

General Introduction

Marlon Miguel

Cinema on the Margins and in the Centre of Deligny's Experiments

Cinema occupies an ambiguous position in the work of Fernand Deligny: it is both central and marginal. For Deligny, cinema constitutes a space of practice as well as one of conceptual speculation. Present to a greater or lesser degree in different periods of his life, it is nonetheless a common thread that runs through more than fifty years of clinical, pedagogical, and socio-political experimentation.

If Deligny's work has for decades been associated with pedagogy and the so-called social 'maladjustment' of children and adolescents; if as a result of the renewed interest in his work from the late 2000s¹ his writing has come to be associated with a style both conceptual and poetical, the crucial relationship it maintained with cinema and the image continues to be a blind spot. In the French clinical and cinematographic context, there has been renewed interest in certain of 'his' films, including *Le Moindre geste* (*The Slightest Gesture*, 1971) and *Ce Gamin, là* (*That Kid, There*, 1975). Yet very little has been written about the ways in which the cinematographic practice was essentially interwoven in Deligny's experiments or how speculative reflection on the image constituted a vital line of his thought.

This blind spot in the reception of Deligny's work is due first to the fact that the majority of his texts on cinema and the image have remained unpublished until now. Many were discovered only recently during the organisation of his archives.² *Camering: Fernand Deligny on Cinema and the Image* is a first step towards filling this gap. Its title is taken from a series of texts and notes that date from the late 1970s, which Deligny called *camérer*. Three of them, the most important and polished pieces, are published in *Camering*.

This volume reunites, in chronological order, pieces written in different styles between 1934 and 1996. They offer an overview of Deligny's involvement with cinema, beginning with a short review he wrote about three films screened at a cine-club for the journal *Lille Université*. There is a large gap between this piece and the two that follow: 'The Camera, a Pedagogical Tool' concerns Deligny's first practical experiment with the camera, while 'He's Still One of Us' is a reflection on *The Slightest Gesture*. The latter, along with the remaining texts in this volume, was written during

Deligny's most productive period, when he lived with autistic children. The reader will note that the texts become progressively more speculative and shift from work with the camera and reflections on cinema towards an unstable and mysterious notion of the 'image'. 'Miscreating', 'The Alga and the Fungus', 'Fossils Have a Hard Life: Apropos of the Image', and 'The Distinctiveness of the IMAGES' had until recently been lost along with numerous other texts inside long-forgotten boxes, trunks, and suitcases in the attic of an old house in the Cévennes.

Deligny produced many texts on cinema and the image, among them a variety of scripts, most unpublished and now stored at the Institut Mémoires de l'édition contemporaine / The Institute for Contemporary Publishing Archives (IMEC) (see *infra*, note 75). However, the aim of this volume, far from being exhaustive, is to provide a compact and insightful glimpse into his reflections and practices in these areas. Furthermore, because of his obsessive manner of writing, many texts from the Cévennes period are similar to or intersect with one another—passages and themes reappear in different works. For this reason, the decision was made to include a selection of the most representative texts from each period, as this would enable the reader to follow the movement of and displacements in Deligny's reflection.

The gap in the reception of Deligny's work on cinema and the image can be explained by several factors. First among these is that although cameras played a central role in many of his experimental 'attempts'—*tentatives*, as he refers to them in French³—with delinquents and psychotic and autistic children, it was never Deligny's intention to devote himself to cinema or become a filmmaker. In fact, he generated contexts in which cinema could be practised without touching a camera himself, just as he proposed the well-known cartographic practice that entailed tracing the movements and gestures of autistic children without tracing the maps himself. In this sense, Deligny is neither a director nor a scriptwriter, and much less a historian or theoretician of cinema; his written production cannot, strictly speaking, be considered a theory of the image. Nevertheless, there is no doubt that cinema and the image can be regarded as one of the main lines with which we can approach his writings.

It is for this reason that cinema plays both a central and marginal role in Deligny's practice and his speculative reflection. He moves alongside and away from cinema; his experimentation takes form through and within cinema; he elaborates on the image to reflect on autistic perception and memory or to develop his critiques of classical humanism and discursive language, without succumbing to the temptation of post-humanist trends, and always insisting on the importance of the 'human' (species). And since the practice of cinema is invited into his different attempts, and occupies a central position in them without being vital to their survival, there is always a wide opening for experimentation. In these attempts, the energy mobilised through the cinematographic practice does not saturate the effort of creating a film-object, but is instead invested in the processes around it—processes that are

always intimately connected to the other activities in the attempt, such as hosting delinquent adolescents and inventing pedagogical situations involving them, or living with autistic children and making bread or cheese together. This approach does not imply that the film itself was unimportant, but it did play a role in emancipating the work created from the temporality of traditional and commercial cinematographic production. Released from the necessity of a film-product, Deligny and the group involved in its creation could carry out the other activities inside which the project of the *film to come* would take place. At the same time, the film projects were not in any way secondary or superfluous. Nor were they conceived simply as a means of documenting these activities. On the contrary, they helped to otherwise structure Deligny's pedagogical and clinical attempts. And they played a symmetrical role by also helping to emancipate these same attempts from their supposed aim—that of healing or normalising psychotic persons, and re-educating or readjusting deviant subjects.

Deligny's Trajectory: a Life of Attempts

Deligny is a challenging figure to classify. Primarily known as an educator or pedagogue, the author himself refused the category in as early as 1967.⁴ Nor is he a psychologist or a philosopher, even if he does dialogue with both fields. Later, engaging with the field of social work, he stated he would prefer to identify himself as a 'poet and ethnologist'.⁵ As we will see in detail, his perspective on clinical and re-educational practices is indeed closer to anthropology or even ethology. Certainly, something that characterises each of his different attempts is the fact that they were always accompanied by the practice of writing—writing that was very much the form he used to develop his experiences. Deligny is not a professional with a graduate degree, and was very sceptical of 'specialists' of all sorts, preferring always to carry out his attempts with workers, farmers, artists, 'common' people. In fact, very early on, he abandoned the bachelor's degree in philosophy and psychology he had begun in Lille, in northern France. If we follow his own narrative, instead of going to university or writing exams he preferred to 'go to the cinema'.⁶

After leaving university once and for all, Deligny soon began working in a class of children with special needs—thanks to help from the father of his friend François Châtelet, the future well-known historian of philosophy. It was the beginning of a long trajectory of work with 'abnormal' children that would continue until his very last days.

Deligny's trajectory can be broadly organised into three significant periods: 1938–1948, 1948–1962, and 1967–1996. They describe his movement from work of a more intra-institutional nature towards that which took place outside the institution.

During the first period, Deligny worked inside the main public institutions for ‘maladjusted’ children and adolescents: in two special classes; in a psychiatric asylum in the city of Armentières, close to Lille; and as the director of an observation centre for young delinquents in Lille. Deligny was also recruited to the armed forces for a short period between 1939 and 1940, an experience that recurs frequently in his writings.⁷ This extremely ambiguous time in France, from the Front Populaire era, moving through the Vichy occupation, and arriving at liberation, was characterised by the structuring of a series of institutions, technologies, professions, and laws concerning young ‘abnormal’ people. The general concept of a ‘maladjusted childhood’,⁸ established in 1943, marked the beginning of an important discontinuity in the legal, social, educational, and psychiatric fields. In a sense, it indicated the end of an era of total exclusion and confinement, and the beginning of a new one that was violent in different ways, and was based on forced inclusion.⁹

Though intra-institutional, Deligny’s different attempts were aimed at disrupting the ‘instituted’ functions of such spaces, as well as the related operations that led to the establishment of traditional divisions, such as that between a ‘normal’ class and a ‘special’ class, the teacher who has the knowledge and the students who passively receive it—students who are themselves divided into good and bad, ‘normal’ and ‘abnormal’—and between the warders and ‘the insane’. Deligny’s efforts were directed towards creating collective situations where such divisions, which were responsible for establishing the positions and thus the identities of each subject in the space, could be neutralised. Maladjusted children in a special class would become ‘experts in modes of being’ during storytelling sessions;¹⁰ warders and the mentally ill were brought together for weaving sessions inside the asylum; delinquents acted in films and were involved in shooting them.

Particularly interesting is Deligny’s work at the Armentières asylum. He forbid disciplinary sanctions, invited the warders and their wives to participate in activities with the patients, and organised ateliers, group sports, and walks outside the asylum. In this way, he tried to change the immutable time-space of the asylum by producing new and unexpected ‘occasions’ that might ultimately trigger the mentally ill patients into engaging in some activity. With these experiments, he aimed to create a network of persons, a ‘collectivity’, in which the usual instituted functions could change. To do so, he transformed the warders into educators of sorts—they were responsible for organising activities and using other skills unrelated to their positions (playing the accordion, crafting, constructing, etc.). Their wives, most of whom were workers in the textile industry, were asked to bring in materials and run sewing and embroidery ateliers, but also to help organise other activities, such as the reconstruction of asylum spaces. By not taking the patients as ‘irrecoverable mad people’, but as persons needing ‘occasions’ to do something, by creating a ‘network’ between them and the warders and their wives, and by initiating communication between the ‘inside’ and the ‘outside’, Deligny aimed at a neutralisation of the usual functioning of the asylum.¹¹

Deligny further developed some of the principles he had implemented in Armentières shortly after the war, when he began to work as the director of the first Centre d'observation et de triage (literally Observation and Triage Centre), located in Lille. Created in 1945, these centres were established to observe and evaluate young delinquents for a certain period of time before the justice system could take a 'technical' decision regarding their futures—send them to prison, special schools, other re-educational organisations, etc. Deligny writes of his experiences at the centre in the 1947 book *Les Vagabonds efficaces* (*The Efficient Vagabonds*).¹² During his time there, he once again chose not to work with professional educators, but instead with individuals from working-class backgrounds. Furthermore, he transformed the centre into an open space where family members of the adolescents could visit, as could poets, musicians, and anarchists, especially during the events organised in the evenings. In his book, Deligny attacks the perspective of education conceived as a moralisation process and considers it through the lens of emancipation. He believed it was preferable to work not with highly qualified professionals, but rather with persons coming from the same social milieu as that of the young delinquents. His conception can be synthesised with a simple idea: a social milieu alone is apt to take care of itself, to think about itself, and to find the appropriate solutions to its own problems. That is why it seemed crucial to him to think in terms of creating an internal and popular network that was immanent in the social and political situation, rather than waiting for external solutions from technical professionals with their presumed know-how. What at the time was called 'educational readjustment' ought to be linked, in Deligny's perspective, to a comprehension of the social and political circumstances at stake and to the necessity of actively participating in them.

