develops by virtue of its bodily existence.[15] Thus while the two systems of reference occupy the same space, each is irreducible to the other. (This is how Bergson and Deleuze refuse the Kantian hierarchy—but not the duality—between things and subjects.) Since neither philosophy nor Bergsonian psychology can become the image of all images, Deleuze's account of cinema has to ride a line be-

tween textual formalism and affective positivism. His descriptions of particular films can only be "pragmatic" (a central and radical notion for Deleuze and Guattari), that is, confined to an essentially descriptive level, against which all general topographies of the Whole will always be "indeterminate."[16]

Cinema catches Deleuze's eye because it begins without prejudice to the subjective point of view. Its mechanical "duplication" of natural perception cannot help but be unfaithful, opening onto "vast acentered and deframed zones."[17] All processes of reproduction and simulation belong more to the first system of reference (things as movement) than to the second (perspectives as duration), television just as much as cinema. The apparatus itself promises unique and instantaneous access to images that, in their very mechanical randomness, do not appear to have been filtered through a subjective screen, yet are not valorized as more "truthful" for all that. The camera, in other words, makes it possible to lose objects in a nonconscious circulation of images, to snatch things from the universe of intentional gazes. Only images taken in this way can be composed into sets having a mobility beyond that of subjectivity. Deleuze excludes, therefore, noncinematic images where movement is too premature, too much a part of a subjective function of selection. He cites the long exposure photograph, which compresses the random instants of the photographic still through a certain length of time. But a better test case would be the electronic image, where the speed of the apparatus allows for a different kind of movement in the image. Although there would still be a mechanical randomness, there would be no partition of movement into sections or segments. In the electronic image, the indistinction between object and image dissolves into continuous movement, allowing time to pass in a newly automated consistency. (These themes will be taken up later.)

Alongside the Bergsonian scheme Deleuze places Peirce's classification of signs, which are arranged in three tiers: immediate apparence (firstness), dual relationality (secondness), and abstraction (thirdness). When Peirce's terminology is turned toward Bergson's system, semiotic terms come to qualify not meanings but perceptions. With this combined arsenal of terms, Deleuze sets out to present all the possible combinations of movement-images under the sun of visibility, from so-called things to so-called consciousness and back again. Rather than rehearsing all of these categories here, I want to note something else in Deleuze's account, namely, his resolute refusal to be drawn into the swamp of linguistic-

based semiotics, into the interminable debates about visual language, and so on. His instinctive cringing from that kind of work does not prevent him, however, from appropriating its vocabulary from time to time to name some zone of his great plane of images. More to the point, we can recognize in the levelling operation waged through Bergson and colored by Peirce the same impulse we see throughout *A Thousand Plateaus*, where Deleuze and Guattari provocatively redefine language in terms of its indirect coercive force, and narrative as nothing more than secondhand "hearsay."[18] Language, then, would have nothing to do with the transmission of a signified content (as we heard Derrida argue above) but instead assembles and regulates signifying regimes, stitching bodies and enunciations together. Instead of a lock-up in the prisonhouse of language, Deleuze and Guattari portray an endless parole: speaking itself appears as a way of serving a life sentence of obedience. With cinema, it would have to be the same thing; instead of resemblances or laws of signification, Deleuze speaks of variable links between ever-changing elements. Thus, no representation, only images in conjunction at different angles and speeds, intersecting aspects of bodies in motion.

The movement-image, however, forms a definite historical force that exhausts all its options within a few generations. It begins with the near-miraculous simultaneity of Bergson and Lumière, and it comes to an end as soon as the circuit of movements that it had allowed has broken down. As Deleuze explains in a *Cahiers du Cinéma* interview about the first book, "I believe that all images combine differently the same elements, the same signs. But any combination is not possible at any moment: for one element to develop, there must be certain conditions, otherwise it is left atrophied or secondary. There are therefore levels of development, each as perfect as it can be, rather than descendants or filiations. In this sense that it is necessary to speak of a natural history rather than a historical history."[19] Under the initial disposition of cinematic elements—the camera shot and the editing cut—Deleuze identifies three basic types of movement-image (perception-image, affect-image, action-image) that are arranged in four varieties of combination or montage. Each montage belongs to a national cinema and a philosophical perspective.[20] A montage develops from a particular attitude toward the material image, an attempt to arrive at different kinds of Wholes from the same given capacity of capturing instants. Thus Griffith's organic realism must use images of the same substance as Eisenstein's staged dialectical conflicts, Renoir's measured exploration of psychic intensities, and Murnau's stark spir-

itualism. Each option occurs as a distinct activation of the terms of the movement-image.[21] What they have in common, and what in fact defines the entire regime of the movement-image, is the way in which sequences of images are supposed to extend into the responses emitted by those living images called spectators. (I would call these "subjects supposed to see.")[22] Deleuze's keyword for this extension is "sensory-motor link": the phrase recalls both Freudian and formalist postulates assuring that a given construction of images will produce a given reaction. But Deleuze would not say that the response is produced—since perception itself is only activated *as* an image, the sensory-motor link crosses back and forth through a set of references as its immanent principle of unity, its "plane of consistency." It motivates the structure without emanating from a single source.

