



# CINEMATIC ART & REVERSALS OF POWER

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DELEUZE VIA BLANCHOT

EUGENE BRENT YOUNG

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# Cinematic Art and Reversals of Power

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# Cinematic Art and Reversals of Power

*Deleuze via Blanchot*

Eugene Brent Young

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## Preface

One of the most satisfying cultural experiences is perhaps to view a moving and thought-provoking film and then to encounter an equally thought-provoking interpretation of it. It is a cliché that art transforms how we perceive, feel, and think—and interpretation is also, for many of us, a key component that solidifies such a transformation. But what films we choose to interpret as “art” is a contentious question for a medium that seems to be “mass produced,” an empty projection of ghostly images.

My own discovery of Deleuze as a teenager was precisely around this question: I *wanted* to love art and cinema, and while Benjamin’s argument about the loss of “aura and presence” made a good point (expressing what made it so difficult), it didn’t get me to where I wanted to be. I soon discovered the music of Steve Reich, whose work I thought created its own aura and presence, its own *experience*, through its musical phasing and forms of repetition—precisely *by virtue of its* mechanical reproduction. And, after searching and searching, it was Deleuze whose philosophy of repetition and difference allowed me to consider what artistic experience, in the complex forms of its movement and change, and in relation to ideas, might look like. This opened up the question of all artistic media around repetition and difference, and the more difficult problem of the imagination and artistic inspiration.

It was then Blanchot who spoke to me directly of “inspiration” itself, and whose voice always seemed to be at the core of pivotal moments in Deleuze’s thinking about encounters with genuine novelty (eternal return, the highest forms of the time image, the event, etc.). My interest in Blanchot was also probably born of tragic experiences and loss in my personal life: he offered a view of mortality and a “spiritualism” that did not seem naïve or dogmatic, where art can draw us outside of ourselves and be fascinating without being idolatrous; added to this, his stylistic use of paradox forced thought beyond words. In short, if Deleuze taught me how to think, Blanchot taught me how to believe. From their perspectives, though, the role of art is central—both thinkers somehow express ideas that are *felt*, and somehow offer something to feel, something to believe, that is unthinkable (Deleuze calls it a belief in “this world” as unknowable; Blanchot calls it a necessarily “forgotten truth”).

Then of course Foucault allows the two thinkers to relate to the “world” (and allowed me to return, intellectually and practically, to the world), even if it is a world where truth and reality are products of power: Foucault forced me to confront the question of how Blanchot’s outside—this experience of artistic inspiration—could be genuinely untouched by the pernicious forces of capitalism or, deeper than that, offer an obscure yet intuitive alternative to our everyday values around what is normal, regular, and related to life (in many ways precisely because Foucault provides an especially Foucauldian reading of Blanchot that “encloses” the outside as an “exception”). As my career designing college courses evolved, it was Foucault who served as a gateway and

impetus to engage students in their everyday lives but then challenge their normal and usual perceptions and feelings by placing Foucault into conversation with Deleuze and Blanchot (I have taught an evolving, interdisciplinary seminar almost every year since 2014 based on the structure of this book called “Knowledge, Power, and the Obscure” that places these thinkers in conversation directly).

This book therefore constitutes the culmination of an intense interest in Deleuze and Blanchot that has shaped my entire adult life. My years-long apprenticeship to Deleuze as primary author and editor of *The Deleuze and Guattari Dictionary* (Bloomsbury, 2013) in fact allowed me to draw new conclusions for this study about his syntheses of time and approach to eternal return (discussed in Chapter II and the Conclusion) as they relate to his work on Foucault (discussed in Chapter I) and his work on Cinema (Chapters VII–IX); it also allowed me to relate his syntheses of time and approach to eternal return to his work with Guattari on (de)territorialization and Kafka (Chapter V), as well as to their work on chaos in relation to the percepts and affects of art (Chapter IV). But beyond that, having internalized Deleuze’s references to Blanchot throughout his oeuvre and having read between the figures for decades, with Foucault as a key interlocutor, it has become apparent to me that a new perspective can be born that is greater than “the sum of the parts”—or in this case, greater than all the individual perspectives of each thinker. In particular, the thorough and exhaustive conversation between Deleuze and Blanchot has revealed to me a distinctive perspective on the relation between art and ideas, between the displacement and disguise of incessant movement on the one hand and the groundlessness of Deleuzian becoming and Blanchot’s “diverging of difference” on the other hand, which might just be a lens into thought-provoking critiques and interpretations of cinema. In fact, as I hope this book demonstrates, bringing Foucault into this conversation has allowed me to refine a relatively new definition of art that entails a reversal of the effects of power, leading to a unique dynamic between unreality and untruth, between repetition and difference, between implication and explication—a unique dynamic that is the ultimate and most radical Blanchotian “reversal”: the inseparability of the inaccessible interior of the imaginary from that which is beyond the exteriority of the world. But getting there is a long journey, which I wrote this book to take us through.



## Acknowledgments

There are so many to whom I owe enormous gratitude, and whose advice, friendship, support, and feedback furthered and transformed this book. I have been fortunate over the last decade to have the support of wonderful colleagues and friends at Le Moyne College, where I have held a dual position in the English and Philosophy departments, and I thank everyone at Le Moyne who discussed this book project with me, especially Julie Grossman and Bill Day. I am grateful for my interdepartmental position there as well, which provided the essential flexibility to design interdisciplinary courses on the topic of this book; I especially thank all of the patient and open-minded seniors who took my “Knowledge, Power, and the Obscure” seminar on Foucault, Deleuze, and Blanchot over the years (as well as students in my Kafka classes and my “What it Means to Dream” seminar), all of which provided the circumstances to simplify and further explore this material with non-experts. I also thank the R&D Committee at Le Moyne and the Boudreau family for their generous financial support, which created some breathing room to focus on this project.

I would also like to thank the community of Deleuze scholars, especially Ron Bogue, whose thoughtful conversations over the years at conferences and during visits are ever stimulating (as well as all the other wonderful scholars with whom I’ve shared this work at various conferences, who are far too numerous to list). I want to offer a very special thanks to Todd May for his endless patience with me as we co-taught a seminar together on Foucault and Deleuze in 2017. Working with him allowed me to refine my approach to Foucault by leaps and bounds; our conversations are ever inspiring, and his clarifying approach to philosophy is ever energizing. Ron and Todd both have inspired me to strive for clarity and precision in my writing when approaching the obscurity and complexity of figures like Deleuze.

This project began before my time at Le Moyne, and I also owe a great debt of gratitude to my advisor from graduate school at Emory University, Jill Robbins, for shepherding me through my years-long study of Blanchot, as I painfully tried to place him in conversation with Deleuze (and Kafka) during my time there. Portions of Chapter V and ideas from Chapter VI were revised and reconsidered from my dissertation at Emory, which explored literary paradox via Deleuze and Blanchot. I also extend a special thanks to faculty and friends from the Comparative Literature and French departments at Emory for their encouragement and conversation over the years.

I also extend a generous thanks to Liza Thompson at Bloomsbury for her support with this project over the last few years, especially for creating an incredibly useful review process at various stages of this project. Also thanks to Lucy Russell at Bloomsbury for all of her invaluable support and guidance, and to all of the thoughtful and supportive peer reviewers of the proposal and manuscript. Additionally, I’m grateful to Ronnie Hanna for his diligence with copy edits.

I want to offer a special thanks to Jon Contino for his work on the cover design. Jon's artistic intuition was invaluable, and seeing the title of this book rendered through his vision brought the book's key ideas to life better than I could have imagined. Jon sensed exactly what I was trying to do with my cover image and how to complement it with his work (more on the cover image itself in the "How to Use This Book" section). Then, his overall design—giving the title a subtly cutting and gothic flair, and providing the cover and back cover with a cinematic and otherworldly feel—set the perfect tone for the book. It was a genuine pleasure to collaborate with an artist of Jon's caliber and to learn from his insights about visualizing themes from this book. Also, photo credit goes to Laura Rose for the human background image on the cover; thanks to Laura for that. Thanks also to Ben Anslow at Bloomsbury for his help and his contributions to the back cover.

I also thank my family and friends for all of their encouragement surrounding this project. I'm particularly grateful to anthropologists Jon Carter and Christina Carter for their friendship and enthusiasm, as well as their distinctive approaches to post-structuralism, which lent a very special ear. I'd also especially like to thank Teresa and Dan, my father Gene, Amit Shilo, Erin Contino, Rob and Dessi, and Ken Skarka.

Most importantly, I want to thank my wife Jamey, whose constant moral support and practical editing help made this book possible: what you are reading simply would not have come to fruition as it is if not for her. Her unending patience with and interest in this project, which withstood both a pregnancy and a pandemic, has been an indescribable source of joy. She hasn't merely "put up" with my eccentricities that were exacerbated by completing this project, but has loved me *for* them. And I couldn't imagine a better companion and interlocutor. As I write these acknowledgments, with our two-week-old son on my lap (our first child), I'm hoping that one day I'll take him to the movies.