Deligny's radical position at the centre in Lille led to it being shut down less than one year after opening. He then worked for a short time at the popular educational and cultural organisation Travail et Culture (Work and Culture), alongside figures such as cinema critic André Bazin and future filmmaker Chris Marker.¹³ Deligny has said of this time that it involved, among other things, 'escorting' films programmed by Travail et Culture.¹⁴

The following years, from 1948 to 1962, mark the second important period in Deligny's trajectory. With his then wife and communist activist Huguette Dumoulin, the support of the French Communist Party (PCF), Henri Wallon's laboratory for childhood psychobiology, and the anarchist youth hostel network—as well as, in its first years, the social security system—he created the para-institutional network of social re-education for juvenile delinquents called La Grande Cordée. The network sought 'occasions' that would give juvenile offenders something to do with their lives, and would help emancipate them from the infernal institutional cycle of maladjustment; furthermore, it sought to constitute a 'collectivity' or 'supportive milieu'¹⁵ that they could be part of. The 'occasions' took place away from the adolescents' homes and

were conceived as collective situations that would entail, for example, learning a job they took pleasure in, or developing a project. The aim was to constitute new 'conditions of existence assumed to be favourable to their development'.¹⁶ In each case, the adolescent was sent somewhere in France for a temporary 'trial placement'.¹⁷ If they enjoyed their time there they could stay on as an employee; otherwise, they were sent to another placement.

La Grande Cordée's conception was heavily influenced by the ideas of Soviet pedagogue Anton Makarenko, as well as by principles from the tradition of popular education—such as those developed by Célestin Freinet or by the CEMÉA (Centres d'entraînement aux méthodes d'éducation active / Training Centres in Methods of Active Education). On the one hand, Deligny was undeniably close to the Soviet and Marxist traditions—and the PCF wanted to transform him into a sort of 'French Makarenko'; on the other, he took some distance from them, particularly in emphasising that France was a post-war capitalist society, one very different from the Soviet post-revolutionary context in which Makarenko developed his experimental pedagogy at the Gorki Colony.¹⁸ Deligny remained close to the PCF, but his libertarian position was met with some suspicion and there were those who considered him to be a 'very insufficient communist'.¹⁹ La Grande Cordée was based in Paris and sponsored by Social Security until the beginning of the 1950s. Its structure remained more or less organised until that time. However, when the network lost its financial support in 1953, it became an itinerant group in France, and the re-education work at its core came to be increasingly mixed with the very activities that ensured its survival, such as the restoration of houses, goat farming, etc. More importantly, it was at this time that the group began to work with a camera to shoot films. The second text in this volume, 'The Camera, a Pedagogical Tool', is a crucial document of their attempt.

When La Grande Cordée dissolved, Deligny, Josée Manenti, and the last of those remaining from the group started the film project *The Slightest Gesture* (1962–1965), before Deligny was invited to La Borde clinic by Jean Oury and Félix Guattari. He spent approximately two years (1965–1967) at the clinic, largely avoiding its activities, though he was responsible for a few ateliers and cine-club sessions, and edited the journal *Cahiers de la Fgéri* (Fédération des groupes d'études et de recherches institutionnelles / Federation of Study Groups and Institutional Research). It was also at the end of 1966 that he met the autistic boy Jean-Marie J.—whom he called 'Janmari'—and that the idea for a new project involving mute autistic children began to take form.

In 1967, tired of the atmosphere at La Borde and the emphasis the clinic placed on language and verbal communication,²⁰ Deligny and a small group of individuals (Gisèle and Any Durand, Jacques Lin, Guy and Marie-Rose Aubert), along with Janmari, first moved to Gourgas, a property owned by Guattari in the Cévennes in southern France, and then, in 1968, to another house not far from there in the hamlet of Graniers. This was the beginning of the network of living areas conceived to host

mute and severely autistic children. Though the network operated entirely outside the institution, surviving on what it produced, Deligny's books, the occasional help from local farmers, contributions from some of the children's parents, and eventually aid from a few projects and donations—in particular one made by the rock group Pink Floyd in 1973—it remained very much connected to the intellectual, cultural, and institutional landscape in France. In fact, it was Deligny's decision not to receive public support, so that there would be a larger margin for experimentation. Still, the network maintained its connections, in particular to the psychoanalytical field (and to important names such as Françoise Dolto and Maud Manonni), hosting numerous children from all over the country who had been sent by clinics or analysts. The network existed as such until 1986 and Deligny, along with Jacques Lin and Gisèle Durand, continued to work with autistic individuals until his last days in 1996.

During this period, Deligny's language underwent a radical transformation and his production increased exponentially. The majority of the texts included in this volume were written in the Cévennes. Deligny constantly plays with language, moves between biography, fiction, poetic description, and conceptual and highly speculative reflection, searches for unusual and long-forgotten words, creates numerous neologisms, and invents a strange syntax. And, indeed, his thought—but also his biography, which he ceaselessly takes over and rewrites throughout his texts and over the years—is indissociable from the language he invented in an attempt to translate the radical experience of living with children outside the reign of speech. This language is certainly all his own, but it plays within his native tongue, French, exposing its mechanisms, vices, modes of functioning, and structures, and is in dialogue with its literary tradition, with authors that implicitly or explicitly inhabit his texts, such as Stéphane Mallarmé, Arthur Rimbaud, and Francis Ponge.

Beyond what Deligny narrates and how he constantly fictionalises his own biography, his experiments are to be read as part of certain pedagogical and clinical 'utopias' that emerged and were developed in the twentieth century, in particular in the post-war period. Though Deligny's is a singular position within this horizon, one that merits further analysis, his experiments cannot be read outside the particular space between Lacanian psychoanalysis,²¹ the anti-psychiatry movement, *désaliénisme* (deinstitutionalisation and 'sectorisation'), institutional psychotherapy, and the idea of the *collectif soignant* (healing collective); between popular, radical, and emancipatory education projects. And it is mainly within these two fields—clinical and educational—that he operated in a direct manner, in particular because of the public with whom he worked. This does not mean, however, that his writings can be reduced to these fields alone; on the contrary, they take inspiration from diverse disciplines (including anthropology, the arts, philosophy, and politics) and contribute to the debates in these fields, as is evidenced by the remarkable number of interlocutors he had throughout his life: François Truffaut, Chris Marker, and Robert Kramer; Louis Althusser, Gilles

Deleuze, Marcel Gauchet, and Isaac Joseph; Maud Mannoni and Françoise Dolto, to name just a few.²² This interdisciplinary arc can be explained, on the one hand, by his work's concern with the very status of the 'human'—a keyword in his thought—and, on the other, by his invention of a language capable of critically rethinking the conception of the human: How are normality and abnormality defined? How does one trace where the human begins and ends? And by allying himself with 'the mad, the delinquents, the retarded, the dissidents',²³ by de-solidarising himself with that which was 'similar'²⁴—his *semblables*, other human beings in general—and with the dominant 'image of Man',²⁵ Deligny developed, as we will see in his writings, a radical anthropological and political critique of resemblance, similitude, likeness.

The fact that Deligny's name was largely forgotten in the final decades of the last century can perhaps be linked to the coincident end of clinical and educational utopias such as those mentioned above. However, the rediscovery of his work that has begun to take place in recent years demonstrates the current relevance of his thought and is an opportunity to better grasp it today.

The Camera as a Tool

The practice of cinema, or what could, strictly speaking, be regarded as the use of the camera, first became part of Deligny's attempts during the period of La Grande Cordée. The archives from these years show that cameras were included in the budgets of Deligny's first funding applications for the network. In as early as 1950, he was able to acquire a 16 mm Paillard camera, but he likely only began shooting with the adolescents in the group in 1952. A screening of some of the images they had captured was organised in Paris in 1954, and other sequences were shot in 1955 and 1956. 'The Camera, a Pedagogical Tool' was written in the summer of 1955 and constitutes a sort of manifesto, while reflecting on the group's on-going film projects. Though none of these projects would be concluded, they remained central to La Grande Cordée and many ideas developed at this time were carried over to the making of *The Slightest Gesture*.