All of *Cinema 1* rests on the assumption that the sensory-motor link actually works through the movement-image, that is to say, that certain images draw out others reflexively, even up to the climactic "completion" of cinema in the Hitchcockian "mental image" (where an "idea" takes the form of a third image in order to relate two other images).[23] Perhaps the best indication that the sensory-motor link defines the regime of the movement-image is that Deleuze scarcely critiques the idea in the first volume.[24] At the outset of the second book, however, as soon as he has to explain how the order established under the movement-image disintegrates, he must reinvent the concept and apply it retroactively. This shift of thinking is all the more striking because it permits the relation between the two books to be posed in the grand-scale language of his earlier historical thinking, so little in evidence here.[25] Although the movement-image names something more than a discrete era of film history, it has to be posited in those terms first; only later does it become possible to identify what other dimensions it crosses. Throughout Deleuze's richly textured taxonomy, where the shining singularity of each film or director still stands within a rigorously delimited slot, the movement-image attaches to such a vast number of image-sets and worlds that it cannot simply define a proper space of cinema but extends to an entire historical dynamic or wavelength. With its dual reference systems and self-sufficient rules of justification, with its economic cosmology and ergonomic microscopy, the regime of the movement-image is above all one of "reterritorialization": not a general loosening of energies but a strident reclamation of images from both the dazed modern subject and the dispersed social machinery. Like money and words, it works as a general

equivalent; also like them, the movement-image can never be isolated from the relations that support it. (Deleuze even reinforces the monetary comparison by naming the two basic processes as reversible formulas—SAS' and ASA'—that recall Marx's circulation models in *Capital*.) The function of the movement-image is everywhere connective, joining images of an "any-space-whatever" to another image elsewhere, across coefficients of organized time. Each of the idiosyncratic Wholes of the great directors testifies to the same problematic or abstract goal: to splice together objects and subjects in a common milieu of images—a spatial resolution of incommensurable temporalities.

In Deleuze, it becomes possible to ask if the movement-image might have existed in multiple forms beyond cinema. Not to say that cinema simply infected everything else with its logic, but that something like a movement-image surfaces in a range of activities sharing the same abstract (acentered, variable) relations of exchange and mobility. Bergson serves as a native guide in period costume along one such track and stands alongside other contemporary "discoverers" of the movement-image: Einstein and his Special Theory, Cézanne and the early avantgardes, John Dos Passos, almost-forgotten experimenters in aesthetic cognition,[26] George Herriman, Coco Chanel, Henry Ford,[27] Le Corbusier, and so on. With all of these figures and many more besides, one of two reciprocal movements takes place. Variable elements are brought to bear on a single image that expresses them, or else a single image is varied, multiplied, and distributed throughout the world. Of all the movement-image franchises, however, cinema completes its circuit of reterritorialization most rapidly, returning to its most stable state or simplest formula—the action-image—and repeating it endlessly. Working up its own world of situations and actions, cinema clears a gridwork of formal grooves for its images to travel. That solidification and stratification lets cinema regulate the unpredictable worldly connections that it opens; in effect, it becomes possible for cinema to be constituted as one more machine among others, with the movement-image as its staple commodity.[28] (In this sense Deleuze proposes his own version of the "Culture Industry" thesis.)

For if the ensemble of movement-images defines a set of Wholes constructed according to common axioms of visuality and movement, then the breakdown of that set must bring a cataclysmic reorganization, a massive deterritorialization of the zones enclosed by the movement-image. That reversal forms the familiar two-way hinge between *Cinema 1* and

Cinema 2: not only does the sensory-motor link in cinema become un-coupled, but the time-image emerges within a new state of disorganized exchange networks. Deleuze himself offers a simple two-ply account. "We hardly believe any longer that a global situation can give rise to an action which is capable of modifying it—no more than we believe that an action can force a situation in disclose itself, even partially."[29] At this moment the rational orchestrations of the movement-image cannot find any point of liberating release. Belief—as a power of perception obeying memory—now finds it easy to entertain new kinds of disjunction, dislo-cation, and faithlessness among images. New indiscernible Wholes blur the outlines of the old ones.

The second volume describes this much different kind of regime, where the unity of cinema itself (and much else besides) has been cast into doubt. Deleuze appeals to the "soul of the cinema," its "will to art" as it pursues the kind of thought of which it is capable; this soul, how-ever, scarcely rescues itself from the commercialized juggernaut of the movement-image and the temptations of stratified constructions. To move beyond the movement-image, then, becomes an act of ambiguous rebellion, a refusal of a major power in favor of a minor one (to use another Deleuze/Guattari opposition). This gesture of refusal takes the most errant shapes, although for Deleuze each replaces the spatial-temporal complex of the movement-images with new geometries of con-struction. Images reassert themselves within a distinct temporality, an inhuman universe of time, refusing to be reduced to subjective reference points.