## How to Use this Book

This book is structured more as a tapestry of interwoven parts than as a theme with variations. That is, the thesis of this book unfolds gradually, and every chapter is dependent somehow on other chapters. If Chapter I offers a view on the role of power in determining our truth and reality, in Chapter II, the pendulum swings assertively in the other direction to offer a Deleuzo-Blanchotian perspective on untruth and unreality that reverses such effects of power (this also provides the Blanchotian framework for the remainder of the book). Chapter III offers the relatable example of dreaming to illustrate such an experience outside of power, where affection and perception are displaced and disguised by that which has no truth or reality. Chapter IV, in considering the unthinkable and insensible outside of power, builds on the dynamic between Deleuze and Blanchot in Chapter II and the role of affect and percept in Chapter III to lay out the philosophical foundation for this book: the relation between thought and art as a radical reversal beyond power that draws from Deleuze's early works such as *Difference and Repetition* and continues in his later work with Guattari, all via Blanchot. Chapter V expands the conversation between Deleuze and Blanchot by shifting specifically into fiction's reversals of power, and Chapter VI presents their approaches to Kafka's *Castle* as a key case study (both chapters on fiction crucially build on the role of displacement and disguise in Chapter III and the dynamic of art and thought in Chapter IV, while Chapter VI also returns to key distinctions from Chapter I). Chapter VII finally returns to the problem of truth and reality from Chapter I to ask how we *normally* experience cinema, for example, through our panoptic or etiological ways of seeing (while also considering the relevance to cinema of the event from Chapter III, of the planes of immanence and composition from Chapter IV, and of the literary medium or milieu in its deterritorialization from Chapter V), in order to ultimately articulate an approach to cinematic art in Chapter VIII. Chapter VIII both serves as a counterpoint to our normal experience of cinema in Chapter VII (as Chapter II served as a counterpoint to Chapter I) and also builds on the approach to "vigilant" dreaming and the Blanchotian "fissure" in Chapter III, the Deleuzo-Blanchotian foundation of Chapter IV on thought and art, and the approach to novelty in fiction in Chapter V. Chapter IX then offers case studies of cinema for Chapter VIII just as Chapter VI offered a case study illustrating Chapter V. While the introduction lays out the stakes of developing this approach to art as a reversal of power and as composed by genuine thought, the concluding chapter reconsiders the thought of eternal return in Chapters II, III, IV, V and VIII. The book's thesis is articulated on pages 11–12 of the Introduction (in the section "Toward a philosophy of cinematic art"), followed by a detailed chapter-by-chapter synopsis.

There are also several voices in this book: it is primarily an exchange between Deleuze and Blanchot (establishing Blanchot's influence on Deleuze), but there is also

Deleuze/Guattari, Foucault, and Kafka (note that Deleuze and Guattari is abbreviated as D&G). The result of the exchange, however, is greater than the sum of those voices: as I believe, the encounter between Deleuze, Blanchot, Foucault, and others generates a new thesis involving what I call the reversal of power. I argue this thesis in my own voice using my own philosophical approach, though I continue to summon the support of these key thinkers. Thus while I invoke proper names when appropriate, I leave them out when considering the ideas about reversals of power that constitute the primary assertion of this book. (Even so, I do not use the pronoun “I” in the pages that follow, as this is a journey that *we* take.) For further interpretations of cinematic art, in all its reversals of and beyond power, as well as critiques of cinematic worlds, in all their productions of reality and truth, visit my website, [filminterpretation.com](http://filminterpretation.com) (though if you are reading this book substantially after its publication, visit my faculty webpage for updates on the URL, etc.).

A word on the cover art: the cover image depicts an urban landscape superimposed over a face, where the eyes of the figure look downward toward the fade into darkness, while the mind’s eye is drawn into the urban world and down a road (pictured in color) that takes us to the imperceptible, vanishing point of the horizon, and toward a moon that may also be a sun. This return to the world through the darkness or the “absence of origin” of night is the experience of the Blanchotian dream (III; 5). I superimposed the images this way to invoke the notion that, in art’s radical reversal beyond power, when we are drawn further from the reality that we can experience or the truth that we can discover—that is, beyond the external world—we are also drawn beyond what we can perceive and feel—that is, *further inward* than we have access to: a radical reversal of interior and exterior. Thus if “a journey in the world is also a journey in the brain,” as Deleuze says of Kubrick (IX; 3b), for Blanchot, such a journey would also be incessant, which is why the road draws us to a vanishing point and to a moon that may also be a sun—just as dreams, for Blanchot, involve the “incessance of the day.”

Because this book’s chapters are all mutually interdependent, and because this book considers Deleuze’s and Blanchot’s complex and idiosyncratic terminology—not to mention the terminology that I introduce or refine surrounding the book’s thesis about art’s reversals of power—there is a detailed glossary in the back of this book. There is also a cross-reference system that I use when I’m building on a specific point from a previous chapter or foreshadowing a point that will be made in a future chapter. The reference system offers the chapter number as a roman numeral, followed by a semi-colon, followed by the section number of the chapter—e.g., “IV; 3c” (if there is more than one cross-reference, the chapter references are separated by commas, and multiple references within the same chapters are separated by semicolons). The glossary also utilizes this cross-reference system extensively.

# Abbreviations

## Works by Deleuze:

B = *Bergsonism*  
C1 = *Cinema I: The Movement Image*  
C2 = *Cinema II: The Time Image*  
CC = *Coldness and Cruelty*  
D = *Dialogues II (with Claire Parnet)*  
DR = *Difference and Repetition*  
ECC = *Essays Critical and Clinical*  
ES = *Empiricism and Subjectivity*  
F = *Foucault*  
FB = *Francis Bacon: logic of sensation*  
LS = *The Logic of Sense*  
N = *Nietzsche and Philosophy*  
NG = *Negotiations*  
PS = *Proust and Signs*  
SEP = *Expressionism in Philosophy: Spinoza*  
SPP = *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy*

## Works by Deleuze and Guattari:

AO = *Anti-Oedipus*  
K = *Kafka, Toward a Minor Literature*  
TP = *A Thousand Plateaus*  
WP = *What is Philosophy?*

## Works by Blanchot:

AwO = *Awaiting Oblivion*  
BtC = *The Book to Come*  
FS = *Friendship*

IC = *The Infinite Conversation*  
ND = *Nights as Days, Days as Nights*  
(foreword)  
SL = *The Space of Literature*  
SnB = *The Step (Not) Beyond*  
UC = *The Unavowable Community*  
WD = *The Writing of the Disaster*  
WF = *The Work of Fire*

## Works by Foucault:

BC = *The Birth of the Clinic*  
DP = *Discipline and Punish*  
HS = *The History of Sexuality, Vol. I*  
SD = *Society Must be Defended*

## Works by Foucault and Blanchot:

F/B = *Foucault/Blanchot*

## Works by Kafka:

BN = *The Blue Octavo Notebooks*  
C = *The Castle*  
CS = *Collected Stories*  
D1 = *Diaries, 1910–1923*  
T = *The Trial*

## Introduction: How the True World Finally Became a Bad Film

Our cultural paradigm seems to offer us two ways of consuming fiction. The first is impulsive: filmgoers and readers may seek out what is suited to their taste and share personal opinions. This is reflected, for instance, in the industry of film criticism, which offers spoiler-free promotions and praises for directors, actors, or writers. The second is informative: when a film is interpreted, an awareness of genre or the history of fiction is demonstrated, and detached observations are made of a work's form and technique. In this second case, there is less focus on our opinions, enthusiasms, or disapprovals: theoretical or academic approaches often deemphasize the very same content and judgment on which film critics focus almost exclusively. The issue here is that this false dichotomy encourages not only a pervasive right to judgment (everyone is entitled to their taste) but, by compartmentalizing interpretation or theory focused on form or technique rather than meaning and value, the discussion of what makes a work of fiction a work of art—which compels us to passionately interpret it—becomes moot. The work of art—as a distinction—is no longer sacred. Art is either whatever we make of it individually, or, with some notable exceptions, it is set aside in favor of analysis in the archives of fiction and theory. We are left at an impasse in determining and appreciating the qualities and features that make a work of fiction a work of art.

The impulse to judge according to taste means that filmgoers and readers may not often casually discuss the transformative power of a work, or search for insights that the work has into thinking otherwise about our culture, history, or human condition. But where does the impulse to judge a work of fiction come from? It is likely a practical consideration: filmgoers and readers want to know the type of fiction they are going to enjoy, if it's well crafted, and if the characters are interesting, and they don't want to waste their time with a book or movie that doesn't "pay off." Perhaps they want characters who make choices we may not, and walk away with a moral lesson based on those choices. Perhaps they want an immersive world. Whether thinking in terms of type or "genre" (some like horror, others do not), of what defines craft (some like CGI action, others simply like good dialogue), and what makes a book or movie "pay off" (some like ambiguous endings, others do not), what pleases us may seem highly subjective, and is perhaps as mysterious and unpredictable as the products of a Kafkaesque world: it "depend[s] on the mood of the observer," where "the reflections it gives rise to are endless, and only chance determines where one stops."<sup>1</sup>

Lines are always drawn between the escapist diversions of popular taste and works that deserve critical acclaim. Let the masses enjoy a world of distraction, while the elite, with their “good taste,” enjoy some other, relatively esoteric or inaccessible level of appreciation. Duchamp famously challenged this when he claimed that “taste is the enemy of art,” but his alternative of *l’art pour l’art* does not get us beyond this impasse: the notion that anything can be art remains a solipsistic view that still produces a hierarchy of taste. In other words, even if “art” claims criteria like emotional transformation or content that transcends the personal—which may correspond to our expectations (our “good taste”)—such criteria are still subjectively defined. Art is art because someone says so, or through consensus. And if we reject Duchamp’s assertion in order to celebrate “original” works in privileged genres that challenge our formulaic expectations, we then resort back to generic judgments (some sort of hierarchy of classifications, à la Aristotle). In this case, art is art because it is generally inexplicable, while non-art is easily explained. So, there remains no legitimate, objective foundation for taste or for art.

To get some bearings to define works of fiction as works of art, we could refer to back to David Hume, who used the metaphor of taste to compare art to food, noting that some of us have more cultivated taste than others. Refined taste, in this sense, involves a habituation that we share: some may be better suited to judge art because they are attuned to notice things that others do not. This still implies, however, that art is fodder: mass produced to meet a constant demand, even if the expectations are more refined. Kant extended this insight in an effort to find not just cultivated (and thus contingent) but universal criteria for taste such as “beauty,” settling on ideas involving the “disinterested” reflection that art provokes, which suspends our desire and, by doing so, is morally good. Judgments of the work of art, in that sense, are inevitable insofar as they incite some kind of critical distance. Kant’s case, however, can be described as “purely formal” in that the content of reflection is less relevant than the fact that we suspend our desire by reflecting on artistic forms.