Even at this stage, Deligny emphasised the tool, a notion he would develop further with the neologism 'camering'. He did not conceive of the camera as an instrument for documentation, but as a tool that one wields and that mediates collective relationships. He saw it as not only 'for recording pedagogical activity, but for participating in this activity, a little like a lone, unique, and valued mechanical weapon in combat'.²⁶ Deligny's conception of La Grande Cordée was clear: rather than 'assist' the adolescents, he sought to support them and 'intervene'²⁷ in a way that would allow them to articulate a language and formulate their intentions and problems; in sum, to express themselves: 'Each one of them is, as much as possible, scriptwriter, stage director, author of the shots. The film is first and foremost the

work of those whose lives are filmed.²⁸ In an unpublished letter to Truffaut, who had planned to take part in the subsequent film project that began in 1958, and from then on was entitled *La vraie vie* (*The Real Life*), Deligny was once again explicit about his position: ‘the film I plan is not a work inspired by or gleaned from the four or ten lads living here [...] The presence of the camera among lads like those I recruit seems necessary to materialise [*concrétiser*] a way of thinking, of situating oneself.’²⁹

Deligny’s position was thus that the film should consist in *their* work. The radicality of his gesture is twofold. First, though cinema became a central preoccupation of popular education movements after the end of the war, the focus remained primarily on educating the spectator’s gaze.³⁰ Deligny, on the contrary, insisted on the practice, on the importance of handling the camera oneself. Second, it was not just a question of a production by non-professionals—something that in itself was rare during that period—but of one led by ‘abnormal’, ‘marginal’, ‘maladjusted’ adolescents. The production, Deligny felt, should be a means of exposing the origins of these adolescents, their histories and difficulties; in sum, a means for them to finally occupy a position of visibility in a society that has always rejected them. In a sense, Deligny anticipated problems that a decade later would become central to collectives such as the Medvedkin Group.³¹

Most of the adolescents hosted by La Grande Cordée had critical language learning deficits. Deligny believed producing images to be a strategy that could help them with expression. But he felt the camera could play an even deeper role by helping them to perceive reality differently, to better understand their own intentions. ‘The camera wielded by the adolescents themselves helps them to see.’³² Indeed, behind the idea of the ‘supportive milieu’ that defined La Grande Cordée, one sees that of the ‘existence dispositive’ capable of transforming the adolescents—transforming their perceptions and awareness, as well as their positions, so that they could move from the passive objects of clinical, legal, and social knowledge towards active subjects who produced knowledge, told themselves their own histories.

The word ‘dispositive’ is recurrent in the texts and notes from this period.³³ It resonates with Michel Foucault’s use of the word many years later; i.e., it is conceived through its ‘strategic nature’, in response to ‘an *urgent need*’, ‘assuming that it is a matter of a certain manipulation of relations of forces, either developing them in a particular direction, blocking them, stabilising them, utilising them’.³⁴

In Deligny’s case, the dispositive is regarded as a means of transforming the adolescents by ‘putting order to their intentions, re-establishing a balance perturbed by the absence of concrete projects’.³⁵ In other words, the dispositive aims at a double transformation: first, as already indicated, to help the adolescents, in their confusion, find their ‘true’ intentions, and thus enable them to focus their energies into a concrete project; second, to help them understand that their problems, which are linked to the label of ‘maladjustment’, can only be tackled collectively, since they are intimately related to a political conjuncture that is much more structural in the context of a

country where nothing but the adolescents' 'exploitation as unstable labourers is conscientiously planned'.³⁶ As we will see, the word 'dispositive' also plays a role in how the camera was used in the network for autistic children.

Deligny took a materialist stance—he was reading Makarenko during this period, but also Lenin (*Materialism and Empirio-criticism*), and his interlocutors were members of the Communist Party—and the dispositive aimed at a transformation that was indissociable from the development of a sort of class consciousness, self-reflection, and growing awareness. But a process of transformation such as that which Deligny sought with the dispositive needed to be anchored in a collective practice: the film.

'The Camera, a Pedagogical Tool' gives hints of at least three different film projects: (1) in the Vercors region, fifteen adolescents, along with two survivors of the Resistance, shoot traces of the Maquis from the Second World War; (2) the adolescents shoot what they see from their original social milieu and consider how their perception has changed after spending some time 'elsewhere', in a new 'living regime'; (3) they put together different sequences in order to form something that could constitute a 'unified memory' of La Grande Cordée collectivity. Other projects would be developed in the following years, but none would be completed. These projects were conceived to be more or less self-managed, with the adolescents alternating between the different aspects of film production and technical apprenticeship (handling the camera, loading film, cutting, scriptwriting, acting, etc.). They learnt these aspects of filmmaking progressively and in cooperation, the most experienced adolescents generally teaching the new ones. The pedagogical potential of the camera was thus in allowing individuals to work together to resolve tensions and problems that appeared during the production and realisation of the film.

It is again interesting to note the particular stance Deligny took. Like many of his contemporaries, he acknowledged both the 'omnipresence of modern techniques of dissemination'³⁷ and the 'latent danger' of images. This danger was related to the fact that 'film gives an initial impression of reality directly reproduced—a reality extracted from natural reality'.³⁸ But Deligny differed from his contemporaries in that he imagined a sort of *cine-pharmakon*. His position, echoing Marxist theses, was that individuals who learn to master the technique and understand how the filmic object is produced will be in a better position to resist alienation. Deligny viewed, at least during this period, cinema as a language, with its rules and usages, and said of the adolescents in La Grande Cordée: 'They can only truly know this if they try the "language" out themselves in order to perceive it without becoming spellbound by it'.³⁹ In this sense, cinema represented for Deligny both the danger of alienation as the result of the magical power of images and the solution if it was practised.⁴⁰

Deligny held that the film as a *work in common* could synthesise the materialisation of the individual project with the memory of the collectivity, reunifying a group that was dispersed in several trial placements and that for this reason did not 'lend itself

well to the establishment of customs and traditions that, via attitudes, transmit the collective experience from individual to individual'.⁴¹ He felt the film should produce this aimed-at unity through the scattered stories and lived experiences of the group members; that it should become, if we take Vertov's words, a sort of 'montage of life itself'.⁴²

This montage of life, this memory of the collectivity, was conceived as an indefinite, on-going process—or rather, as a 'permanent one'. Indeed, Deligny's project appears inside an interesting dialectics of two statements: the *film to come* (or, following his own expression, the *film à faire*,⁴³ 'to be made') and 'permanent cinema'.⁴⁴ These two statements inscribe Deligny's political project in a very experimental and speculative field. The project is thus a question of a permanent film to come, one that elaborates itself and evolves from day to day, according to its own precarity; in a sense, we could regard it as 'imperfect cinema'.⁴⁵ Such ideas emphasise the process of making and, once again, the materiality of the tool—the camera, even when used 'without film',⁴⁶ structures and sets up pedagogical action and installs the milieu *there*, where it is wielded. The camera is primarily responsible for establishing a new form of mediation between the members of the group and installing a scene and milieu.⁴⁷

Minor Gestures

'The Camera, a Pedagogical Tool' ends with the critique of a language whose 'small and big words' are too embedded in the 'hypocrisy of bourgeoisie morale'. At the end of 1957, Deligny would meet Yves Guignard, a 'severely retarded' adolescent with psychotic traits. Yves's parents had entrusted him to Deligny's care and their encounter marked the beginning of an important turning point in Deligny's reflection, practice, and writing, one that would only be fully realised when, several years later, he met Janmari and they moved to the Cévennes. Both language and image would start to become central nodal points in his speculative work.

As already indicated, none of the film projects that Deligny began during the period of La Grande Cordée were finished. More than a decade would pass before the first cinematographic work, *The Slightest Gesture*, would be completed. The film we know today is the result of a long process. The first stage entailed shooting, which largely took place between 1962 and 1965 in the Cévennes region, though other scenes were shot at La Borde clinic. During this time, Deligny also made some attempts at cutting the film. José Manenti was responsible for wielding the 16 mm Paillard camera and shooting the images; Guy Aubert—an orphan who had been integrated into the Grande Cordée group years before—recorded the heart of the film's 'musical material', i.e., Yves's delirious speeches, in the evenings;⁴⁸ Any Durand wrote a simple script and also appeared in the movie; Deligny organised drawing and language development sessions with Yves, followed shooting from a peripheral

position, and sometimes gave the adolescent suggestions about what he might do on camera. The second stage was that of montage, which took place years later, between 1968 and 1970, and was carried out by Jean-Pierre Daniel with the support and advice of Chris Marker.⁴⁹ It also involved the fundamental soundtrack work by Aimé Agnel and sound engineer Jean-Pierre Ruh, who mixed Yves's speeches with sounds from the Cévennes landscape, the stock market, and street demonstrations. The final cut generated a very powerful disjunction between sound and image, transforming the speech into an uncontrollable flow of words that traverses the film. This element was crucial for Deligny, and corresponded with his proposition of a discourse that would not belong to a single subject even though there was a subject who 'took the floor' and pronounced the words.⁵⁰

One could of course think here of Deleuze's interpretation of Pier Paolo Pasolini's reflection on free indirect speech—or, as he puts it, the way modern cinema is characterised by 'breaking with uniformity on the interior monologue to replace it by the diversity, the deformity, the otherness of a free indirect discourse'.⁵¹ Indeed, *The Slightest Gesture* works with this disruption by creating a discontinuity between image and speech, which it takes even further by linking the non-stop flow of human speech to different non-human sounds, by breaking the unity between the discourse and that of the interior monologue. Yves is not a 'subject of enunciation', but he emerges from within 'his' discourse. He takes over things he has heard on the radio or that were said by a neighbour, from De Gaulle's discourses to prayers. But by breaking the supposed unity of the discourse, Deligny aims at emphasising the 'speech that makes us what we are [...] and that reigns, universal, historical, demonstrative, zany, deadly'.⁵² Written in the Cévennes in 1971, 'He's Still One of Us' already showed evidence of a concept that would later be central to Deligny's thought: the 'deadly', *meurtrière*, dimension of speech, especially when it exercises its totalising power of speaking (for) the other. The text was published that year and resonates with its context. For example, one could consider Jean-Pierre Faye's *Langage totalitaires* (1972), and the discursive and narrative method of analysis he proposes not of 'what men say but in order to pay attention to the figures that describe the *circulation* of words'.⁵³ Faye's method serves as a means to identify how the deadly words and syntactic chains that constitute fascist language are disseminated.