Before following Deleuze any further into the crystal palaces of time-images, I want to reintroduce the question of television, video, and "the electronic image." For if the first part of the twentieth century proved to be a generalized era of reterritorialization under the dual forces of the movement-image—centrifugal one of inclusion under the sign of gener-alized visuality and the centripedal one of subjectivation under the sign of centered visibility—then the time-image must not only effect a deter-ritorialization, but its features must surely be registered in other realms. If, in other words, the auteurist cinema of the postwar era runs against the tide of the movement-image, then so does the television system. The routes of deterritorialization differ in each case, but the two-edged histor-ical framework obliges us to recognize how the powers of the time-image moved into and beyond the cinema, joining a larger, epochal disposition of forces. The radical difficulty in reading Deleuze's second volume will

be to see the same short-circuiting force of the time-image elsewhere, in perhaps less auspicious and admirable forms.

Beginning with the inaugural steps taken by Italian neorealism, the support-struts of the American action-image are kicked out, its causal schemes disassembled, and a new element added to the available reper-toire of images: the "direct image of time." With a few strokes, Deleuze ingeniously sketches the salient points of neorealism: characters now stand outside events, as spectators in their own right, and narrative takes shape as a *balade,* a voyage and a ballad at the same time.[30] An autono-mous "pure optical and sound situation" appears, no longer driven by actions that would tie all its images together. In the vacuum left by the loosened sensory-motor link, cinematic *description* becomes possible. For Deleuze, these developments stray from any careful demarcation of real and imaginary. "[There] is no longer even a place from which to ask" about the distinction, he says.[31] From these initial efforts of postwar disorientation, more follow: Welles, Robbe-Grillet, Ozu, and most cen-trally, Godard. The latter attempts a special kind of break with the old regime: an autocritique—maybe even a show trial—of the image and a confrontation with its clichés. Since the clichéd image bears the simplest possible sensory-motor links, it becomes Godard's target and weapon all at once.

But none of these images can prevent the reappearance of the move-ment-image and the reassertion of its two-dimensional force, which appears poised to overcome any film from within at any moment and tighten up its slackened strings of sense. In response, the time-image multiplies its dimensions and layers in order to liberate time from the movements that occupy it and to allow time to form more complex fig-ural "thoughts." Thus the autonomization of sound disengages another "outside" from the realistic synchronies of the image, just as the autono-mization of the camera's motions shows how the apparatus itself emits thoughts.[32] Whereas action and perception were previously threaded by a single automatism, now the gap between them is wedged wider by new circuits of the Whole: the crumpled temporalities of the "recollec-tion image" (including flashbacks), the obscure flights of the "dream image," and the encircling approximations of the "world image."[33] In all of these innovations, a "direct image of time" folds out of a stream of movement-images and disorders it by following an "aberrant" and incom-plete course. Montage (in the sense of "assembly") becomes a *"montrage,"* a "showing" of images in their singular duration, opticality, and sonority,

rather than as raw materials that construct a movement.[34] The "falseness" of the time-image ends up as the only way to tell the truth about cinema's rules of construction.

When Deleuze speaks of an "indiscernibility" between real and imaginary, he wants this zone to be considered an aspect of the object-character of the images, not as the putative confusion of some viewer. The power of indiscernibility developed by the postwar cinema pivots on a structure he calls "crystalline time." A crystal-image always implies two sides, actual and virtual, put in constant correspondence and mutual usurpation, "a double movement of liberation and capture."[35] Coruscating objects, having lost the grounding continuity of action, vibrate in the time of potentiality. Crystalline structures branch off as soon as the image registers the splitting of a present moment into the past and the future, the simultaneous projection of a now and gathering of a past. That gathering occurs as memory, the accretion of subjective reflexes within time. "It is we who are internal to time, not the inverse . . . Subjectivity is never ours, it is time, that is, the soul or the spirit, the virtual."[36] The crystal-image, then, does not bring forth recollections or dreams, nor does it represent time, but it fluctuates between its two temporal aspects, its present actuality and its past virtuality. Deleuze gives the Bergsonian terms for these aspects: "Peaks of present" and "sheets of past."[37] Their only point of encounter is the screen, that is, the brain.[38]

All of these new image-forms should be strikingly familiar once we strip off the cinematic allusions, once we stop reading Deleuze's concepts as brilliant and beautiful descriptions of Resnais or Welles and notice that simultaneous peaks of present and virtual loops of returning past occur in everyday segments of television. It may well be true, however, that these crystalline structures remain transparent, glassy and glossy, emptied of the chromatics that tint the great works of cinema. As we have seen, Deleuze attributes to the highest cinema a capacity for thought, a means of forming concepts that had gone unrealized in the ascendancy of the movement-image. But thinking is precisely what has been lost by these new televisual images: the force of the images is insufficient to break with organic movements and unable to produce a shock that would open the possibility of thought.[39] That kind of shock had been possible under the movement-image as the "spiritual automaton" of newly mechanized vision that jolted its audience into reaction. But this automaton became the achieved solidification of sensory-motor links and was immediately incorporated into commodity culture. The avant-garde failed to