With both Hume’s suggestion that we can cultivate our taste and Kant’s suggestion about the disinterested reflection that is universal, it remains entirely feasible that there are no criteria to justify the qualities or features that make certain works artistic and others not. We can cultivate our taste all we want, but *what* we cultivate is made up and arbitrary. And if we like whatever we want, and if art is in the eye of the beholder, then even cultivating what we like socially (when habits become “culture”) is arguably nothing more than tradition, with no other justification. Likewise, the “something” we make of art upon disinterested reflection is entirely up to the person doing the reflecting. Therefore, if the content that provokes disinterested reflection is entirely subjective, then the art object has no autonomy and its formal qualities are only distinctive by virtue of the subject. Here we return to where we started: we don’t have to justify our taste or opinions because there is no universal truth in which to anchor them. Whether speaking of refined taste or disinterested reflection, we have not yet moved beyond our dichotomy of taste, enthusiasm, or disapproval of the content of fiction on the one hand and informational, disinterested analysis of its form on the other hand.

If there are no universal criteria to distinguish art from non-art in fiction, then it may seem that “art” is not based in anything—it is simply not real. Here we encounter

Sartre's existentialist position on fiction, which reflects his views on the real world, where, he claimed, we "exist" as conscious beings but don't have an essence or purpose, and yet are still bound to the "freedom" to make choices. What essentially makes us human is *nothing*—but nothingness then becomes a universal principle that gives us *something* in common: if nothing is true, then we have the freedom to be whatever we want, and are also responsible for enhancing that freedom for others. And yet, when we read a novel, for instance, he claims that what we perceive is also what we "imagine," such that there is no tension between our consciousness and our world.<sup>2</sup> So, art may be based in "nothing," but that nothingness is what opens up possibilities to perceive and imagine simultaneously. In this sense, the escape from the real world afforded by fictional worlds absolves us of the responsibility of choice that we must make *in* the world. This absolution of responsibility is not Kant's disinterested reflection per se—but is what makes art pleasing. Fiction absorbs our attention because it is not we who suffer the consequences of choice, and the situations presented are not ours: they belong to the characters.

For Sartre, the judgment that makes a work of fiction "art" therefore turns on whether the choices the characters make open up possibilities rather than close them down: the work must not "authorize an injustice" but bring about "a world to be impregnated always with more freedom": "at the heart of the aesthetic imperative we discern the moral imperative."<sup>3</sup> In short, the work must show us how the world could be: "a promise to change" or "a promise to imitate", that is, a moral template for action rather than a moral act itself (disinterested reflection). In an entirely classical fashion, he considers the aesthetic to be analogous to the moral. Sartre's premise, however, is that if this world has no real essence, then it can be anything, and the worlds in art serve as a blueprint for how this world could be. This approach thus considers art and reality to have a parallel and reciprocal relationship: despite fictional art having no essence, it still *reflects* our world by offering possibilities. In this sense, Sartre's approach reduces and limits the scope of art and the imaginary to a moral imperative tied to possible action.

If fictional worlds genuinely have no reality, though, then their relationship to the actual world can simply become overdetermined; this is reflected in philosophies of "world" as well as in theories of world-building. For instance, Heidegger argued that an artwork discloses a world while simultaneously concealing the earth; more recently, literary-critical conceptions of "world making"—such as those of Nelson Goodman (and other narratologists)—emphasize the way that narratives "invoke" worlds, so that there can be as many worlds as there are stories (though all the worlds will still be "comprehensive systems which comprise all elements that fit together," and are not in conflict in terms of their coherence).<sup>4</sup> This of course explodes today with film franchises and TV series, which are less dependent on specific characters, themes, or plots than they are on the worlds in which that those characters, themes and plots can be found. In this sense, we escape into fiction to discover worlds—and are less interested in the characters than in imagining what is possible in those worlds: sometimes there may be mysterious situations or supernatural worlds that lie underneath a cinematic world; sometimes the worlds may present wide-ranging flights of fancy and action; sometimes they may take us to unusual historical or geographical locations. But in any case, the worlds we are drawn to reflect the object of our judgment and taste.



When we focus on the possibilities within fictional worlds, or even the possibilities that it opens up into ours, the actual world that we inhabit, the true world, to paraphrase Nietzsche, becomes not just a fable, but a bad fable, a bad novel, or better yet, a bad film. Still believing in better worlds, not realizing that our own world remains unredeemed, we lose the sense of Nietzsche's final maxim that if the "true world" is "unattainable," then so too is the "apparent" world. In this sense, our very perception of reality is influenced by fiction. As Gilles Deleuze says of film, everything becomes cliché, where nothing is original, everything has been said, been done, and our life is meaningless: it is all in a movie somewhere (or better yet, in Borges' great library). It's been seen before. You can't say "I love you": it has been said a million times already. Only better, probably. As Deleuze wrote:

[W]e no longer believe in this world. We do not even believe in the events which happen to us, love, death, as if they only half concerned us. It is not we who make [*faisons*] cinema; it is the world which looks to us like a bad film.<sup>5</sup>

If our own apparent lives seem boring in comparison to film, the lure to escapism and novelty in film becomes strong. Interesting people are making important or brash decisions in secret worlds suddenly opened up to us, the otherworldly becomes available, or altered worlds appear where we can witness what we normally would not. But this can become confusing: when our exciting movies play like video games, or we are otherwise saturated with characters who seem exceedingly powerful or compelling, we no longer *care* about this world. We then begin to believe in reality-TV icons as real people, and we elect them as president (as in the 2016 US election), demanding more excitement in politics. The boredom of our lives leads Deleuze to conclude that we ought to find reasons to "believe" in this world again. The catch, however, is that what "this world" is cannot be considered to be something that we can know or take for granted. It is not "representable" as a fictional world—if it were, we would be right back to where we started. The fiction would always be better than the reality. And this may be a cliché, too, but the more we obsess over our opinions about fictional worlds, the less invested we are in reality.

The temptation here may be to sink into a malaise or to disparage and discredit fictional works: if Sartre's existentialist approach advocates a philosophy of freedom and the absolution of choice and responsibility through immersion in fiction, other approaches detach themselves from fiction and remain suspicious about its escapist tendencies by offering interpretations that question its apparent meaning—leaving behind the question of art. It is less about fictional worlds being distinct from our world than it is about seeing fiction as a disguised extension of our world. As Paul Ricoeur famously claimed, this involves exposing "the lies and illusions of consciousness":<sup>6</sup> for instance, psychoanalytic theory considers works of fiction in terms of "wish-fulfillments" (we want to experience what we cannot every day). Marxist theory, by contrast, considers how fictional works reinforce or refine the ways of perceiving and thinking—often covertly—that correspond to the values (or "ideologies") of a social class. Even a complete rejection of television and film as a "Huxleyan warning," where we become addicted to the thoughtless pleasure of

entertainment, is a form of suspicion that offers no affirmative alternative.<sup>7</sup> On the one hand, then, these theoretical and critical trends emerged differently in literature and in film, leading to various theories of semiotics and subjectivity, and can be very compelling; on the other hand, the goal of such approaches, by and large, is not necessarily to distinguish entertainment from art: Shakespeare is as much a target as the *Twilight* series. As a consequence, the enthusiasm of the filmgoer or reader is often less for the work itself than for the relevance and insights of the theoretical apparatus to its objects of study. Thus while it may be compelling to diagnose works of fiction using such methods, in those cases it is generally not the work of fiction that compels us to perceive, feel, and think in *new* ways. Rather, it is the critical apparatus that demonstrates how we *already* perceive, feel, and think. The work of fiction becomes a shadow of the critic's assumptions about what makes us human.

### Power: the work of fiction in the world of judgment

Whether we are suspicious of the work of fiction, whether we think it reflects the possibilities of our own world, whether we think it ought to provoke disinterested reflection, or whether we think it is simply a matter of entitlement to our taste (cultivated or not), in every case the work of fiction itself is subjected to demands that belong to actual people in the real world. A theoretical approach may uncover hidden beliefs or wishes which are reflected in the audience or author, an existential approach may demand that fictional worlds show us how our world might be, a Kantian approach may value the manner in which some works provoke us to suspend our interest or desire in the world, and a Humean approach may highlight the manner in which we form expectations about fiction, culturally and socially. In every case, we are somehow tied to the world—and even if the value of art as a category of fiction involves suspending our desire in the world, this defines art's value as a moral imperative *within* the world.

This tension between the compulsion to judge a work of fiction and at the same time to experience it privately can be expressed as follows: on the one hand, what we value in fictional worlds is up to us and seems beyond reproach. If fiction is not real and the events in it have no consequence, why should our judgments of it matter? On the other hand, our judgments of fictional works are inherently social and bound to this world in that they work as a *normalizing* force. Readers and filmgoers may judge those who do not share their opinions rather than judge the works themselves. Films or books may be circulated based on reputation and recommendation. Rating systems (often one out of four or five stars) offered on personalized platforms to customize our taste, algorithms to create more recommendations, and websites that aggregate reviews, may all unintentionally influence how works of fiction can or should be created or experienced. Judgment implicitly or explicitly saturates our cultural experience of fiction.

When considering the normalizing effects of judgment, we can look beyond the philosophies of aesthetics and existence to consult Michel Foucault, who demonstrated, on a practical and historical level, the ways in which power relations implicate us in

constant judgment. These are not necessarily moral judgments, but judgments involving what is normal or abnormal, regular or unusual. As Foucault explains it, “power is . . . a total structure of actions brought to bear upon possible actions; it incites, it induces, it seduces, it makes easier or more difficult”;<sup>8</sup> in every case, such possibilities are informed by practical knowledge of what would make us secure, prosperous, and healthy. We *want* our society to have regulations that protect our health or stimulate our economy, and we *want* ourselves and others to be disciplined so we can be productive and safe. As Deleuze claims, Foucault’s “exercise of power shows up as an affect, since force defines itself by its very power to affect other forces,” which he also designates in terms of being “incited or provoked, to be induced.”<sup>9</sup> Thus in all of our modern practices, the forces of capitalism (whether industrial, correctional, or neoliberal), along with the forces of biological science (whether for medicine, psychology, control, or warfare), on both individual and social levels, interact and reinforce one another. This is how we know our world, and who we are in it: namely, through our own biological existence and our insertion into practices of efficiency or of returns on our investments (of time, energy, money, etc.).