With *The Slightest Gesture*, what was previously a pedagogical tool first came to be perceived as a clinical tool of sorts, one that could help establish a link and mediate between Yves and Manenti–Deligny. For three years, they followed him, filming his erratic gestures, movements, and wanderings across the Cévennes landscape. They did not have many rolls of film, the shots were taken once, the 'scenes' were not repeated, and the film seemed to evolve rather spontaneously; it was constantly reinvented as a result of the spaces they were in and the relationship established between Yves and the objects, people, and situations he encountered. In this sense, the main material of the film is precisely Yves's body in contact with the things he finds in his driftings;

it is the experimentation of his singular body in space and in touch with stones, rivers, trees, construction sites and their machines, villages and their inhabitants. What appears in the film is Yves's infinitely small world and the way his gestures are triggered by different things; the quality and repetition of these gestures. There is an interpenetration between his body, his perception, and the things in the space and his psyche—a sort of commonality of things that is explored throughout the movie and presented to the viewer.



Image from the shooting of *The Slightest Gesture*.

I would claim that Daniel's approach to montage involved using certain images as 'motifs'; these would come to punctuate and give rhythm to the simple narrative. I think in particular of several images of holes in walls—which in a sense translate both the question of a 'fractured' (or 'dismantled') body and that of the autistic and 'holed' image; of houses in ruins without roofs—which one could associate with Sigmund Freud's definition of psychosis, i.e., an 'unconscious open to the sky';⁵⁴ of Yves's relentless attempts to tie his shoelaces or unknot ropes—which resonate with an idea later developed by Deligny of 'endless' gestures; of a sort of 'infinite acting' characteristic of autistic children or of persons non-inscribed in the discourse. Of course, none of this is intentionally presented as such by Daniel, but, through montage, he found ways of expressing many of Deligny's preoccupations, which would later become central in his work with autistic children.

In his writings, Deligny frequently returned to *The Slightest Gesture*, commenting on it, and occasionally criticising Daniel's cut by calling into question whether it was radical enough, as he does, for example, in 'Miscreating', where he emphasises that

more time devoted to Yves's attempts at tying knots was needed. Despite Deligny's regrets, there is no doubt that the movie remains a sort of paradigmatic object of what could be considered his cinematographic conception.

Furthermore, the movie accomplishes something that had been germinating since *La Grande Cordée*: it is the result of a real collective process, one which makes it very difficult to identify the author—is it Manenti? Daniel? Deligny? Yves?; a process based on a certain economy, simplicity, 'poverty' of resources. Deligny's position on this poverty is related in part to his resistance to the commercial, technological, and spectacle-based cinematographic model. But he also believes that a 'poverty' of resources constitutes the necessary means to open breaches in the director's field of intentionality, and can create a space where coincidence and unpredictability can occur. Against the representation of model-bodies, of certain normative types of affectivity and behaviour, Deligny felt that chance could constitute the principle of a practice capable of interrupting anticipation and pre-given signification. I will return to these subjects later, but for now, I want to emphasise that far from the idea of representing Yves, *The Slightest Gesture* takes a completely different track: by making it possible to perceive his gestures, attitudes, corporality, it aims at revealing his particular body, his 'way of being', his singular *mode of existence*.

The Slightest Gesture is the story of these odd gestures, which one might feel lack something, and in which the link between a certain action and the one that would 'naturally' follow is broken. From the perspective of 'normality', these gestures may appear unfinished, without reason or aim. And it is precisely to contradict this perspective, to show its limitation, that the movie focuses on these *minor* gestures.

The Other Gravity: Deligny's Anthropological Position

Deligny's late reflection on the image and cinema cannot be separated from the work carried out by the network for mute autistic children he established in the Cévennes in the summer of 1967. The Cévennes attempt was not founded on principles of a healing treatment or cure, and Deligny constantly dismisses such terms in his discourse. Certainly, it involved a clinical process of sorts, but one that was completely diluted in ordinary tasks such as taking care of the space, farming, bread production, etc. Along with these tasks, special attention was given to space and to the placement of objects in it, as well as to the precise organisation of schedules for what had to be done—what Deligny calls 'the customary'. In this sense, the various living spaces in the network were really thought of as installations where everything had its time and place. Each living area generally housed one to three adults, as well as between two and six autistic children. The network was most active during the 1970s, when for a time it consisted of seven different living areas, housed around ten children on a permanent basis, and hosted as many as thirty or forty during the summer.

For Deligny, the main problem concerning autistic individuals was the standard psychiatric approach at the time, which expected them to be, become, and behave exactly like those we consider 'normal'. That is why, through a particular rhetoric, Deligny prefers to think of autistic children not as 'abnormal' or 'handicapped', but as manifesting another 'mode of being' (*mode d'être*), belonging to another 'structure', living under 'another gravity'. Thus, he proposes we learn the conditions and circumstances in which these children can live well and exercise their own 'normativity'.⁵⁵

Deligny refuses to follow the path of comparison—to compare autistic mute children to speaking subjects. Nor does he take that of analogy; that is, of translating the children's absence of speech into a form that could replace this 'gap' in order to make them efficient, or that constitutes some capacity analogous to this 'absence', 'privation', or 'lack' of speech.⁵⁶ For this reason, Deligny puts forth a very interesting notion of the 'human', conceptualised through its plasticity and 'diversity of forms'.⁵⁷ With it, he proposes that the mute autistic children living in the network be regarded as individuals that are a different actualisation of the 'human'. In his system of thought, the notion of the 'human' is placed in opposition to that of the 'Man-that-we-are'. The latter emphasises the fact that every attempt to define 'Man' is limited, always situated in a specific place, time, and context, and a narcissistic projection of oneself, of what one considers to be similar. It is in this projection that a process Deligny calls *semblabilisation*, 'similarisation', takes place. The neologism names the assimilation that occurs when one takes the other to be alike or similar to oneself.⁵⁸ Through 'similarisation', one tends to project one's own image onto the other, wanting the other to be like oneself. And, as he remarks, speech is indeed the primary force enabling one to proceed in this manner: speaking is a way to assimilate, to colonise, the other.⁵⁹

That is why, according to Deligny, the most dangerous mistake one can make when dealing with autistic children is to compare them to or regard them as 'subjects'—if one understands the subject to be an individual inscribed in the discourse, structured by signifying speech. What may seem a humanistic, well-intentioned position—that of considering the other as a subject, a similar being—in fact conceals a violent form of assimilation, a forced and brutal operation of inclusion. From a practical, clinical, ethical, but also aesthetic perspective, this critical position has consequences. Deligny notes that as autistic mute children are not able to speak, they do not organise and represent the world as speaking subjects do; they do not live in a properly signifying dimension and the modes they develop to establish relations with the world thus function according to radically different forms.

In order to avoid 'similarisation', Deligny adopts the position of insisting on the transformation of oneself—the 'normal' speaking subject—rather than that of the autistic child. We can affirm, for this reason, that his position is anthropological rather than psychiatric. He claims in his 1975 book, *Nous et l'Innocent (Us and the Innocent)*,

that ‘each individual is the first, a human, no more, no less than the very first humans that opened the way to this species’.⁶⁰ He thus underlines the perfectibility and the incomparability of each individual. That is why the ‘attempt’ is structured as a sort of perspectival principle: ‘What was at stake this time was to look at language from the “position” of a mute child as it is possible to look at justice from the window of a delinquent child’.⁶¹ Or, as he puts it in a letter to Althusser: ‘What is the object of our practice? This or that psychotic child? Certainly not. The real object that is to be transformed is “us”, “us, there”, close to these “subjects” that strictly speaking are hardly subjects’.⁶²

It is in this context, in 1969, that ‘cartography’ first appeared as a tool of experimentation in the network. Unsure how to deal with the children’s crises, Deligny suggested that the ‘close presences’—the non-professional speaking adults who resided with the autistic children in the network’s various living areas—retreat from action, from direct intervention in their behaviours. Instead of actively doing something, he proposed that they back away and ‘trace’ the children’s movements, wanderings, and gestures in space. In a sense, the maps’ appearance in the network was related first to a clinical strategy to ‘distract’ the close presences and put them in another state of presence and ‘observation’. Isaac Joseph, the sociologist and key Deligny collaborator, put it precisely when he described the maps as a tool to control the ‘therapeutic anxiety’ experienced by the close presences.⁶³

‘Map’ and ‘cartography’ are in fact wide-ranging categories that englobe the different drawings traced by the close presences. There are maps of gestures and movements, of objects, a small room, a large territory; some describe a specific event, others series of actions. Usually they concern one child, but they can also describe several individuals in a specific space. They are often diachronic, so that we see several actions in the space, but they also frequently have a narrative. The maps are different sizes and formats and were made in function of the available material. Often a base map was first traced and then over it, on a superposed piece of carbon paper, the lines that described the movements, so that one could see the different layers of time, space, and the ‘common’, collective, progression. Deligny specifies the movements of the autistic children with the term *lignes d’erre*, often translated as ‘wander lines’, despite the fact that *erre* evokes instead the movement of a ship when it ceases to be mechanically propelled.⁶⁴ Indeed, the term *erre* reveals a good deal about both the close presences’ attitude—of not directing, or guiding, the children’s behaviour—and the children’s movements, which were certainly characterised by a wandering quality, but made possible because they were inscribed within a specific territory; *erre* also means ‘trace’, a ‘way of moving forward’ and is a homophone of *aire* (*aire de séjour*, ‘living area’).⁶⁵

If the maps first appeared as a means of disrupting the therapeutic drive, they quickly became an important tool that helped the close presences install the space—that is, position themselves in it, perceive things they would not have without these apparatuses, and constantly rearrange them. The cartographies played another role as what could be considered an art of memory, enabling the close presences to remember where each item belonged—which was important clinically in that it helped organise the space and ease the children’s crises.⁶⁶ In this sense, the installed spaces worked as therapeutic machines of sorts, allowing the autistic children to organise their bodies and their perception. At the same time, they allowed the close presences to serve a certain function, one capable of mobilising the children’s attention, thus helping them unify their sensorial experiences, and become better able to act.