safeguard its discoveries.[40] Now, with the time-image, another kind of shock can happen; or rather, two versions of the same disturbance, one totally identified with the schizoid flow of television, the other duplicating that flow in order to think about it. Both forms of shock stay within the automatic ticking of dislocated images; both imply an outside "world" marked only by the cracks between images, not a world that fills and upholds images in themselves. For Deleuze, again, Godard presents the best example of a cinematic practice that confronts the formal emptiness of the shock, rather than merely celebrating it as an estrangement device. What Godard offers is a concept of the cut itself as the interstice between images, as the upsurge of a power of difference in the ruins of the old logics of sense.[41] For its part, television offers disjunction as part of its apparatus: the more complex the televisual system, the greater its powers of dispersive flux.

Is it possible to think a cut in itself? This is the ultimate question Deleuze extracts from Godard and turns into the final decisive question of his own work. And it is the minimum necessary question for any global discussion of televisual flow. The "irrational" cut in Godard's films can be granted its full import: it spurns all syntax and figurality between images, it draws attention to the possibility that the two images being joined are of *different kinds*, it deplores closure as much as it distrusts the openness of a projective rational totalization, and it brings the noise of sound to the pitch of a perpendicular interruption. (Deleuze accounts for dislocated sound by dubbing it a "sound image" [*image sonore*].)[42] But the televisual cut seems invisible and silent, squeezed on both sides by the most stratified, most regulated blocks of images—yet only the cut allows us to recognize the flow in the first place. Already in *Anti-Oedipus*, Deleuze and Guattari had theorized the relation of interruptions and flows as the serial linkage between machines.[43] A drastic rewriting of the notion of televisual flow would have to account for the multidimensionality of cutting and for the persistence of visual forces beyond syntax and interruptions. Or we could insert quite different terms—using neither "ideology" in the classical sense nor "discourse" in the Foucauldian sense—by recognizing that the limit-question for television can never be "what will it refuse to show?" Instead, the question becomes "what will television refuse to cut, or cut between?" An image, cut or combination would be "impossible" only if every possible linkage had been fixed in advance—but they never are.

Deleuze recognizes that the "electronic image" implies in its very struc-

ture the possibility of the most radical cuts: the integrity of the frame is at last violated and images can now surge up from any part of the screen.[44] The image never fully appears because it is always cut laterally anyway, since strips of blackness persist, forever unlit, while tracks of luminosity sweep past.[45] Even granting that television offers visual resemblances or approximations, televisual cutting still has nothing to do with the "grafting" of codes, the so-called polysemy or intertextuality with which so many cultural critics are anxious to credit it; cutting never brings a complete translation or exchange between codes but only a scattering, a dispersal, a deterritorialization of codes.[46] On a television network, through the syntax of sponsorship and corporate identity, those codes can reterritorialize themselves again in new locales, drawing together a set of linkages, warding off semantic contaminations, claiming temporary property rights over a zone of signification. In that sense, cutting is also a fundamental operation in the capture of time. It isolates discrete sites in which codes can be modulated and multiplied in increasingly narrow variations, even while being deployed across longer spans of time. Since instantaneous cuts "connect" boxed-in quantities of movement only in this very special sense, reading a series of cuts in terms of an intelligible sequence will recuperate only a part—the programmable part—of the whole assemblage.

Now, before we turn to these televisual matters in the next section, one major question remains to ask Deleuze: what, finally, is the historical status of the time-image? Already I have suggested—staying generally within the Deleuzian framework—that while the movement-image was a properly cinematic concept, its lineaments extended in a number of directions. As industrial product and mechanized optic in one, the movement-image fulfills Debord's definition of the image as the highest stage of commodity reification. With the time-image, however, we face a gradual dissolution of that logic in the remotest artworks and the most everyday image-flows. The spectacle, if we keep the word, undergoes the same cutting that the movement-image had. If it no longer assumes a direct extension to the spectators, that is because images have achieved an unexpected new level of totalization. No longer functioning according to the spatial imperative (to be seen, to make something visible), images now switch into another register, directly intermingled with the temporal fluxes and turnover times of economy and information. The appearance of the time-image presupposes the generalization and concretization of movements carried out by the previous regime. Now, zig-zagging

through the well-programmed machines with their well-worn physical and ideological automatisms, the time-image offers a respite from the heavy-handed representational blows of the movement-image.[47] At one end, a refusal of sense for those who throw away their time in reckless abandon; and at the other, suspension of sense for those who try to look for a meaningful world anywhere on television, even for just a moment. For, as we will now see, television produces a time-image the moment it has been turned on—which is to say, regardless of whether it is turned on for anyone in particular. Televisual time is already in the air, lofted in the world's atmosphere and running rings around earthly existence. No longer the core of psychic life or the continuum on which everything finds its place, but time as the infinitesimal fissuring of an interminable present.