From Foucault’s perspective, then, if we ask what our world is, we can say that it is what we know in a practical sense: the product of power and knowledge. For the purpose of considering fictional art in the Foucauldian age of biopolitics, this book will consider what the *world* is—not in terms of coherent expectations or comprehensive systems (Goodman), or other philosophical understandings, but in the practical sense of a world where we know who we are by virtue of the values tied to life (e.g., health, prosperity) and the normative judgments which surround such values. Such knowledge of the world and who we are in it depends on what we can observe and what we can articulate about it, where truth and reality cohere. Foucault claims that what we articulate socially is “binary” in the sense that it captures what we can observe—quite literally what we can “see” about our milieus and one another—and places it along a spectrum of positive or negative judgment. All practices, Foucault says, are “dividing”: “the mad and the sane, the sick and the healthy, the criminals and the ‘good boys,’”<sup>10</sup> and we are constantly provoked, “incited,” or “induced” to act to avoid negative judgment, which reflects whether our actions in fact improve our health, security, and prosperity or not (individually or collectively). This knowledge may be created or “fictional,” but as Deleuze says of Foucault, “never has fiction produced such truth and reality.”<sup>11</sup> Thus even if this is a post-Nietzschean world without truth *per se*, power “produces” truth in the world. And as we will see, it is arguably the case that we carry over our values into fiction, even and especially if the situations presented are fantastic or otherworldly.

As much as we may wish to escape our everyday world into imaginary worlds to experience fiction on its own terms, if we are implicated in a world of power, what we cannot escape—even in our most escapist diversion—is judgment. This is what Foucault’s perspective allows us to consider: the inevitability of judgment insofar as fictional art is an object in the world. If filmgoers and readers want the experience to “pay off,” they essentially want a return on their investment (which confirms their own “bias”). In some sense, they want their works of fiction to be as regulated and predictable as their lives: as we will see (VII; 4), the very movement of cinematic images wherein we expect things to happen, or await an event that already happened to be revealed,

supplants a genuine encounter with art that “forces us to think.” This experience of judging such fiction orients us toward common questions. How elaborately designed or conceived was the fictional world? How vital (interesting, talented, witty, attractive, etc.) were the characters? In every case, we still subordinate the work to the very same regulated and disciplinary processes that force conformity in our daily lives: characters are treated as real people with psychology and feelings (with whom we can “identify”), fiction is assumed to be expressive of—or tied to—the ideology of a social class (even “low brow” distinctions operate this way), and fiction is expected to offer a moral lesson to expand the possibilities in our *actual* worlds. In other words, insofar as the importance of fiction is tied to possibilities in the world, it is dissolved into, normalized, and assimilated by power—whether the homogenizing and normalizing effects of psychology, the disciplinary and (anti-)regulatory effects of capitalism and neoliberalism, or simply that which can be institutionalized and judged socially. Our judgment thus operates in the real world of power, rather than itself being transformed through the unreal worlds of art.

Foucault’s own famous work on the function of the “author” or artist emphasizes that art’s importance can be seen in its creation of discourses—new ways of seeing and saying, and thus new forms of knowledge. The problem with discourses around authors is that such discourses tend to isolate an author’s fictional worlds from our own world, because “fiction threatens our world” of regularity.<sup>12</sup> Foucault’s own solution, however, still makes fictional worlds dependent upon a potential “mode of [real] existence,” or subjective “positions that can be occupied by different classes of individuals.”<sup>13</sup> In other words, as with Sartre, for Foucault fiction is not a unique experience which truly differs from real experience; rather, it is a possible experience of reality that is judged (as obscene, for example) by linking it with an author’s mind. Power creates knowledge by equating the imaginary with an author. At best, art creates new ways of seeing and saying—new “discourses” which are descriptive or perceptive—but such discourses can be quickly institutionalized and normalized (e.g., imitated, taught, etc.). Artists may temporarily tap into a creative domain which is outside of power, but are immediately thrown back into it. While Foucault offers an account of this problem, and it is surely the case that fiction cannot be separated from its impact on the world, the unrestrained nature of the imagination continues to loom large.

### The work of fiction beyond our exterior and interior worlds: critique and interpretation

If, even in the most escapist pursuit, we cannot escape our own subjective judgment—lest we succumb to detached critical analyses—it is because our perceptions and affections are inevitably oriented toward life in a world of knowledge and power. We can question this impulse, and criticize the failure of our practices that facilitate life, but this does not take us beyond such limits. The question becomes: if, in a Foucauldian world, our perception and affection are continuously bound up in provocations or incitements to act, how might art, as an *experience*, provoke or incite us beyond the

judgments and knowledge that require action in the world? To experience fiction is to *withdraw* from the world, and even the existentialist view, which claims that there is no “essence” to art, sidesteps the fact that fictional experience, by its very nature, *neglects* the world. Likewise, any link between Foucault’s “subjective position” of an imaginary character and our actual world of power would be tenuous at best. In this sense, judging the imaginary is an effort to wield power by forming our own personal knowledge about a domain that can never judge us back, and any compulsion to judge such a domain is all the more addictive and unsatisfying because we are grappling with an intractable element. If fiction truly has a “relation” to this world, it is one best characterized as ignorant, unconcerned, and indifferent. Why? Because fiction has no rules, no laws, no reality, and no truth: how on earth can we assume it therefore has some role in our world of law and of truth? Does this not forever tie it to a judgment that is, if not dogmatic and unreflective, then at the very least grounded in some assumption that is forever foreign to the work of fiction? And even if fiction can be judged on its own terms, how can it be apart from an empty formalism, which would offer a detached or “formulaic” analysis of its internal relations and craft?

The answer to these questions is that it is not art that is the object of judgment, it is our own judgments that are the object of art: if art can reverse the effects of power, it is by seizing us or drawing us in precisely by virtue of our judgments and knowledge, our perceptions and affections oriented toward life. Just as power, then, produces truth and reality, as well as our normative judgments, of which we can be critical, so too do most films and fictional works. But fiction can, artistically, make reality impossible to discern and truth impossible to discover. We are now beyond the dichotomy outlined at the beginning of this Introduction. Drawn in precisely by our judgments, we are immersed in an experience that cannot be explained as true or discerned as real, which not only “distances” us from the coherence that fictional worlds offer, but beyond that, creates what Maurice Blanchot (an interlocutor of Foucault) calls an “intimacy” with that distance. We thus “escape” or withdraw from the world into the imaginary, but, like the dream (III), we cannot escape the imaginary once it truly fascinates and touches us: it “escapes [us] by the very fact that there is no escaping it.”<sup>14</sup> Here, fiction expresses such distance in more or less profound ways, as a feature of art.

To interpret works of art, in these terms, is to conceive their relations without “capturing” their material in the form of judgment (since art’s distance cannot be captured)—but, impassioned, it also expresses the value inherent to a sensibility reshaped by this withdrawal beyond reality and truth. As Deleuze states in an oft-cited remark, “what has value can be made or distinguished only by defying judgment. What expert judgment, in art, could ever bear on the work to come?”<sup>15</sup> In other words, it is the defiance of normative judgment by the work of art that makes it worthy of interpretation in the first place; if art is actually expressing the new and different (rather than values tied to life), then it could never be anticipated by “expert judgment.” To return to the choices we are often faced with (from the opening of this Introduction)—namely, film criticism that offers opinions without much interpretation, or film theory that offers contextual interpretations without the passion that comes with judgment—it is perhaps feasible to consider our sensibilities and “unthinkable” *experience* of a work of fiction as provocations to think through it and even “believe” its values (V; 3a):

this is the effect of an immersion in its milieus and worlds. The role of criticism, in this context, finally diverges from the spuriousness of taste and the priority of subjective responses over the features of the artwork itself, while interpretation diverges from the dispassionate and technical approach. Interpretation, in short, retains a mannerism and style, a mode of conveying ideas and values that arise from fascination with the artwork. But what does critique and interpretation become, in this context?

There is, as Deleuze insists, an “art of interpreting” and an “art of evaluating” that develop the differential elements of sense and value, respectively.<sup>16</sup> Such evaluation and interpretation determine whether a work’s differential elements pass Nietzsche’s “test of the eternal return” (II; 8)<sup>17</sup>—in this book’s reversals of power, whether they produce or hollow out realities and truths on the one hand, or whether (through eternal return) they express genuine *novelty* through the “same”—which is to say, through displacements and disguises of reality and truth, on the other hand. Thus interpretation is not the application of a theory, since the dissolution of reality and truth in fictional art has no predetermined content to uncover (such as “repressed wishes”). Any given work of fictional art determines the very realities and truths it reverses and the inexplicable differences that remain. Deleuze provides a useful way to conceive of such a role when commenting on Blanchotian fissures between Foucault’s seeing and speaking, where “there are only milieus and whatever lies between them” such that “thinking addresses itself to an outside that has no form.”<sup>18</sup> That is, interpretation asks what remains of truth when it is displaced, of reality when it is disguised, and more radically, when the imaginary and false enter a new dynamic. To interpret the work of fictional art that reverses such effects of power, in short, is to conceive of its unlocatable forces of displacement and unrevealable relations of disguise. This goal of such interpretation, however, is not to distinguish art from non-art. The interpretive question is inclusive, concerning artistic *features* or *characteristics*; it does not exclude entire works as “non-art” (e.g., judging films as worth seeing or not). Fictional works may contain features that do *not* reverse the effects of power (that is, the truths and realities produced in individual works), but can be critiqued; however, those same works may contain features that do reverse the effects of power, demanding interpretation (and evaluation): in either case, *we are never finished* with truth and reality. Criticism draws us beyond the exterior world of normative judgment to ask how truth and reality are produced in the first place (whether in our world or in fictional worlds), while interpretation considers the manner in which fiction’s truths and realities are reversed within perception and emotion, ultimately expressive of obscure ideas and values beyond *both* its exterior and interior worlds. The approach of this book, in these terms, concerns both critique and interpretation: fiction that passes and does not pass “the test of eternal return.”