In order to serve this function, the close presences lived in a very ritualised manner. This can clearly be observed in the films, for example in *That Kid, There*. One sees the constancy and a certain aesthetics in the close presences’ gestures, the very precise rhythm imposed on daily tasks—even the simplest ones such as preparing a snack or washing the dishes—as if actions were choreographed and ‘adorned’.

It is interesting to note that if the space constituted a key element in the ‘clinical’ process, this was also because it enabled a more indirect approach to being with the children and a suspension of the knowledge assumed about them. The close presences mediated their relationships with the children and the ‘care’ they provided through the space. In *That Kid, There*, one sees precisely how there was very little ‘inter-subjectivity’ in the ordinary sense, very little in the way of a direct relationship between those staying in the living areas. In the film’s images, one often sees the close presences giving the impression of being absent or inattentive; in fact, an entirely different sort of ‘attention’ and listening is being developed—a type of attention akin to being ‘on standby’, a presence without being excessively present. The aim was to build this fragile dialectics of distance-closeness capable of both respecting the incommensurable distance of alterity and pursuing the effort of forging bonds—of accepting the distance and at the same time being closely present, creating a zone of proximity where the autistic child felt safe and was encouraged to act.⁶⁷

Camering

It is noteworthy that the hosting of autistic children and the daily activities in the network were accompanied by the colossal production of all sorts of documentation: journals, letters, photos, drawings, maps, texts, and films (video, super 8, 16, and 35 mm). This living archive aimed not at representing the children, but at multiplying perspectives. In the case of the cartography, it is important to mention that the multiple layers of the maps were aimed at an erasure of subjective identities, even at the impossibility of determining who was who in a certain territory: Was the trace that of

a speaking subject or an autistic child? And, in each case, which individual among the many living there? The layers also made it impossible to discern who traced the map and who ‘performed’ the actions in the territory.⁶⁸ In this sense, these different forms of documentation certainly involved an observational component, but they were not conceived of as instruments to produce a positive theory on autism or psychosis. Rather, they were meant to suspend the supposed neutral exterior of psychiatric and diagnostic knowledge on ‘abnormal’ individuals. They constituted ‘reflexive’ tools used in a very specific situation and were aimed at completely disrupting the usual forms of representation. Reflexivity and multiple archiving are thus to be considered inside a collective practice of ‘perspectivism’, of the invention of a world—something that always implies a degree of fiction, though a fiction does not produce something that is ‘fictive’.⁶⁹ This practice was indissociable from the aimed-at transformation of this ‘us, there’, as Deligny mentioned to Althusser.



Jacques Lin with Marie Pierre in the Network.

Deligny occupied an interesting and ambiguous place in the network. On the one hand, he did not produce these different documents; he did not move between the living area he resided in (Graniers) and the others in the network; and the different close presences had the complete freedom to carry out their everyday lives and experiment in their areas as they saw fit. On the other hand, Deligny was undoubtedly the ‘storyteller’,⁷⁰ the person who conceptualised and proposed the different *dispositives*, and the nodal point and mediator between the living areas—which did not communicate much among themselves but directly with him—as well as between the inner world of the network and external work. This explains the very intricate and collaborative nature of what took place in the network and gave it its specificity. Deligny was completely dependent on the remarkably inventive work of the close presences and the material they produced—this is precisely what constituted the subject matter of his storytelling—while they were dependent on his ideas and proposals to keep working and inventing. Publications such as the three *Cahiers de l’Immuable* (*The Notebooks of the Immutable*) clearly evidence the complex entanglement and collaborative form of work developed there.⁷¹ And as for Deligny’s own texts, they also constitute a multiplicity of sorts: they consist of conceptual, speculative, and poetic works, letters, fictions (scripts, plays, novels, stories), biographic texts, and numerous pieces that mix these diverse genres.

At the end of the 1970s, when the cartographic practice began to fade away before it was completely abandoned in around 1980, the use of the camera—which had persisted as a tool from the start—became even more central in the network and started to occupy a dominant place in Deligny’s reflections.

Cameras were regularly wielded in the network for different purposes. First, as a means of documenting the children’s activities, very often in super 8 format, the result of which was destined mainly for their families. This close collaboration with the children’s families was indeed an important characteristic of the network and followed a principle of ‘transmission’: the aim was that the majority of the children return to their original living milieus and homes, and that there, the families adapt the techniques, the ‘therapeutic machines’, that had been developed with each child in the network and had been proven favourable.

Second, shooting was a parallel practice to cartography, one that accompanied the daily activities, but that was not exactly destined for the children’s parents. Over the years, Jacques Lin, in particular, produced a large amount of material—including frame-by-frame short animation works, such as *Les fossiles ont la vie dure* (1994), which shares its title with one of the texts included in this volume (‘Fossils Have a Hard Life: Apropos of the Image’). Lin continued to shoot even after Deligny’s death.⁷²



Animation sequence shot by Jacques Lin with a 35 mm camera, around 1982.



Gilles T. in the animation studio installed by Jacques Lin in the living area at Montplaisir, Monoblet, during shooting of the animated film *Les fossils ont la vie dure* (*Fossils Have a Hard Life*) in 1994.

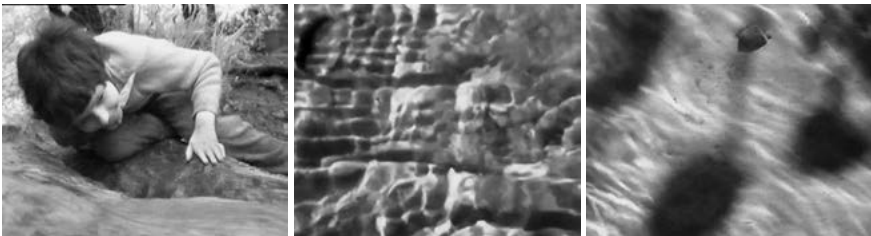
Third, cameras were used to shoot the more consequential productions that played a role in giving the network visibility and presenting its experimental position, both clinically and ethically. *That Kid, There* (1975), in particular, which was directed by Renaud Victor and co-produced by Truffaut (*Les Films du Carrosse*), had a relatively large circulation and was often screened in clinical, educational, and cinephile contexts. This was also the case with *Projet N* [*Project U*, 1979 ('N' for 'Nous', 'Us')], which was directed by Alain Cazuc and produced by Thierry Garrel and the INA (French National Audiovisual Institute). These two documentaries took entirely different approaches to presenting life in the network: the first is black and white, very much a silent film,⁷³ and offers a sober, almost monastic, atmosphere; the second is colourful, and shows a more collective and even 'hippie' atmosphere. But the films have in common a preoccupation with presenting the very unique way of life in the network and are traversed by Deligny's poetic storytelling and reflections. Furthermore, both directors lived in the network for periods—they were part of it and not outsiders there solely to document it from an external perspective. In the years that followed, Victor became Deligny's main interlocutor when it came to cinema. With him, Deligny developed a sort of Socratic relationship and discussed movies,⁷⁴ concepts on the image, and film projects—among them several fictional works that were never finished;⁷⁵ Victor is the primary 'image taker', the virtual interlocutor mentioned in several texts published in this volume, some of which are even addressed to him. A few of these fictional projects were incorporated into the 1989 film *Fernand Deligny. À propos d'un film à faire* (*Fernand Deligny. About a film to make*), directed by Victor and co-produced by Bruno Muel⁷⁶—the work was indeed a sort of conceptual *film to come*, mixing shots of these projects, a few scenes that had been staged, and

Deligny's readings and reflections on the image. Also of note is *Le faire et l'agir* (1979), directed by his daughter Caroline Deligny, and cut by a group of people associated with the University of Lyon. Unfortunately, its circulation was very limited. It was filmed with a Paluche video camera, which had recently been invented by Jean-Pierre Beauviala—and which would be used for example by Claude Lanzmann in his *Shoah*. Since the camera was very small, held by hand, and enabled a dissociation between the eye and the hand, entirely new perspectives were possible; Caroline Deligny, who spent some time in the network between 1977 and 1979, shot many hours of impressive and very sensitive images of the children, living areas, and elements of the landscape, particularly the water.



Gisèle Durand-Ruiz and Janmari during the shooting of *Project U*, directed by Alain Cazuc, 1978.

The turning point in Deligny's reflection in the late 1970s coincides with the first known occurrence of the neologism *camérer*, an infinitive in French,⁷⁷ which was precisely when Deligny's daughter began shooting with the Paluche. The term is the title of a series of texts, as was mentioned earlier, but is also used conceptually in many other pieces and in explicative remarks in the scripts. The use of the infinitive form—often translated as the gerund, 'camering', in this volume—recurs throughout Deligny's texts. It takes inspiration in the autistic children's form of 'acting' (*agir*), thus emphasising the action that is non-subjective and endless—in its double connotation of 'without goals' and 'ceaseless'. With 'camering', it is the cinema as a process that is highlighted: 'I maintain that camering doesn't come to an end and it's perhaps here that it differs from filming'.⁷⁸ Furthermore, as Deligny did twenty years prior in 'The Camera, a Pedagogical Tool', here he once again emphasises the tool—the camera—instead of the primacy of the object, the film. He believed that the camera should not be regarded mainly as an instrument that produced a finished object and he sought to demonstrate that the camera could 'make something quite different from a film'.⁷⁹ Indeed, most of his definitions of 'camering' are negative. In 'Miscreating', he emphasises that camering is an attempt 'to avoid intention' or that it is the 'the surfeit of intention', and that this requires 'a strange rigour that can't be intentional'.⁸⁰ If one wants to search for more positive definitions, one must look to the purpose of camering, its connection to the ideas of 'gathering' (*recueillir*) or 'catching' (*attraper*) images. From these provocative reflections, it follows, then, that the aim of camering is to achieve what Deligny feels the traditional form of filming seems generally incapable of, i.e., taking images.



Images shot by Caroline Deligny with the Paluche Camera in the network, 1978-1979.