Aloft in the Stilly Light

To catch television in flight, a conceptual filter has to be held up against the glare of images. So far we have been following Nam June Paik's intuition—shared by many critics since—that the fundamental concept of television is *time*.[48] It precedes and envelops any semiotic: As the previous chapters have argued, time is the substance of television's visuality, the ground of its ontology, and the currency of its economy. Television has been analyzed as a machine for the prodigious regulated construction and circulation of time. Its limited morphology of representation obeys strictly temporal constraints. There is a structuring movement of flow and segmentation, certainly, but also speeds of transmission and diffusion, intensities of filling and draining that alter images as if from within. An adequate conceptualization of time as an open-ended process of composition and decomposition is a precondition for any homology between televisual images and exchange value, not to mention any discussion of how television's systemic *visuality* accounts for the contingent subjective processes of *visibility*. Time must be theorized at the greatest level of generality without taking for granted that it bears sense, narration, or discursivity.

A basic proposition: Time moves in two directions on television, toward the still and toward the automatic. By "still" I mean the breaking of one movement of images (matter in motion) by a kind of mechanical movement (inscription). The still depends upon a subjectivizing formation, a provisional image of subjectivity, for its linkages. By "automatic" I

mean the extension of a movement by another kind of mechanical movement (illumination and scanning). The automatic is that which generates an autonomous series and requires no interval to pass through a subjective formation. With television, the mechanical movements that break up the instantaneous and charge up the continuous are in fact inseparable. Neither kind of time necessarily allows the appearance of a visible image—television does not always produce one. Nor are these concepts bound to an idea of perception: both the still and the automatic can occur at speeds separated from human existential reality—indeed, that is the whole point of trying to think about them. Still and automatic time constitute the intensive and extensive limits of the apparatus itself, and depending on which kind of time is assumed to be dominant, television will take on quite varied characteristics. What some descriptions of television register as fragmentation, reification, and formal heterogeneity can be more fully grasped in terms of diffracted slices of still time, and what strikes us as television's compression of distance and presence is perhaps better understood as its capacity for automatic time. These are not the same vectors circumscribing cinema, cybernetics, photography, or print, although television can intersect all of these. Every process of recording and inscription enfolds a certain temporal mode, each with its specific forces of retention, transportation, and repetition.[49] With television, all discursive forms and figural strategies draw upon the forces of the instantaneous and the automatic in order to generate distinctive temporal shapes approximating narration, distance, and even history.[50]

The temptation to read some kind of invariable "content" into temporalities is strong. Let me cite two strongly suggestive examples. In a brief essay titled "TV in Two Parts," Hal Foster names "two ultimate (?) 'forms' of capitalized time" on television: "the fetishistic and the fluent," the fragmentary and the flowing.[51] What Foster wants to identify—in a brilliant shorthand borrowing modernist and psychoanalytical terms—is not so much the geometry of televisual time as a particular logic of consumption: on one hand, severed instants that seem to trap and burn off desire in a high-speed combustion cycle; on the other hand, sustained images that seem to loosen viewing time into an ambient sensory emptiness. However apt these characterizations may seem—and I will allude to Foster's terms as I go—it is worth wondering if these kinds of time will always bear these functions. As I suggested in Chapter 2, the link between television and contemporary capitalism is extremely mobile: the circuits of valorization trace countless configurations of time. By the same token,

May Ann Doane's tripartite distinction between temporalities of "information, crisis and catastrophe" designates an easily recognizable scheme in our current televisual system—where events are defined by different transmission times—but there is no reason to suppose that other systems, in other places and historical moments, will not have found various ways to rescale, reverse and rearrange these categories.[52] If what counts as "information" or "catastrophe" has to do with different rates of presentation, we may expect television (and the systems joined to it) to invent new ways of storing, altering and restaging events, so that "information, crisis, and catastrophe" may become consumer options rather than modes of dissemination still obeying the temporality of some Real.

Still and automatic time operate as thresholds in an alternating current: the instant disrupts the continuous and vice versa. In film, the simplest kind of interruption is a "cut," recalling the snip of scissors and the handmade splice. On television, the cut has been overtaken by the "mix" or the "switch," which makes every change of image an occasion for potential displacement. (Deleuze names a cinematic variant: the "irrational cut.")[53] It does not matter who makes the mix or the switch; the point is that mixes and switches can always be made and that every image "begins" and "ends" that way. Although we can only talk about "seeing" what happens as a mixture of still and automatic time, the mix or the switch structures seeing. It marks the place of the virtual world of images, and the switch may or may not break, connect, rupture, blend, close, or open.

Hence still time is not a moment of capturing a picture and making an object of it, as in photography. Televisual stills are created by switching away from a picture, pushing past one toward another, by halting a movement or adding a different one. And these stills do not add up or follow one another: each turns over and disappears from view. Meanwhile, automatic time appears when an image is switched on and left running, so that it is no longer an image *of something*: it is the time of the camera's relentless stare, persisting beyond the movements of objects and scenery that pass before it. If still time slices off images and designates them as past, then automatic time opens onto an anticipated future: it is an image waiting for its event to happen.