Foucault often gestures to this space of thought that is beyond knowledge and power—especially to Blanchot’s “outside.” Blanchot overtly characterizes this space of the outside as a “non-power,” and literature as a space divorced from action:<sup>19</sup> the “unimportant” (V; 1–2). And while Foucault acknowledges the space of thought and experience of the imaginary that is outside of power, he does not articulate a philosophy of art outside of power as such. He in fact characterizes Blanchot’s outside as an experience of “negligent attraction” which creates a “discourse . . . that is always outside what it says,”<sup>20</sup> setting him apart from the likes of Sartre and Kant by gesturing toward

the metaphysical limits of his concept of power. However, he also “encloses” Blanchot’s outside as a space of exclusion that “culture rejects” (II; 4). Foucault in fact claims that Blanchot’s outside “hollows out” our interiority (which, for him, is also a product of power), so no sense or value remains. Granted, in initial reversals of power in this book, truth and reality are hollowed out, but in more radical reversals of art, sense and value *do* return, even if they do not produce a “discourse” (Foucault) or a “promise to imitate” (Sartre). It is only through Blanchot’s insistence on the “unimportance” and “inessential” nature of art that we can consider how it draws us into *another* experience that is both outside of the world and yet not strictly meaningless. The same thing that makes art excessively vulnerable to judgment—it cannot judge us back—is what makes it a force of obscurity, one that we cannot ignore (insofar as it fascinates us) but also cannot comprehend (and thus cannot imitate). So how does Blanchot describe this?

By emphasizing the obscurity of perception, attention, memory, and thought as we experience it, Blanchot shifts emphasis from unknowable relations of power in the *external* world to that which is inaccessible within each of us—what we cannot know about our own imagination, perception, and experience. Thus it is no longer a conversation about discourses of art or subjects of power, or even just about how reality and truth are produced, but about the features of another kind of experience, beyond power, depicted in “the opaque and empty opening on what is when there is no more world, when there is no world yet.”<sup>21</sup> We are now plunged, as Blanchot would say, “further inward” (*plus intérieure*) such that the obscurities of our own perceptions and emotions form a “single continuous space”<sup>22</sup> that “flows” or “glistens”<sup>23</sup> within the obscurities beyond our exterior world. This is “a profounder intimacy, toward the most interior and the most invisible, where we are no longer anxious to do and act.”<sup>24</sup> He continues, citing Novalis, “We dream of voyaging across the universe. Isn’t the universe, then, in us? We do not know the depths of our mind.”<sup>25</sup> But this Blanchotian inaccessibility of interiority is not a philosophy of fictional art *as a reversal* of the effects of power—and it is here that this book turns to Deleuze.

If Blanchot’s outside—as an experience of art—represents a blind spot for Foucault, so too does the insidious and pervasive nature of power and its influence on fictional worlds represent a blind spot for Blanchot. The excess of each thinker’s singular contribution carries its own limitation. It is a goal of this book to bridge this divide by incorporating Deleuze’s perspective, which places the thinkers in conversation. This will take us from Blanchotian mortalism, dream, and literary space to Deleuze’s exploration of imagination, movement, memory, time, and ultimately cinema. Deleuze’s perspective, as this book will explore, will allow us to consider an approach to literary and cinematic art that is greater than the conversation among these thinkers: that is, Deleuze’s philosophy of movement and time (in experience, literature, and cinema), via this clash between Blanchot and Foucault, will lead us to reconsider the Foucauldian role of truth and reality *within* Blanchotian domains (of experience, dream, and fiction) that are utterly foreign to them. In short, we will see that we do not lose the world when it is reversed or eclipsed, nor does it strictly disappear in our encounter with—and experience of—fictional art. Yet, we do not regain it, either. What happens instead requires careful consideration.



As Deleuze demonstrates by drawing on Blanchot, the “absolute relation” or “non-relation” of the outside is not only beyond the external world—that is, our reality and truth—but is *closer* than our internal worlds of dreams, memory, emotion, and perception. There is “*an inside that lies deeper than any internal world*, just as the outside is farther away than any external world,” and this inside is “not something other than the outside, but precisely the inside of the outside.”<sup>26</sup> It may sound easy or flippant to say that the inside is “the inside of the outside,” but this means that what we thought was beyond our reach because it was “out there”—in Foucauldian terms, a diffuse and unstable set of power relations (what Deleuze calls the “diagram”)—is suddenly “coextensive” with that which *inexplicably* informs our own experience. Instead of perceptions and affections bound up by the constant provocations of power (which promise to improve our lives, prosperity, etc.), we perceive and are affected passively, drawn toward what is not possible, beyond reality and truth. This leads us to what Blanchot calls a “profounder intimacy” and more “radical reversal” where, as this book contends, unreality and untruth, the incessant and the ungraspable, repetition and difference, enter into their own unique dynamic. This dynamic is not simply a space of “exclusion” from, or “exception” to, our world of truth and reality (II; 4–8); it is integral to human experience. But how does the obscure or impossible lie at the very heart of our perception and affection, our imagination and memory? What does an experience that cannot be explained by our truths or discerned as real actually look and feel like? In short, *what* is beyond reversals of power?

### Toward a philosophy of cinematic art: reversals of power in mortality, dream, and fiction

Beginning with Foucault’s insight that power creates truth and reality through values placed on life, this book then turns to a study of experiences that reverse and escape such effects of power. Consequently, this book explores, firstly, how mortality, imagination, memory, dream, chaos, and art—particularly literature and cinema—hollow out the life-centric values of the world as we know it. Moreover, beyond that hollowing out and initial reversal, this study considers how artistic fiction can involve what Blanchot would perhaps call a “radical reversal” through a dynamic between unreality and untruth that is expressive of obscure value and composed by ideas (which concern Deleuzian difference, novelty, and becoming). That is, in such fictional art, the unrevealable disguises of perception and the unlocatable displacements of affection may be composed by genuine ideas that, like the oblivion of Blanchot’s night where we dream, are never given, but unlike the dream, in Deleuze’s terms, “consist” and “insist” within the artwork. In this manner, art’s unrealities and unresolvable problems, or its “indiscernible” (Deleuze) and “incessant” (Blanchot) percepts, radically become its very untruths and unanswerable questions, that is, its “inexplicable” (Deleuze) and “ungraspable” (Blanchot) affects—or vice versa, where the untruth of art’s inexplicable affects becomes the unreality of the indiscernible. It is this dynamic, based in a Blanchotian approach to Deleuze’s syntheses of time (where the third synthesis



conceivably entails a dynamic between the first two), that ultimately leads to the novelty and becoming of genuine thought untouched by the pernicious forces of normalization and judgment in a world of power.

This book culminates with a study of cinematic art, which incorporates features of *every aforementioned reversal*: Blanchot's uncertainty of mortality (II) becomes the impossibility of reality's cinematic unfolding and truth's disclosures; the indiscernibility of the imagination's "contractions" in Deleuze's first synthesis of time (II) refract and reflect Deleuze's "crystal" cinematic images of the real within the imaginary; the inexplicability of difference in Deleuze's second synthesis of time (II) likewise becomes Deleuze's cinematic "chronosign" of multiple truths, perspectives, or worlds; the highest paradox of time, eternal return (II; IV), becomes cinema's "false continuity" of the imaginary, or the "serialization" of time's untruths within the imaginary; the dream's unrevealable disguises and unlocatable displacements (III) become cinema's creation of movements that are apparently real or true but actually problematize and question; what D&G call the *speed* of differential thought that conceivably makes connections independently of the perceptual and affective movements of dream, imagination, and memory (IV) become "vertiginous" Blanchotian relational spaces of cinematic framing and cutting that no longer cut or link us to the next image rationally; and finally, the dismantling of truths and realities in D&G's "assemblages" of fiction that instead draw us toward difference and novelty (V; VI) become the very dismantling of cinematic montages or "assemblages" that make illusory realities and truths cohere. In fact, we will see that the chaotic material of thought—that is, D&G's plane of immanence, which they call the Blanchotian "unthinkable of thought" (IV; V)—remains thought's "absolute milieu" in cinema, where Deleuze's plane of immanence becomes the materiality of cinematic light and movement. Cinematic movement, and the realities and truths it produces, are therefore inextricable from both its percepts and unrealities as well as its affects and untruths.

It is in this sense that the movement we experience in the exteriority of a Foucauldian world wherein we are provoked or seduced to know what is true or real continues in cinematic art and Deleuzian "time-images": it is just that, in cinema's initial reversals of power, instead of discovering what is real or revealing what is true, reality refracts, twists, and divides; truth bifurcates, becomes perspectival, and multiplies; and ultimately, in the most radical reversal beyond power, the imaginary and false are indiscernible from and coexistent with each other, displaced and disguised by that which has no truth or reality (thought). The beyond of such worlds also takes us not only further than the exteriority of truth and reality, but "closer than" the interiority of our own perception and affection explored in this Introduction, where Deleuze's cinematic movement is "subordinated to" time (VIII; 5a). However, to consider how cinema creates truth and reality, our initial foray into cinema (VII) will involve aligning the organic totalities of Deleuze's movement image with our study from the first chapter of power's production of truth and reality. That is, *just as power produces truth and reality, so too can cinema*. In the case of the cinematic movement-image, which subordinates time to itself, this book's approach to cinematic worlds is that the disciplinary and regulated aims of territorial assemblages become the behavioralism of Deleuze's large form of the action-image and the etiology of the small form: in these

cases, reality is always discovered (actions are predicted and judged) and truth is always revealed (situations are disclosed). But to explain how power makes us know what is real and what is true in the first place, and what reversals are involved outside of power that leads us to cinema (VII–IX), our journey takes us from Foucault's world (I) to Blanchot's outside and Deleuze's syntheses of time (II), dream (III), and chaos (IV), toward a Deleuzo-Blanchotian approach to artistic fiction—with a focus on Kafka, who both Blanchot and D&G treat at length—as a radical reversal beyond power (V–VI).