As we will see in detail, Deligny's reflection on camering is indissociable from his reconceptualisation of the notion of the 'image'. His proposition is to think of the image as being outside the reign of intentionality and subjectivity. For him, images can only appear 'by accident': they require a well-placed camera, and only then is it possible to gather them. That is why, beginning in 'Fossils Have a Hard Life: Apropos of the Image', he refers to the 'image taker' rather than the director, filmmaker, or any other of the terms traditionally used.

‘Caming’ is thus to be read as a conceptual and speculative term related both to a gesture—a form of practising—and a horizon—of experimentation. Its formulation also implies a completely different temporality from that of conventional shooting, as in a sense, it is emancipated from the commercial timeframe of production. In one of the ‘Caming’ pieces, Deligny associates the term with ‘natural history’, claiming to ‘dream of camering the path of an iceberg and its thaw and the succession of changes in its appearance [...] The event camered in real time, weeks would be needed to render it, to reproduce it; permanent cinema. Nothing but the iceberg on the screen for weeks’.⁸¹ We saw that the idea of a ‘permanent film’ was already present during La Grande Cordée period. Here, however, it is the extended temporality of shooting that is emphasised—in a similar manner to that in Andy Warhol’s early experimental films, such as *Sleep* (1964) and, in particular, *Empire* (1964).

In more practical terms, Deligny thus seems to think about cinema not through the goal (the film-product), but through its experimental dimension, where both time and integration into a specific space constitute its fundamental features. As with the living areas that hosted the autistic children, ‘caming’ requires that a ‘customary’ space be set up, one in which the camera becomes an integrated element of the installation, and is then capable of capturing images of the gestures, wanderings, moving bodies. Turning away from images that might signify or represent something—even if, in a sense, the aim is still to document (for example, Yves’s gestures in *The Slightest Gesture* or those of Janmari in *That Kid, There*)—Deligny looks beyond the traditional documentary model for something that, from his perspective, could avoid forms of discursivity that *say* who the other is (that label, categorise, identify, signify); something that remains surprising and unknown; something open to the presence of materials, bodies, and gestures. In ‘What Is Not Seen (by the Self)’, a text that appeared several years later in *Cahiers du cinéma* (1990) and is included in this volume,⁸² Deligny defines the practice as ‘ultra customary’, as being both fiction and documentary, or, at the same time, neither: ‘It’s a genuine documentary. And for good reason: You can’t get Janmari to do anything other than what he does every day. One couldn’t make more of a documentary than that. And it makes the film a fictional work because folks have never experienced anything like it. It’s neither documentary, nor fiction; it’s the customary, this customary being so real that it surprises.’⁸³

He felt that ultra-customary cinema would make visible what one is not used to, what perhaps remains unknown. Its function, I could add, is to ‘puncture’ representation. This theme runs through many of the texts in this volume. In ‘Miscreating’, Deligny insists on the ‘disappointing’ rather than the ‘fulfilling’ aspect of art, on the necessity of going beyond the ‘mirage, each of us mirrored in it’, of opening a ‘breach whereby the human—that people are not at all conscious of—takes forms’.⁸⁴ And later, in the same text, he claims that ‘it’s a matter of putting out a new carbon copy of the same people as always, the viewer content as can be at recognising themselves just as they were taught they are.’⁸⁵ Deligny’s proposition is inscribed in

a tradition of critiquing the film as an object of consumption.⁸⁶ With such film-objects, a subject is impelled to watch images that only project what is already known: ways of behaving, of feeling, of being in the world. The imagination is reactivated by objects that it already possesses. The subject accesses recognition-images, ‘carbon copy’ images (*copie conforme*, he writes, as in the title of one of Abbas Kiarostami’s last films), which somehow confirm their convictions—and the diversity of human life forms is thus reduced to the one already-known vision of Mankind. In ‘Miscreating’, he insists: ‘the film [is] a finished product destined to be delivered to the other’s gaze, the other projecting their influence on the images to be taken, the sequences always/ already taken in that inevitable cadastre of measured time, the representation always/ already there, inevitable, in all that presented itself in the camera’s frame.’⁸⁷

This circular process of recognition and (re)production is at the very core of the narcissistic structure of subjectivity. That is why Deligny constantly emphasises the use of reflexive pronouns—something difficult to transpose into English—which is apparent in the original title of the 1990 text: *Ce qui ne se voit pas*. Something cannot be seen, in the first place, because of the all-encompassing presence of the subject (of the *se*, the ‘self’)—or rather, we should add, of a dominant, normalised, and major form of subjectivity that makes one say, for example, that an autistic child is deprived of ‘normality’. Following his reasoning, subjects ‘don’t see anything’ and in total opposition to this state of affairs, ‘the task of cinema’, the ‘urgency of cinema is this: to revive that which among them is numbed, dazed, squandered, overnourished’.⁸⁸

In ‘Camerling’ (1982), the same questions appear in different formulations. Deligny takes over from Jean Epstein, a crucial theoretical and cinematographic reference for him, to think about this task, and relates it to the “‘revolutionary power” of cinema’, to its capacity as ‘a privileged instrument that, like the telescope or the microscope, reveals aspects of the universe that were previously unknown’.⁸⁹ Contrary to filming, which shows known images that say what a person’s body or gestures should be like, the aim of camering, Deligny feels, is to reveal something that has remained unknown because it is undermined by our general and established perception. Epstein praised the importance of chance, of coincidence, and argued that cinema was capable of producing a ‘geography of gestures’.⁹⁰ In this geography, it was not the recognition of a certain gesture that he searched for, but rather stupefaction, and the oddness or uncanny nature of an unknown gesture. For Epstein, a certain use of the camera, of this ‘eye outside the eye’, would allow us to finally escape ‘the tyranny of our egocentric and personal vision’.⁹¹ This formulation matches up with a statement made by Deligny, in which he writes ‘this other retina perceiving with another eye’.⁹²

Indeed, Deligny often mentions the importance of chance in camering. In ‘The Alga and the Fungus’, a text on the collaborative relationship between he who writes and he who takes images—in French, *l’écrivain* (‘the writor’) and *le camérant* (‘the cameror’), the use of the present participle again emphasising the processual dimension of the act—Deligny discusses shooting with the latter, Renaud Victor, and says: ‘Treat

chance as you do the light: with the utmost respect and even a bit of fear.⁹³ If the 'writor' plays with words, the 'cameror' plays with the material of chance rather than that of image. In this sense, camering, as a practice willing to escape intentionality and self-reproduction, implies a *dispositive*, something that counters the director's drive of anticipating what they want to see and shoot, that helps them 'disintentionalising'.⁹⁴ That is why 'camering' involves the setting-up of a 'shooting area' (*aire de tournage*), a 'shooting dispositive' (*dispositif de tournage*),⁹⁵ that is integrated into customary life and enables, through its persistence, the shooting of unexpected, unanticipated images. For the same reason, Deligny prefers the word 'canvas' to that of script, as he describes in 'Fossils Have a Hard Life: Apropos of the Image'. He writes that one must create canvases 'that will lend themselves to coincidences'.⁹⁶ Different from a very defined playscript, the *canovaccio* in the *commedia dell'arte* is a support for improvisation, for the setting-up of situations. In French, the use of the term *canevas* in cinema is not unique to Deligny, but he takes it over precisely to emphasise this openness and its opposition to closed, intentional, and prescribed forms of scripts. He adds that the *canevas* does not constitute a perfect form, as it should be 'coarse' and full of 'holes'.⁹⁷ The holes constitute the favourable milieu that allows images to 'come through'.

Point of Seeing

These reflections and Deligny's insistence on the camera's potential can surely be misleading. However, it is noteworthy that he does not naively assume that the supposed objectivity of the camera will override the director's subjectivity, nor that the camera will enable a supposed total visibility.⁹⁸ His reflections are in fact very distant from models of permanent surveillance where observing-documenting takes place from the exterior. On the one hand, Deligny's proposition targets the personal point of view of the subject behind the camera, and the dangers of self-reproduction and self-projection; on the other hand, and this is crucial to understanding his position, he insists on the importance of the camera being *there*, operating within the living milieu as an integrated and customary element. The camera does not simply observe; it helps build the milieu from within. He writes that this 'entails the camera being *there* to so great an extent that it's the camerographer and their intentions and their point of view that fade before the point of seeing'.⁹⁹ It is not so much a question of recording as it is of keeping records, traces, documentation that, as already mentioned, aim at a multiplication of perspectives. This is what makes Deligny's notion of the 'point of seeing' (*point de voir*, in opposition to *point de vue*, 'point of view') so intriguing and a critical tool against the dangers of reducing reality to a single personal perspective. The point of seeing always concerns what is marginalised, what is 'refractory' to the dominant and conventional forms imposed by society.¹⁰⁰

Though the notion first appeared in Deligny's vocabulary in 1976, it was in part developed and inspired by his exchanges with Robert Kramer, who visited him in the Cévennes in 1979. In a letter to Deligny, Kramer expresses his concern about 'camering' and the idea of 'an omniscient eye-camera' that would ideologically obliterate the 'subjectivity of the camera' and the fact that there is always a 'point of view'.¹⁰¹ But in his response to Kramer, Deligny sticks to his position, and introduces a eulogy to the 'artifice' to help 'thwart the drive to represent oneself', which is important to counteract the effects of the 'dominant ideology'.¹⁰² Also in his preparation notes for 'Miscreating', he argues that the 'artifice' makes it possible 'to glimpse the Real'.¹⁰³ As he often does in the texts written during this period, Deligny uses the Lacanian notion of the Real to refer to that which is outside the symbolic, the discourse, and thus resists attempts at signification. Following his argumentation, the dominant ideology has (a) language and the Real appears as what breaches this ideology, firstly, because it escapes language. Deligny's preoccupation here is, as always, to break with the usual representations of autism. To exemplify what he understands by 'artifice', he then describes how the camera can perceive a seed of wheat growing—time-lapse allows us to see what the human eye otherwise could not—and he asks if other artifices would not also be useful in exploring the human. The core of his argumentation is, once again, the following: 'It is necessary to leave our point of view, which is somewhat unanimous, in order to find a point of seeing, this point of seeing not being someone's. Hence the necessity of the artifice that will enable us to break, at least a little, the pact on which is based the man conscious of himself and through which this universal connivance is established'.¹⁰⁴