At the extreme, still time could be achieved only as a series of pure instants, without any relation whatsoever, like a bottomless trash pile of snapshots or postcards. And—here is first paradox—this pure still time would have to be moving so fast across the plane of transmission

that images would have no time to drop their loads, to deliver messages, to enter into syntactic or narrative chains. They could not be, strictly speaking, discernible. Baudrillard has spoken of television as a "succession of instants,"[54] but this is only part of the story: such a succession posits a viewer, any viewer, for whom this randomness could be registered (for example, that newly born mythical figure, the zapper). Even in the high-speed switching of zapping, however, a sheer succession of instants would invert the formula and make something visible: namely, the apparatus and its matrix of virtual temporalities. As television extends the range of its virtual images, diegetic or discursive time unwinds under a new pressure to sum itself up at every instant. The "moment" can no longer afford to be simply an incomplete part of a whole; now every instant can be placed in a number of different series which expand the parameters of the image's outside totality or world. (Recall that, for Deleuze, an accessible Whole was the absolute presupposition of the movement-image.) Jean-Luc Godard has commented on this possibility. "If you watch three television programs, even for ten minutes, this doesn't give you three times ten equals thirty minutes, but perhaps three hours, sometimes thirty hours, sometimes even three thousand hours . . . [Zapping] escapes these three thousand hours to reduce them to one true minute."[55] The important point about zapping is not that it gives the viewers a new way to chase their pleasures across the channels. In fact, zapping draws on a force already built into the televisual image from the start, a cleaving force that refers the image not only to the innumerable points of visibility called viewers but also to other streams of images, unseen, which nevertheless share the same moment and which always stand ready to emerge into a new present. If, recalling Foster, we think of these images in terms of capital, the instant image can be seen as a tentative response to this threat, a way to economize on the time costs of meanings and desires. It floats images at the smallest possible exchange rate, saving expenditures to maximize distribution.[56]

Conversely—and here is the second paradox—automatic time, the unending effusion of visuality that might have seemed closer to the steady gaze of the eye, eventually leads away from the fits and starts of perception toward an implacable and unplaceable collection of spatialized data. Automatic time runs through the operations of video scanning, where a field and a frame become flattened surfaces for gathering, arranging, and combining sets of images. On a continuously modulated screen surface, layers can be superimposed and blended, allowing the eruption of new

spaces out of the middle of previous ones.[57] Changing camera angles becomes unnecessary, for the field of objects itself can be adjusted or moved by the camera's processor (as in computer-guided animation).[58] Continuous time allows for the loosest possible attachment to the image as expression and the greatest possible imposition of a total temporality, thereby replacing a logic of subjective visibility with an environment of machinic visuality.

Bounded by these abstract limits, everything else, all actually existing television, is constructed by combining forces of stilling and extending time. In fact, the practical range of any given system may be quite small: where traditional representational tactics still hold sway, still and automatic time will only appear in muted, tendential forms. Even so, North American television, as the dominant international form, has developed at least a rudimentary repertoire of time-designs. Still time, the flurry of instants, occurs most commonly on music videos and commercials. Rapid or meandering images, with unpatterned or erratic framings, offer fleeting glimpses of things, a collection of scenes and objects that neither compose nor contain one another. In those cases, however, the rapid flight of images is reined in by the presence of a single commodity (or, in the case of music video, an autonomous, automatic sound-image) that serves as a separate referent or interpretant for the entire set. It should not be surprising that the still, in this dissipated form, has been reasserted as the most direct presentation of commodities, especially those most in need of imaginary differentiation or ideological tinting (pop singles, fashion clothing, automobiles, political candidates). Since a stack of instants does not present a thing but a proliferation of aspects of things, still time lends itself well to repetition and rhythm. In its fastest state, the instant image constitutes the minimal unit of televisual aesthetics, the smallest interval for the activation of sensory-motor reactions, and the most intense fusion of subjectifying and objectifying image making processes.

At the other end, automatic time belongs to a specifically televisual epistemology, occurring most often in nominally "live" televisual situations: sporting events, televangelism, air raids, and to a lesser extent, various direct address presentations, such as State of the Union speeches and emergency bulletins. Automatic time is pitched at the level of the pure event, the direct, the scene that speaks for itself. A number of critics have commented on the ideological uses of "live" television (see Chapter 1); the significant point here is that automatic time does not necessarily take on the trappings of nowness or "real time"; it maintains its own

consistency and control by limiting when and where internal switches can occur. In fact, the "live-effect" can only be produced by a certain pattern of switching away from and into automatic time, often using two series of images that confront each other as "simultaneous." The presentation of "presence" always refers elsewhere for confirmation, even if it is nothing more than the little word "LIVE" electronically pasted over an image. At one extreme, the sudden and sustained irruption of automatic time on television (the emergency broadcast) constitutes a new kind of microhistorical event, a disruption of everyday existence with far greater capacity for provoking general terror than car bombs or Scud missiles.[59]

If there is a universal archetype or ur-form of mixed televisual time, it must be "the news." Every national system has a news broadcast, and now with CNN, every system can have the same one. News offers itself as the most immediate, most disjointed production of a world assembled by a constant vigilance, where all rays of representation leave and return to a single point, that is, the newsreader's face. (Here, like much of television, faciality remains a central signifying paradigm.)[60] The basic range of time is deployed, zigzagging between still instants and automatic continuities. The mode of presentation can perhaps best be grasped as the inverse of the theoretical language called "overdetermination": instead of combining and multiplying relations between images, television news disconnects and abandons them.