The first chapter of this book, entitled “Power and the (In)Visible: Foucault and Deleuze,” explores Foucault's approach to power, and Deleuze's analysis of it, to consider how we are constantly “provoked,” “incited,” and “seduced” to act: as an affectively-driven phenomenon, modern power no longer operates by sovereign “deduction” and fear, but purports to facilitate and foster life and prosperity. We therefore always want something from it. But this continuously ensnares us in disciplinary and regulatory mechanisms that normalize how we speak (label, classify) about what we see (observe, experience)—such that language “captures” the visible in a binary fashion (healthy/sick, etc.). In fact, the “resistant” features of power are necessarily co-opted by it (such that there is no evading power's capture; nothing is unintelligible to power): for example, sanity is only intelligible through insanity, health through illness, and so on. These mechanisms normalize our behavior through direct intervention (the discipline of the panopticon), and through indirect intervention in “milieus” (both neoliberalism and medicine). Added to that, sexuality marks a strange intersection between discipline and regulation that produces truth both through its normalization and expression (but never its “repression”). This capture of knowledge, as this Introduction has discussed, compels us toward constant judgment and produces our very truth and reality. The Foucauldian approach to power thus critiques how we perceive—whether predicting behavior in the panoptic model or uncovering causes with the “medical gaze.” Here, Deleuze, alongside Foucault, allows us to consider that the milieus *within which* we are disciplined, and that *are* regulated, are conceivably territorialized by the abstract conceptual functions of practices (e.g., “reform” for prison). Milieus in fact lie beneath any given assemblage or “*dispositif*,” and conceivably are created by and create our habits. In fact, our habitual expectation “that ‘it’ will continue,”<sup>27</sup> along with our idealizations of memory—which, as Deleuze's first two active syntheses of time, establish reality and truth, respectively—value what *is*, reinforcing our obsession with preserving and extending life.

The second chapter, entitled “From Menace to Passion in Blanchot and Deleuze: ‘The Sovereignty of the Void’ and Experience of the Imaginary,” considers how Blanchot's “outside” problematizes the Foucauldian obsession with life: for Blanchot, mortality cannot be “carefully evaded,” but is a sovereign, disembodied force, exerting a menacing pull that “seizes” us with “the empty intimacy of ignorance” (hence the “sovereignty of the void,” over which we can have no power, and which appears through dissimulation). Beyond mortality, obscure “fascination” by the imaginary is further away than our exterior worlds, like power, but also *closer than* our most interior, intimate worlds. In fact, such obscure fascination as an experience beyond menace is elided by many interlocutors and critics of Blanchot, including Foucault himself, who claims that Blanchot's outside involves a “hollowing out” of interiority in a “placeless

place” and “infinite void.” It is here that Deleuze’s work on Foucault that incorporates Blanchot offers insight: as Deleuze claims, while Foucault speaks at length of intractable power relations that are beyond our exterior world, he is nevertheless “haunted” by a relation to an interior world that is closer than our perception and self-knowledge.

At this point in Chapter II, the book shifts from engaging with Foucault’s world of power to characterizing Deleuzian reversals of power via Blanchot. We begin with Blanchot’s outside that is more than just an “exception” to our world: for Blanchot, the outside involves passionate experiences of impossibility characterized by three features: incessance, obstinate ungraspability, and becoming. By “hold[ing] these traits together,” we see an “affirmation” of “non-power that would not be the simple negation of power,”<sup>28</sup> and arguably a direct contrast to Foucault, who claims that the resistance to power is its very “target, handle, or support” (I). That is, this outside does not actively resist power, nor is it devoid of all features (i.e., it is not “nothingness”): it is, in Blanchot’s terms, the passivity of passion. This chapter contends that Blanchot’s three features of impossibility correspond, respectively, to Deleuze’s own *passive* syntheses of repetition (the simultaneity of contraction in the imagination), difference (the coexistence of memory), and eternal return. In fact, Deleuze’s third synthesis of eternal return—which draws overtly on Blanchot’s approach to death, incessance, ungraspability, and impossibility—as this book contends, *combines the paradoxes of difference and repetition in the first two syntheses*, just as Blanchot’s features of impossibility are “held together” to affirm the groundlessness of renewed presence: the Nietzschean refusal of nothingness and the alliance of estrangement with the “strangely familiar.” This approach to eternal return and becoming—as a combination of repetition and incessance alongside difference and obstinate ungraspability—will concern the ultimate, radical reversals beyond power in fiction (V–VI, VIII–Conclusion).

The third chapter, entitled “Dreams: The Eclipse of the Day and its Incessant Return,” considers how dreams epitomize experience outside of power which we all undergo. On the one hand, the Freudian dream that displaces and disguises repressed wishes or fears must “mean” something psychologically (subordinating dreams to what Blanchot could call the “day’s truth and laws,” or a Foucauldian, normalizing world). On the other hand, Deleuze’s vision of displacement and disguise involves the unconscious posing of problems without solutions and asking questions without answers. While Deleuze does not write at length about dreams, it is conceivable that the force of the Deleuzian dream is precisely the urgency and scope of such positing: this chapter contends that reality’s problematizing takes the disguised form of percepts and truth’s questioning takes the displaced form of affects (this will inform the approach to art in the subsequent chapters). This leads to a reconsideration of Bergson’s dream “illusions” that distort sensation and expand memory, leading us to *move beyond the Bergsonian perception and “expanded” memory towards Blanchotian oblivion*: in Deleuze’s Bergsonian terms, contrary to the indiscernible connection between one moment and the last beneath lived repetition and habit (that disappears *in* appearing), in dreams, connections are “so relaxed that the preceding moment has disappeared when the following appears.”<sup>29</sup> Thus within and beyond these “relaxed” connections we discover Blanchot’s inspiring movement of oblivion that is “baseless and without depth,” from which we insouciantly turn away and “forget to forget.” That is, dreams

are not mere “illusions”: they do not just create illusory realities or truths, *they unravel them*. Dreams, as this chapter ultimately contends, involve Blanchot’s paradox of forgetting, whereby, like eternal return, day does not end in night but returns incessantly and ungraspably: we may be relaxed or inattentive to the day but are “vigilant” towards a night (or “nothingness”) that can never be located or revealed (such a movement thus does not represent “repressed wishes”). This movement engenders “recognition without cognition,” a “fissure” between dreamer and sleeper (which is considered later as the cinematic “interstice”: VIII; 5a). From this perspective, all dreaming is “lucid,” illuminating a “pure semblance” to reality; furthermore, beyond the menacing “harassment” by reality in nightmares (which conceivably “hollows out” our personal truths), the Deleuzo-Blanchotian dream is a forgotten, “pure approach” of questions without answers and problems without solutions that is *unthinkable*.

The fourth chapter, entitled “The Conceptual Composition of the Work of Art: Chaos and the Outside,” begins by considering the difference between experience, art, and dream. While the everyday experience of habit (imagination) and memory, bound as they are to the world, often resort to expectations to reinforce reality and idealizations to reinforce truth (respectively), the oblivion of the dream is lost in a sea of imagination and memory-images that lack any medium or milieu. However, it is the milieus and mediums of art that have both the traction to produce semblances of truth and reality, but also, in their “absolute separation” from the world, to reverse their effects and to be composed by thought. That is, unlike the indeterminate milieus and immensity of oblivion that separate or “fissure” us from cognition in absolute *slowness*, the *speed* of thought within determined milieus is beyond movement altogether. For Deleuze, such movements of the imaginary, in their displacements and disguises, however “unthinkable,” “force us to think.” Ideas, in this sense, are answers to questions and solutions to problems—but they are *connective* rather than representative; that is, *ideas do not explain anything*. Rather, being inexplicable, they only *imply* or “implicate.” But *what* they implicate depends on whether thought critiques the production of our realities and truths (e.g., Foucault’s vast historical and actual milieus of power), or whether it composes percepts and affects (the stuff of art). Indeed, if Foucault’s concept of power problematizes and questions reality and truth, the ideas of fictional art can express values *within* unreality and untruth. But how?

It is here, in Chapter IV, that the book begins to assert the thesis that will bridge the reversals of power in mortality and dream from chapters II and III to reversals in fictional art (in the chapters that follow) by asking the question: *how do ideas compose a work of art?* Not “concept art,” or fiction where characters discuss ideas, but genuine, unrepresentable ideas that are responsible for the very composition of images and stories, of affects and percepts, in their movements of displacement and disguise? That is, *how does art “think,”* or as Deleuze likes to say, “force us to think”? These questions require a revaluation of the materiality of art and the immateriality of thought—but more specifically, how the two are related, which brings us to another key feature of the outside of power: *chaos*. Chaos is considered via D&G’s planes of immanence and composition (each incorporating distinct chaotic features), where they reference Blanchot to depict the former moving with incessantly amorphous form (i.e., the event, the “soil” of repetition), and the latter as a formless, absent totality (i.e., the “cosmos,” the

“sky” of difference); concurrently, affects and percepts are, conceivably, transforming forms, and concepts are formless, fragmentary intensities. Considering D&G’s claim that entities of one plane can occupy the other, this chapter contends that concepts, occupying the plane of composition, can unleash affections and perceptions from their finite movements. That is, rather than affects and percepts displacing and disguising Blanchot’s nocturnal oblivion of dream (in a “pure approach”), they displace and disguise that which cannot be located or revealed: the inexistent idea. Like Blanchot’s night, and death, such ideas are not the “non-being of the negative”; rather, concepts survey milieus with “an order without distance” (D&G), and hold forces “at a distance” (Blanchot on Deleuze). They traverse the “inexistence of a whole which could be thought”<sup>30</sup> and are thereby naturally suited to compose the affects and percepts of art that do not (re)produce truth and reality: if affects and percepts pose questions and problems (respectively), concepts are the fragmentary and unrepresentable solutions that implicate them. Illustrations of affects and percepts as the “entities” of art are provided in literature (Moby Dick), painting (Francis Bacon), and music (Oliver Messiaen).