The notion of a point of seeing is thus indissociable from an ethical horizon—Deligny takes the word 'ethics' from Wittgenstein and it becomes even more central in 'The Distinctiveness of the IMAGES'—i.e., from the struggle against the universalisation of established conventions and the dominant ideology that determines how one is or should be. The invention of artifices that enable detours appear to Deligny as strategic forms to foil the inevitable reproductive dimension of the subjective gaze, to foil its 'convention arsenal'.¹⁰⁵

Image(s)

For Deligny, a director is not truly concerned with the practice of image-taking if they pre-imagine their shots to too great an extent. Dazed by their own point of view, they remain in a state of auto-reproduction where the other always appears similar to them, a mere mirrored projection. For the image, as Deligny wants to conceptualise it, cannot be anticipated; on the contrary, the image is that which interrupts the subject's imagination. That is the reason behind the provocative statement he made in 1990; despite everything, he claims, 'We don't live in the age of the image', but instead in the era of 'verbalised reproduction'.¹⁰⁶

The image as Deligny regards it is related to the Real and should evacuate the excess of subjectivism. It should at least be capable of ‘stranging’ the subject. In French, Deligny uses the infinitive form of the verb *étranger*. In English, the infinitive ‘to strange’, which is obsolete today, comes from the Latin *extraneus*, ‘that which is on the outside’. The image, as conceptualised here, is precisely what comes from outside, what is unknown, uncanny, and strikes the interiority of the subject, their language, and their convictions.

When speculating on the image, Deligny makes a coupled conceptual distinction. On the one hand, some images are a reproduction of oneself and thus of a certain conception of Man, i.e., mirror, monumental, or, as he brilliantly puts it in ‘Fossils Have a Hard Life: Apropos of the Image’, ‘iconic’ images: ‘the Man that we are has an image of himself, as it were, and this image is not distinctly speaking an image, but imagery, the product of naturalisation; Man is his own icon—the icon is incorporated’.¹⁰⁷ On the other hand, there exist images that are scraps (*lambeaux*) or full of ‘holes’:¹⁰⁸ ‘images don’t represent anything at all. That’s why they’re images; they themselves have no signification. Anyone who says sign, says code; you might as well tell wild geese to respect the Highway Code or the Air Traffic Code’.¹⁰⁹ Deligny relates these images both to the notion of the ‘trace’—in opposition to that of the ‘sign’, since they do not signify anything—and to ‘stirrings’—to the power they have of moving the spectator. In French, Deligny prefers the word *émoi* to dissociate it from its subjective and psychological dimensions, in a way that is close to Deleuze’s use of the word ‘affect’—one can speak of the *émoi* of bees or leaves, for example. In *Acheminement vers l’image* (*On the Way to the Image*), a text contemporary to ‘Fossils Have a Hard Life: Apropos of the Image’, Deligny further develops the motif of the wild geese in order to make a new, but analogous, distinction between ‘domesticated’ and ‘consumable’ images, on one side, and ‘wild’ or ‘savage’ images, on the other. Whereas the first are ‘weighed down with meaning, symbolically fat, saturated with intensions’, the latter appear again as speechless, empty of meaning, but capable of flying, and of interrupting recognition. ‘The images cannot be imagined. [...] The imagined images are domesticated and they don’t fly very far’.¹¹⁰

Here Deligny criticises a form of imagination that works by analogy and through associations that are always limited to one’s own subjective repertoire. His struggle is against the fetishisation of a supposedly free faculty of imagination. That is why images cannot be imagined—again, he makes use of the reflexive form, *les images ne s’imaginent pas*, because the ‘S’ of the subject, the self, is present to too great an extent. ‘As long as the image taker doesn’t leave the self, s, e, l, f . . . there will be no image.’¹¹¹

‘Camingering’ is an attempt to gather, to shoot, what escapes ‘us’. In *On the Way to the Image*, Deligny says that he may well be in search of lost images (*à la recherche des images perdues*, echoing of course Marcel Proust’s oeuvre)—in search of the images that disappeared during montage, or even those that were never shot, maybe those that are *inmontables*, as Marker put it.¹¹² In ‘Camingering’ (1978-1983), Deligny writes a

new eulogy, this time to the ‘leftovers’,¹¹³ to that which remains outside the director’s intentionality and ends up being left behind. It is a eulogy to those images that were forever lost, that could not be seen because so much of the self was there.¹¹⁴ In this sense, Deligny is against the iconic images that naturalise what Man is—and that by doing so ‘reject’ and ‘eliminate’ the real images, putting them *bors-champ*, ‘out of frame’;¹¹⁵ what he calls the ‘human’ in fact refers to a sort of image of the imageless. It is something concrete (a singular child and their gestures, for example) but that, not being similar to oneself, is not suited to any known image, and only appears in ephemeral, ‘meaningless’, leftover images. This is indeed the paradox inside which Deligny develops his speculation on the notion of the image.

The motif of wild geese also leads Deligny to a disanthropomorphisation of the notion of the image, to an affirmation that the image is ‘part of the animal kingdom’.¹¹⁶ The notion would in reality be species-specific and not at all a privilege of Man—in his writings, Deligny often refers to beavers, spiders, and termites, and to the specific images originating in a ‘memory of the species’¹¹⁷ that guide their complex architectural structures. According to him, and in a very Nietzschean tone,¹¹⁸ Man, with his ‘overnourished’, overloaded symbolic culture, should instead try to (re) learn to think in pictures, through images. There is of course no such thing as a return to a ‘first nature’—nor is it even a question of ‘first’ or ‘origin’ in Deligny’s texts. It is instead a question of acknowledging the intrinsic violence of civilising processes. Doing so involves the necessity to once again give space to everything Man has excluded from his framework of essential features that define himself and that are responsible for giving him a pre-eminent position above the rest of nature. In the centre of the civilising process, Deligny places speech itself. In the very epoch of *tout est langage* (‘everything is language’), he prepares his rebellion, and insists on the impossibility of universally defining the human even if it is through a diverse notion of the symbolic—he prepares what seems a sort of ‘goodbye to language’ (as the title of Jean-Luc Godard’s 2014 film also suggests), or at least to the unquestionable empire of symbolic, signifying, and verbal language.

Indeed, in the ‘The Distinctiveness of the IMAGES’, the text of an obsessed writer searching for the image until his last days, Deligny develops the ‘mode of thinking’ that is constituted by the image, and which cannot be said by, or reduced to, language. He now writes ‘IMAGES’, in capital letters, englobing in a certain sense all the qualities he has thus far attributed to the notion of the image: wild, autistic, scrap, sparkle, trace, fossil, beastly, hole, myriad. . . . He has Wittgenstein—‘our friend WITT’—as a virtual interlocutor and insists on the specificity, distinctiveness, and precariousness of the image that is always in danger of being hunted down and driven out again. It is necessary, according to him, to give ‘asylum’¹¹⁹ to the image.

Deligny’s late texts struggle with what would constitute the key and distinct aspects, *le propre*, of the image, and the fact that, paradoxically, he does not stop writing. And there is no resolution, no final decision, that puts an end to a struggle

such as this. Sometimes he claims that ‘[l]anguage doesn’t allow us to evoke IMAGES’; at other times, he accepts the existence of a poetic language capable of evoking it: ‘The image I evoke—the IMAGES [...]’.¹²⁰ Interestingly, many of his late texts take a new form: they are of a fragmentary nature, are constituted by short, enigmatic sentences, and make use of the aphorism, and even the haiku. In sum, he experiments with forms that might be more immediately pictorial.

The undecidable quality of Deligny’s writings is not unique to this period, but can be said of each of the texts included in this volume. Indeed, rather than offering a positive theory of the image or a cinematographic method, these texts, many of them highly speculative in nature, function to disorganise our structured convictions.

If Deligny’s system is often organised through coupled terms (image and language, human and man, gesture and speech . . .), it is precisely to resist binary thought. He is instead interested in the transitions from one pole to the other; he never assumes a synthesis, but rather invokes the interminable negotiation that takes place inside the ‘contradictory’, the ‘simultaneous presence of things’.¹²¹ Therefore, it is no coincidence that the motifs of ‘symbiosis’ and ‘lichen’ are so important to him. Indeed, they confirm a strategy of undecidability. They speak both to collaboration or association (and ‘not confusion’¹²²)—between writing and ‘imaging’/‘camering’, between word and image—and to a structural impurity of reality. This impurity implies the coexistence of different life forms and the care one must take not to exterminate the others.