Nevertheless, neither still nor automatic time can reach a final end point or fulfillment, where each would finally become the other—though video art offers much more extreme if fleeting possibilities. (Nam June Paik came to video because he found the temporal disciplines of zen too boring.) Fredric Jameson has made the suggestion that we should pay attention to the way video temporality allows for the simulated appearance of "fictive time" on commercial television.[61] To pursue this idea, we would have to imagine all of television's programs (including series, serials, and even broadcast films themselves) as spectral islands of residual visibility floating along a homogenous, imperceptible layer of time. Simulated fictive time can be posited only on the ground of an absolutely mechanical present tense, always occurring elsewhere first—a temporality that is, precisely, the metaphysical center of television understood as communication, representation, and visibility. Commercials, announcements, and station breaks, in the service of that present tense, mark out fictive time by retroactively dividing it into subcontracted zones. Fictivity, narrativity, even associability are nothing but local effects al-

lowed by (rather than threatened by) the differentiation of time. Insofar as all television has been programmed by rules of segmentation and scheduling, brand-name and generic rules of drama develop within general guidelines regulating the consistency, repeatability, and interruptability of a time scene/scheme. (Hence sitcoms and series tend toward features of still time—interchangeability and repeatability—whereas serials exhibit a more automatic form, linear and incomplete.) I would revise Jameson's account only to point out that simulated fictive time can no longer be considered filmic, since it must already be suffused by the imperatives of transmission, caught in the grid of distinctions and the gearbox of speeds that drive televisual programming. It is not "things" or "situations" that are reproduced, represented, or even simulated, but the archaic speeds of their appearing.[62] Or, put another way, from the perspective of overall programming, it does not matter what visual scheme operates within each slot, as long as some power—a network, the state—can claim to control the series of switches. This is why every staging of the present tense calls most directly on the political and economic concentrations of power that make television possible. Since the opposition between the fictive time of segments and the equally fictive real time of the apparatus occurs at the simplest level (the differentiation of representational forms), it does not correspond to the crossed vectors of still and automatic time, which constitute the plane where all kinds of time are produced and circulated. What appears "fictive" after a single switch may become instantaneous after several; what arrives as "live" may be switched across a couple of instants to become something more remote and uncertain.

Again it is worth saying something about video cassette recorders, if only to forestall the objection that the VCR changes everything. As I suggested in more technical terms earlier, VCRs do nothing but extend the range of still and automatic time, offering an additional loop of flexibility in the circulation of images, bringing new speeds and greater turnover. When it is not opening its own automatic time during recording or playback, the VCR machine allows its own kind of instantaneous switching, where images can be slowed or virtually stopped. Since a videotape contains images only in their decomposed linear state—as a series of spatialized instants—it does not escape the boundaries of the still and the automatic. By permitting another form of tactile participation with the apparatus, video allows people to operate another series of switches, a privilege bought with more time, money, and subjective attachment. The

fundamental question is economic: who profits from this new and immense expansion in the volume of overall televisual time? The answers have been clear: paranational electronics manufacturers and entertainment conglomerates, who are integrating vertically as fast as possible. The VCR and all of the newer systems testify to the deliverance of the televisual system from the demands of solely representational unities in favor of multidirectional technological solutions.

With the ongoing distribution of video cameras and recorders to larger segments of the world population, it becomes even harder to imagine that there will be a single ramified televisual "system." But that is precisely the concept I want to retain by speaking of time, of its speeds and linkages. Although, to be sure, television is unevenly distributed throughout the honeycombed cells of global culture, we cannot speak of autonomous enclaves of video. Even when video images do not share the same screens with television broadcasting (as in a museum), they take the latter as their raw material or point of cancellation; there is no point of exteriority from which video could escape television.[63] (Deleuze might say that there are countless points from which video could "falsify" television by disturbing its habitual patterns, but this is a different enterprise indeed.) In an immediate technological and spatial sense, video images never stand alone but are always strung out on lines leading back to ordering processes of commercial television (no matter who runs it). Rather than providing a unitary "language" of video, then, television can assert its rights of translation over any image-production whatsoever—"translation" in the sense of having the power to alter and inflect the textual framework through which a set of images might be understood.