If ideas *implicate* the material of art (affects and percepts), then that material *develops* art’s ideas. In order to explore this relation between thought and art, between implication and explication, Chapter IV further bridges chapters II and III to the chapters that follow by drawing key parallels between Deleuze’s philosophy of difference and repetition in his three syntheses of time to his work with Guattari on percepts, affects, concepts, chaos, and the planes of immanence and composition. This through line remains essential both for the following chapter that explores the indiscernibilities (repetitions) and inexplicabilities (differences) that culminate in becomings (repetition + difference) in both Kafka’s fiction and in cinematic time-images in Chapter VIII. Here, the language of implication and explication (and complication) becomes essential: if the plane of immanence, as this chapter contends, is the incessantly amorphous form of repetition *as* difference, the plane of composition is the absolute dissolution or formlessness of difference *as* repetition—while chaos complicates the two planes and their entities (where difference *is* repetition *and* repetition *is* difference, which is especially crucial in art’s radical reversals when percepts complicate affects, or vice versa). The plane of immanence thus involves infinite or perpetual movement, while the plane of composition involves infinite speed (disappearing in appearing); the former develops concepts but *complicates* the unlocatable place of affects within the unrevealable disguises of percepts (drawing perceptions and affections away from subjects and objects, creating the repetition of difference, or variety), while the latter implicates affects and percepts but complicates concepts (that is, draws concepts away from any totality, creating the difference of repetition, or variation). Crucial to this dynamic is that only difference implicates repetition, while only repetition explicates difference, and not the other way around. That is, immanence in its amorphous form or affects and percepts in their changing forms—as forms of repetition—*explicate or develop*, and artistic composition in its absolute form or concepts in their fragmentary, iterative form—the formless forms of difference—*implicate*. In fact, insofar as ideas implicate the affects and percepts of fictional art, those affects and percepts also develop those ideas and thereby *reform our*

*sensibility* around *value*. It is at this point in the book that the notion of *obscure value* is introduced, wherein what we perceive and feel is rooted in the impossible. The remaining chapters explore the indiscernibilities of repetition and the coexistence of difference in fictional art (both in isolation and as a dynamic) as manifestations of the syntheses of time—in all of their initial reversals of power and “radical reversals” beyond power—composed by ideas and expressive of obscure value.

As the fifth chapter of this book, entitled “Literature’s Radical Reversal: From Absence of Origin to Deterritorialized Future,” explores, fiction entails a special reversal of power, but not before we make a scandalous pact with it: as this Introduction has discussed, we neglect the world in fiction, and are drawn to impossible, painful or fantastic experiences, but nevertheless carry over our life-centric values in doing so. But fiction need not be content with such a pact: in Blanchot’s terms, it becomes art only when it is genuinely *unimportant*, and “art’s milieu” ultimately has “a pact contracted with death.”<sup>31</sup> The distinction here between such literature and a Foucauldian world centered on life, from Blanchot’s mortalist perspective, then, is that if fiction “knows nothing of life” then its unimportance is precisely its strength: it does not form an “unreal whole”; rather, its origin and coherence is absent. Thus, if Deleuze’s imagination is a *vital* organ of contraction (II and III), in fictional art, the imagination is drawn into a lifeless, Blanchotian “absolute milieu” of difference. Deleuze’s claim that “only differences are alike” supports this and is in contrast to theories which purport that literature creates metaphorical *tensions* that can be resolved in an “organic unity” reminiscent of Hegelian dialectics. Here the life-centric values of our world become not only the content but the form of the very vitalist coherence we expect in works of fiction. However, if the work of art is genuinely lifeless, and likeness is the condition of difference, then fiction’s percepts and affects explicate the non-being of lifeless differences. That is, there is no metaphorical similarity that unites difference; similarity itself becomes displaced and disguised (or for Blanchot, “dissimulated”) by differences that can “only be thought.” In Blanchotian terms, however, this is no “mystical fusion” with ideas: *it is only via the milieu of the imaginary and medium of literature* (where “words are things”) that we are attracted to its absence of origin: not McLuhan’s “the medium is the message,” and not Hegel’s “mediation of the immediate”—instead, a new formula: *the medium attracts the immediate*.

Both D&G and Blanchot draw on Franz Kafka to define what literature *is*, and this leads us toward a distinct post-structural approach away from symbolism and toward the literality, ideas, and obscure value of fictional art—which sets the stage to explore cinematic art via Deleuze and Blanchot later in the book. For D&G, Kafka is a “hybrid genius” that could make art *think*, installing concepts within affects and percepts, and opening his milieus or “segments” onto an “unlimited field of immanence.” For Blanchot, Kafka’s art goes further than religion: by creating presences “as if” true, they do not “forbid” us from moving forward (e.g., no one will worship the giant vermin of “The Metamorphosis”). Both non-symbolic approaches to Kafka indicate that in its literality, rather than the illusory vitality of its metaphorical unity, fiction conceivably reshapes our sensibility, “beliefs,” and values around the obscure. In fact, as this book contends, the transformation of perception and affection—in all their unreal disguises and untrue displacements—by *genuine ideas* reshapes our attitude toward, and belief



in, the impossible; here, as Blanchot claims, when “the notion of value [as we know it] ceases to apply,” the obscurity of values that “know nothing of life” but are nevertheless essential to our human experience take effect. Comparing D&G’s and Blanchot’s non-symbolic approaches to literature leads to a consideration of Deleuze’s provocative claim that “What Blanchot diagnoses everywhere in literature is particularly clear in cinema”<sup>32</sup>—namely, that within the Blanchotian “fissure” (of Chapter III) that hollows out our truth and reality we can still “believe in [the world] as in the impossible, the unthinkable, which none the less cannot but be thought.”<sup>33</sup> In other words, even within the absence of life-centric values, in this “unthinkable” reversal of power, fictional art “forces us to think” and expresses genuine value—however inexplicable and indiscernible that value is. But such fiction is not limited to literature, and considering that Blanchot was conspicuously mute on the topic of cinema (having lived throughout the entire twentieth century), Chapters V and VI culminate the study of Blanchot’s broader influence on Deleuze with a careful consideration of Kafka’s literature, which creates conditions to consider a Deleuzo-Blanchotian cinematic art in Chapters VIII–IX (following a detour and return to Foucault in Chapter VII).

How does Kafka’s work uniquely, and radically, reverse the effects of power? If, in his novels, everyone seems corrupt and everything seems “false,” it is because he is faithful to a domain that has no truth and reality, wherein the aim of assemblages (from Chapter I) undergo what D&G call “dismantling” (*démontage*) to express the new and different by way of such dismantled familiarity. Kafka’s various genres, in fact, reflect both initial and radical reversals beyond power in fictional art: first, hyperbolic projections and distortions in his letters and diaries that “dispossesses” him of his *own* perceptions, rendering them indistinguishable from the imaginary (as in II; 6). Then, human and subhuman protagonists in his short stories make inexplicable how affective differences coexist, but the stories “break down” because of their abstractions (as in II; 7). Finally, in the radical reversals beyond power of Kafka’s novels, what was in the letters and short stories a displacement and disguise of affects and percepts onto *other* affects and percepts (what D&G call “doubling” and “reterritorialization,” and what Blanchot calls a “trap”) becomes the displacement and disguise of affects and percepts onto that which is never given: difference or becoming. The chapter therefore contends that D&G’s emphasis on the “novelty” of *what* Kafka’s “assemblages” are demands that we not take for granted what his novels are “about.” That is, Kafka’s “deterritorialized” assemblages of the future are unrecognizable—if they were recognizable, they would not be new and different—and yet, such difference only appears paradoxically through a given assemblage’s “dismantled” familiarity. Here fiction’s radical reversal beyond power is in full effect: the aims (or “logical concepts”) of territorial “assemblages” from Chapter I are deterritorialized such that the genuine function of Kafka’s literature is to, firstly, dispossess his protagonists of any “transitive action” and interiority—where they are indistinguishable from, and coexistent with, all of the agents of their “corrupt” world (hence his novels are not social critiques). Secondly, it draws us into an interminable movement where affects and percepts (e.g., of vengeance, claustrophobia, persecution, and secrecy in *The Trial*) are composed conceptually as differential relations (e.g. (in)justice as inexplicable, unrepresentable, and reversible): Blanchot’s “pure approach” of the unreal and untrue.

The sixth chapter, entitled “Kafka’s Castle: A Case Study—Conceptual Inexistence and Obscure Value,” provides a close interpretation of Kafka’s novel *The Castle* to illustrate a startling and unrelenting reversal of the effects of a modern power oriented towards life: seduced by a promise of a better life, our protagonist, K., instead only encounters a vast bureaucratic system that will not admit that his summons was a mistake. But they also won’t throw him out: instead, they will only ignore him, while the castle he must confront incessantly recedes into the distance and darkness, forever out of reach. Through this radical reversal beyond power, we encounter topographical perceptions disguised by their imperceptible dissolution (a place that literally has no “signs of life”) complicated by affections of impatience displaced as the insensibility of the “ordinary and ugly”—where a “castle,” which can *only be thought* (insofar as it can be neither perceived nor felt), composes the incessant, ungraspable movements of K.’s journey. In fact, the protagonist also is beyond the Foucauldian categories of knowledge: when the village “mayor” admits that his official summons had been an error or fault (*Fehler*), he also *categorically denies* the possibility of error; here, what is “said” about K.—that he *is* a castle official— is fissured from what can be observed, since K has no practical relation to the castle. Nevertheless, lacking any “psychology” or motive, K. conceivably becomes a sponge and mirror that absorbs and reflects the desires of his “assemblages”: both victim and victimizer, as negligent as the castle officials he wishes to confront (Kafka himself is thus not a stand-in for his protagonist). Everyone, in fact, has some relation to the castle, included or excluded by it—while the castle itself, as a “deterritorialized assemblage” and an idea, *does not exist*, but only “consists” and “insists” immanently to experiences of the characters. A close reading of the novel reveals that the castle is unlocatable, “up there,” somewhere above or beyond the village, but also within it: an ever-changing, fragmented place sometimes in hills surrounding the village (extending outward indefinitely) but also traversing the village, forever in what D&G call “the room next door.” The castle “is” the movements of its activity, “forcing us to think” differential relations and becomings that are properly “bureaucratic”: delegation, (failed) paperwork, (mis)communication, etc.—a paradox of negligent aptitude. But this concept leads to an obscure value—an incessant *hope for “what is,”* where K. is relentlessly returned back to opaque images that “renounce their immediacy” (Blanchot) in their strange but insipid familiarity. Such movements of displacement and disguise form the sensibility of an impossible hope—perceptions of a goal that cannot be reached, impatient affection that can only be disappointed—within the untruth and unreality of a fragmented castle as an absent totality that can only be thought.

The seventh chapter, entitled “Cinematic Worlds of Truth and Reality: Deleuze’s Movement Image via Foucault,” shifts from literature to cinema *not* by interpreting cinema’s obscure and artistic features, but, in a return to Chapter I, critiquing its manner of producing truth and reality. The chapter contends that such cinema is uniquely Foucauldian in its manner of making the visual correspond with the sayable, and assembling our perception with movements of our affection around values related to life, even and especially when it presents dangerous or otherworldly situations. But this does not make cinema illusory (like the Bergsonian dream of Chapter III): for Deleuze, movement is immanent to images, not added to them; only their truth or



reality is illusory. In fact, Deleuze's plane of immanence—the light and “matter” of movement (IV; 5a)—does not form an illusory totality, but conceivably remains the unlimited milieu or “moving soil” of cinema. Even framing and cutting, the most basic of cinematic devices, are “deterritorializing” in that they arise from a vertical, compositional axis—images are only reterritorialized through linkages that continually reveal the out-of-frame (via cuts within cinematic milieus, or a moving frame) and expand the open totality of a given cinematic world. Through basic editing and “montage”—that is, Deleuze's *assemblage*—ensembles of cinematic movement-images create an interval (occupied by affection-images) between our initial perception and the resulting action. Such an assemblage of images operates metaphorically by juxtaposing differences rendered “alike” in the viewer's mind, akin to the organic unity in Chapter V; 3b (this chapter explores both Deleuze's “large” and “small” form of such assemblages).

While cinema may produce reality and truth that supplant genuine thinking, we *can think* the relations within movement-images; indeed, even if such films do not problematize their realities or question their truths by “forcing us to think” beyond the *interiority* of perception and affection (as in Chapter VIII), we can still thoughtfully critique those worlds by looking beyond their *exteriority* to consider how their realities and truths are produced (not as “illusions”, but through movement centered on life-centric values). In these terms, Chapter VII contends that Deleuze's distinctions between the large and small forms of the “action image” parallel, respectively, Foucauldian panoptic or “englobing” ways of seeing that focus on behavior, and medical or etiological ways of seeing that “make images speak” (I; 8). We are either immersed in a reality (“what's going to happen?”) or provoked to discover the truth (“what happened?”); in both cases, the interval which the affection-image occupies mediates us to reality or truth, expressing qualities or creating anticipation. Added to this, sound and voice make visible, or create anticipation around, that which is not given in cinematic images, as the condition for deception (i.e., revealing truths or realities unexpectedly). In every case, reality and truth are explained and organized around expectations for resolution or disclosure within genres, creating a “system of judgement.” But insofar as movement-images created expectation through their intervals, montages, or assemblages of realities and truth, they always gestured toward that which is not given (the totality itself) in order to establish the coherence of their worlds. It is through that which is never given that we can attain distance from such films and critique their truths and realities (as we can critique power relations in our world). Furthermore, films themselves, through their creation of truths and realities, may offer implicit critiques of ours. For instance, cinematic impulse images that “fill” gaps between perception and action (similar to affection-images, which “occupy” them) arise from “formless” originary worlds full of monstrous impressions, exposing the superficialities of the “derived milieus” that reflect our own. However, even when undermining or exposing such superficialities, they always explain their realities and disclose their truths. Thus, any production of fictional truths and realities requiring critique alone *encloses* Blanchot's outside just as Foucault's world does: as exceptions to or interruptions of the movement-image.

Pivoting from the production and critiques of truth and reality in cinematic worlds, in the eighth chapter, entitled “Radical Reversals of Cinematic Art: The Dissociative

Force of Blanchot's Outside in Deleuze's Time-Image," we again confront the issue of cinematographic illusion, asking whether film zombifies the viewer to sleepwalk through it (holding them hostage to a parade of images), but this time consider the "automatism" of Deleuze's "spiritual" cinematic-machine that generates the speed of thinking within oneiric images given a "diurnal treatment." Here cinematic framing and cutting finally unleash the percepts and affects of Deleuze's plane of immanence, which, like the deterritorialized assemblages or "abstract machines" of Kafka's novels (V–VI), conceivably function through the dismantling (*démontage*) of the cinematic assemblages or montages from Chapter VII. As with Blanchot's brief allusion to cinematic experience, where phantasmagoric imagery emerges from obscurity and darkness, Deleuze's approach to cinematic time draws on Blanchot's "vertigo of spacing," where time's absence of origin is revealed through incessant, ungraspable imagery. But this is *not* "the absence of time": for Deleuze, it is time's expression through movement—that is, through *something happening*, however indiscernible and unresolvable on the one hand, or inexplicable and ungraspable on the other hand. This chapter considers how these indiscernibilities and inexplicabilities, in their initial reversals of power, concern Deleuze's first two syntheses of time, respectively, from Chapters II, VI, and V (in their alignment with Blanchot's features of obscurity). We are first drawn into a "crystallizing" cinematic movement that "repeats," splits, and refracts real and imaginary percepts within Blanchot's lifeless, "absolute milieu" (VIII; 2a). Secondly, our effort to explain events is complicated affectively by "chronosigns" that multiply points of view, where truth and falsity are undecidable (VIII; 2b). Each of these reversals confront "limits"—that is, "inner circuits" where real and imaginary are perpetually exchanged and outer limits that, despite their simultaneity, expand into coexisting layers of the past (similar to Kafka's genres in V; 4–5). Beyond these limits, in the radical reversal outside of power, the indiscernibility of real and imaginary becomes the "false continuity" of time when real and imaginary no longer oscillate but inexplicably coexist—that is, the *unreal becomes untrue*; likewise, the undecidability of true and false becomes the "serialization" of chronosigns when truths or falsities no longer oscillate; rather, the false repeats through various "categories"—that is, the *untrue becomes unreal*. As with Deleuze's third synthesis of time, which *combines* paradoxes of repetition and difference in the first two syntheses (II; 8)—and as with Kafka's novels, which compose deterritorialized assemblages by *combining* the unreality of distortion (found in the diaries and letters) and the falsity of coexisting differences (found in the short stories) (V; 6–7)—here, the highest forms of time-images are composed by ideas when their unrealities and untruths *interact*.

In cinema's radical reversal beyond power, when affects are complicated within percepts (IV; 3b–4a), dissolving the interval in favor of an interstice and "incommensurable relation" between and within movement-images—and also between the audible and visible—percepts and affects work in tandem as displacements and disguises not of *more* displacements and *more* disguises, but of that which is unlocatable and unrevealable, and can "only be thought." To consider this, Chapter VIII culminates with an exploration of Deleuze's cinema discussions that directly reference Blanchot, beginning with an overlooked commentary on Blanchot's insistence that "speaking is not seeing." Here, Deleuze asks why Blanchot does not say

“and vice-versa,” such that “seeing is not speaking.” In such a case, rather than language expressing the ineffable, cinematic images express the invisible—and beyond that, where one is the limit of the other, the ineffable can be made visible and the invisible can be made audible, through a Blanchotian “incommensurable relation” or “fissure.” But this fissure does not only concern the visible and audible: *it also concerns the dissolution of the “interval” of movement*. This chapter thereby reconsiders Deleuze’s cinematic plane of immanence (VII; 2b) via his insistence that movement—however false or aberrant—is not absent from time-images but “subordinate” to time. As such, the affect is “absorbed” into, or complicated by, the milieus and bodies of percepts: no longer mediating us *to* movement, the space of affection becomes the “force of time which puts truth into crisis.” This occurs especially in the highest forms of the time-image, where, firstly, problematic forces that crystallize real and imaginary become the questioning potentiality of affects, and secondly, questioning, bifurcating forces of affective untruth become problematic “categories.” Such fissures between audible and visual—and within the dissolution of intervals of movement—concern Artaud’s “hole in appearances” (*trou dans les apparences*), referenced but not cited by Deleuze, which brings him from Artaud to Blanchot’s “dispersal of the Outside” and the vertiginous spacing within cinematic time (i.e., time’s absence). But Deleuze’s insistence that such spacing is a “dissociative force” returns us to Blanchot’s comments on Deleuze’s distinction between force and relation (IV; 5c); here, cinematic affects, complicated within percepts, *no longer supplant thinking* by occupying the interval between perception and action—the interval that had focused attention on what is happening or what happened (VII). Rather, in this reversal, the affect—complicated by the percept—is an unthinkable “force” of the outside that compels us to think relations of movement, however untrue and unreal; this is due to the affect’s *differential* states that are nonetheless bound by movement and bodies (IV; 4a), which thereby “seize” us (Blanchot) in the differential, intensive process of thought. That is, if the affect supplanted thinking by subsuming differential relations of movement when producing truth and reality, it now forces us to think that very difference when absorbed by percepts, in their composition of untruths and unrealities. The chapter concludes by considering Deleuze’s insistence that by filming the impossible, time-images restore “belief” in the world “as it is” (chaotic): hence the sensibility of obscure values.

The following chapter (IX), entitled “Is Anyone Seeing This?,” provides three case studies to illustrate the cinematic art of films which reverse the effects of power and are both implicated by ideas and expressive of obscure values. In *Take Shelter*, the first case study, a man has apocalyptic dreams and visions, developing paranoia and believing he is schizophrenic (asking at one point, “Is Anyone Seeing This?”). However, his family ultimately experiences key aspects of his visions: here, the vision becomes a percept, rendering the real and imaginary indistinguishable, but also retroactively crystallizes a false narrative, rendering normative judgments of him as schizophrenic untrue. Thus, an *untrue* affect of paranoia is complicated within the unreality of apocalyptic percepts—forcing us to think an inexistent “storm”—and expressing the obscure value of trust (between the protagonist and his family) that refuses complacency and believes in unpredictability. In *Arrival*, the second case study, monolith-esque alien ships provoke geopolitical conflict, and, in learning an inexistent alien language, the