As it spreads into a world of its own making, television, like all other kinds of writing, develops its own analytic of the Real, which it alone makes visible and which it alone maps. Once still and automatic time are recognized not as forms of experience but as television's tools of "analysis"—its methods of construction and breakdown—then its images do not need to be interpreted as much as located in their diverse sets and series, in their sectors of distribution and valorization. Every kind of analysis can be defined by sets of elements—characters, situations, drives, things, languages—which are arranged in various permutations and pushed toward limit-cases. With television, the limit was given from the beginning: the impossibility of connecting and communicating its singular components into a single absolute world. Every transmission makes a gesture, a feint really, toward this transcendent impossibility. (Recall Lacan's com-

ment about impossibility and the Real, quoted here in the preface.) What we get instead are myriad projected encirclements, various ways in which a particular assemblage of images posits a complete world in order to claim dominion over other assemblages of images. In that operation, television uses the techniques of still time to trace unstable relays leading across a social-cultural space that never solidifies, bound by its very diffusion, composed of serialized viewers and incomplete imaginary triangulations. Still time does not form a geometry of relationships: its instants may repeat or interfere with each other without generating a common charge. Automatic time, on the other hand, opens a distanceless conduit to any elsewhere: it forms a hollow world, its surface seen only from the inside.

One time-speed scatters, the other encloses, and both override the point of conjunction where watching television would take on the temporality of some other action—work or play, remembering or forgetting, contemplation or distraction. As a result, its currents of time are still clogged by the rattling chains of representation, with links broken or missing, yet carried by the velocity of televisual circulation. The dynamics of causality, sequence, and logical order are subjected to the demands and exigencies of more abstract temporalities. Of course, nothing prevents television from transmitting the most severe formalisms or didacticisms, except that such constructions will always be underwritten and overwritten by the rules of economic valorization. Any radical intervention aiming at a momentary unification or transgression of televisual images would face yet another paradox: should television be drawn back into the order of representation, there to answer for its apostasy from "reason" and "truth"? Or, on the contrary, is it possible to understand television's heterogeneity in terms of an overall strategy, where the whole dissemination of images ultimately and doggedly "represents" the reality of a dissimulated state of power? In order to propose this kind of hypothesis, the old terminology of reflection (where the superstructure mirrors the base) would return, with the proviso that this kind of representation has become general and immanent in the domain it claims. Television would "reflect" the global situation in the same way the stratosphere reflects signals back to earth, a concavity where rays cross and scatter.

If this metaphoric description does not quite work, it is because it requires a totalizing framework specifically prevented by the instantaneous and automatic speeds of the apparatus itself. Television establishes the mechanics of a global representation without being able to perform it,

just as capitalism itself has put in place the means of exploitation without being able to crank it up everywhere. But if, from time to time, a sudden show of force is required, that can be arranged: if anyone doubted the strength of television's brutal superimposition of economics and ideology, it is there for all to see in the quick switch from video-guided missiles hitting Iraq to the CNN reporter in Atlanta reading the incoherent official script of legitimation to a watching and waiting world. As I have been suggesting, the switching and mixing does all the work, organizing actual images even while it "represents" nothing in the usual sense. The Futurists, as Benjamin reminds us in the artwork essay, would have regarded such switches as objects in themselves and no doubt found them beautiful.

It is tempting to regard this expansive visual network as the culmination of the surveillance system Foucault traced to the nineteenth-century Panopticon. No doubt video, coupled with computers, has made it possible to manage massive spaces visually (or, as with the Rodney King tape, to make the agents of control visible as well). But even if the Panopticon still seems to be a good metaphor for all the electronic data banks and security systems ringing multinational capital, it does not clarify the necessity of new distributions of culture carried out through television and its newer extentions. For if telecommunications in general is pursuing a logic of ever greater diversification and differentiation, there can be no panoptic focal point. How can this matrix be understood in terms of power? Deleuze has suggested that the panoptic disciplinary systems have been thrown into crisis, giving way to "societies of control" populated by amorphous capitalist enterprises. There is a corresponding shift in figures: as rigid discipline spreads out and becomes flexible control, the "enclosed" subject becomes the "indebted" subject.[64] Here, then, we can recognize the prototypical television viewer: in exchange with the screen a revolving debt is incurred, one payment is dispensed while the other is held back, so that an obligation and an interest are set against the future. Above and beyond the work we perform by watching television every day, there is still the promise to return. For debt is above all a model of temporal orientation. It persists because the debtor has promised a reciprocal action, a service for a service. When television is no longer offered as a single expressive event (the voice and visage of Authority), each act of viewing becomes charged with the responsibility of fabricating its own present tense, affirming the basic transaction while watching for a message, waiting to see what comes next. The televisual

bargain will last, moment by moment, image by image, as long as we feel we owe something to television, whether it is the solemn duty to find sense in what we see or the sweet burden to pursue our pleasures there. Whereas automatic time demands that we keep watching, still time demands that we keep switching; driven by these two pressures, the image onscreen extends its claim over other images, near and distant, already past and yet to come.

But if we insist on the possibility of seeing the future anew, delivered from the constraints of this unbearable present time, our eyes ought to be trained not on television but on the active and critical powers of thought.