Notes

- 1 This reception is due mainly to the work of L’Arachnéen, the Paris-based publishing house that published a massive volume of his *Ceuvres* in 2007 (and then reissued it in 2017), reuniting a collection of texts written over more than fifty years, accompanied by an important critical apparatus (ed. by Sandra Alvarez de Toledo). Since then, numerous volumes have been published and translated into various languages, in particular *L’Arachnéen et autres textes (The Arachnean and Other Texts)*, trans. into English by Drew S. Burk and Catherine Porter, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 2013) and the bilingual *Cartes et lignes d’erre / Maps and Wander Lines*, Paris, L’Arachnéen, 2013.
- 2 Stored and open to the public at the Institut Mémoires de l’édition contemporaine (IMEC) in Caen, France. I was responsible—along with Noelle Resende and Marina Vidal-Naquet—for the classification and organisation of Deligny’s written archives from his Cévennes period (1967–1996). An alternative and expanded version of this volume in French was put together by Sandra Alvarez de Toledo, Anaïs Masson, Marina Vidal-Naquet, and myself (Fernand Deligny, *Camérer. À propos d’images*, Paris, L’Arachnéen, 2021).
- 3 ‘For an *attempt* is closer to a work of art than to anything else’ (Fernand Deligny, ‘Card Taken and Map Traced’ (1979) in *The Arachnean and Other Texts*, *op. cit.*, p. 151); ‘an attempt is a political fact’ (‘Le Croire et le Craindre’ (1978), in *Ceuvres*, *op. cit.*, p. 1153, my translation).
- 4 ‘In 1944, I did indeed write that short book in which I spoke about the particular job [of educator]. But it is not mine’ (Fernand Deligny, ‘Le groupe et la demande: à propos de La Grande Cordée’ (1967) in *Ceuvres*, *op. cit.*, p. 425, my translation).
- 5 Fernand Deligny, *Lettres à un travailleur social* (1984–1985), Paris, L’Arachnéen, 2016, p. 76, my translation.
- 6 ‘Acheminement vers l’image’, in *Camérer. À propos d’images*, *op. cit.*, p. 220, a shorter version (which was first published in the *Ceuvres*) is available on the *Encontro Deligny* website, ed. by Maurício Rocha and Marlon Miguel, PUC-Rio, 2018, <https://deligny.jur.puc-rio.br/index.php/livros-e-publicacoes/>.
- 7 As for many of Deligny’s generation, his experiences of war and fascism are crucial to understanding his trajectory. His first affiliation with the Communist Party dates from 1933 and reflects the necessity he felt to join the anti-fascist movements.

- 8 *Enfance inadaptée*, in French. The term was coined in occupied Vichy France and aimed at the institutional structuring of policies regarding deviant, ‘abnormal’ children and adolescents. Deligny, along with figures such as Henri Wallon, Louis Le Guillant, and Lucien Bonnafé—all of whom had close ties with the Communist Party—played an important role in debates on the definition of the term, particularly in the immediate post-war period. Against a biological definition of maladjustment, they directed their efforts towards politicising the discussions and trying to demonstrate the sociological foundations of deviancy. For further reading, see the two fundamental works of Michel Chauvière, *Enfance inadaptée: l’héritage de Vichy*, Paris, Les éditions ouvrières, 1980; and Pierre-François Moreau, *Fernand Deligny et les idéologies de l’enfance*, Paris, Éditions Retz, 1978.
- 9 See also Robert Castel, *La gestion des risques*, Paris: Les éditions de Minuit, 2011. The question of why youth suddenly became so central an issue can in part be explained by the context—the need for physical strength during the war and later to rebuild the country. It can be described as a moment of discovery by State apparatuses that saw young people as constituting important ‘human capital’ and that considered it more affordable to readapt them and turn them into a profitable workforce than to confine them. This ‘discovery’, however, demanded technicity. An increasingly technocratic discourse would thus evolve in the decades following the emergence of the concept of *enfance inadaptée* until its replacement by that of ‘handicapped’.
- 10 Fernand Deligny, ‘Les enfants ont des oreilles’ (1948/1976) in *Œuvres, op. cit.*, p. 351.
- 11 Deligny’s experimentation was in many aspects similar to that taking place during the same period at the Saint-Alban psychiatric hospital, the birthplace of institutional psychotherapy. There, the idea of disrupting the traditional relationship between doctor and patient was central to breaking the internal circuit of the psychiatric institution. To create a ‘healing collectivity’ that patients participated in was very important in François Tosquelles’s programme, as was the idea of ‘integrating madness into society’ (in *Recherches*, No. 17, March 1975, p. 87, my translation). The work *outside* the hospital was, in Tosquelles and Lucien Bonnafé’s perspective, as important as the work inside it. Therefore, they talked about a ‘geo-psychiatry’ that would involve the former patient being inserted into a ‘human geography’ outside the asylum where they would fit in and feel progressively more integrated, while continuing to receive assistance during the necessary healing period. Tosquelles, Bonnafé, and Deligny’s perspectives had in common an emphasis on linking clinical and re-educational practices to social and familial environments, where the treatment process was not conceived as isolation, but rather as integration into the milieu. However, Deligny differed from Saint-Alban in that he did not align himself with psychoanalysis, nor did he intend to create a new model of psychiatry, and he would not take part in the anti-psychiatric movement. He intended instead to find breaches where he worked, so that the instituted space could be reorganised. He was always more interested in precarious moments that left space for something different to take place. For a history of institutional psychotherapy in English, see Camille Robcis, *Disalienation. Politics, Philosophy, and Radical Psychiatry in Postwar France*, Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, 2021.
- 12 In *Œuvres, op. cit.*, pp. 161–214. Also available online in *Encontro Deligny, op. cit.*
- 13 We do not know much about their collaboration during this period. What is known is that in early 1948, Deligny’s text, *Le mystère de l’éducation populaire*, appeared in the journal *DOC*, created by Joseph Rowan and Marker, and that the latter published a short review on Deligny’s *Les Vagabonds efficaces* a few months later. For their correspondence, see also Fernand Deligny, *Correspondance des Cévennes 1968–1996*, Paris, L’Arachnée, 2018.
- 14 ‘Fossils Have a Hard Life’, *infra*, p. 138; ‘Camerling’ [1982], *infra*, p. 108.
- 15 ‘The Camera, a Pedagogical Tool’, *infra*, p. 60. The notion of a ‘milieu’ was central to Deligny’s reflection and remained so until his last texts. During this period, he takes it over from Wallon in particular, who showed its fundamental dimension to the formation of the individual (see his *De l’acte à la pensée*, Paris, Flammarion, 1942). Later, Deligny further enriched his reflection with that of ethologists such as Konrad Lorenz, Karl von Frisch, Henri Fabre, and Irenäus Eibl-Eibesfeldt—interestingly, there is no trace of his having read Jakob von Uexküll.
- 16 ‘The Camera, a Pedagogical Tool’, *infra*, p. 60.
- 17 *Idem*.
- 18 On Makarenko, see my paper: ‘The Product of Circumstances. Towards a Materialist and Situated Pedagogy’, in *Materialism and Politics*, ed. by Bernardo Bianchi, Emilie Filion-Donato, Marlon Miguel, Ayşe Yuva, Berlin, ICI Berlin Press, 2021, https://doi.org/10.37050/ci-20_08.
- 19 Unpublished letter to Irène Lézine, March 24, 1956, my translation. Lézine was the secretary at La Grande Cordée, in addition to being affiliated with the Communist Party, a psychologist, a translator of authors such as Makarenko and Lev Vygotzky, and a very important interlocutor of Deligny during this period.
- 20 A passage in ‘The Distinctiveness of the IMAGES’ implicitly refers to this atmosphere and to the position Deligny sought to take at La Borde: ‘At one psychiatric institution, I established myself as the keeper of a greenhouse where anyone who wanted to could go and paint. I never would have guessed that so many

- mentally ill people wished to paint. It's because painting was a decoy; in that greenhouse, ONE—every-one—had the absolute right to keep silent' (*infra*, p. 213).
- 21 Deligny maintains a 'critical proximity with the psychoanalyst [Jacques Lacan]', as Igor Krtolica and Guillaume Sibertin-Blanc put it in their paper 'The children estranged from language: Fernand Deligny, in his time, and against Lacan', in *Psychoanalysis and History*, vol. 21, No. 2, 2019, pp. 211–227. However, Deligny was not properly speaking 'in charge' of patients at La Borde, as the authors assert at the beginning of the paper, and he began the network for autistic children in 1967 (rather than in 1969). Furthermore, as noted above, the network was established from the start by Deligny alongside other individuals (the Durand sisters, Lin, and the Auberts). On the relationship between Deligny's work and Lacan, see also the chapter I dedicated to the subject in *À la marge et hors-champ. L'humain dans la pensée de Fernand Deligny*, Université Paris 8, 2016, pp. 449–470, <https://www.theses.fr/2016PA080020>.
- 22 See Fernand Deligny, *Correspondance des Cévennes 1968–1996*, *op. cit.*
- 23 Deligny, 'L'homme sans convictions' (1980), in *Cœuvres*, *op. cit.*, annex of the 2017 reedition, pp. 1845–1854.
- 24 Deligny to Louis-Pierre Jouvenet, in Jean-Michel Caillot-Arthaud, Claude-Louis Chalaguier, Louis-Pierre Jouvenet, *Deligny: 50 ans d'asile*, Toulouse, Privat, 1988, p. 38. See also, *Lointain prochain. Les deux mémoires*, Paris, Fario, 2012, pp. 24–27; and *Mémoire d'asiles* (Unpublished, 1984, IMEC Archives, pp. 53–54); 'Fossils Have a Hard Life: Apropos of the Image', *infra*, pp. 125, 126, 159, 160. The passage is roughly the same in each of these versions. Deligny describes what can be read as a constitutive, inter-specific, and formative experience for him as a subject. When he was a child, he was walking by himself at a funfair in Lille and saw small monkeys inside a parrot cage. The monkeys looked at him, terrified, and he felt ashamed of his kind, of those who were 'similar' to him and responsible for imprisoning the monkeys. He writes that at that moment, he felt compelled to 'de-solidarise' himself with Man.
- 25 'the Man that we are has an image of himself', 'Fossils Have a Hard Life: Apropos of the Image', *infra*, p. 140.
- 26 'The Camera, a Pedagogical Tool', *infra*, p. 59. Dudley Andrew, in his article 'Malraux, Bazin, and the Gesture of Picasso' (in *Opening Bazin. Postwar Film Theory and Its Afterlife*, ed. Dudley Andrew with Hervé Joubert-Laurencin, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2011, pp. 153–166), also insists on this point, particularly via a sentence by André Malraux—which Deligny himself quoted—on cinema's interest in serving as a means other than language of 'connecting the person to the world' [*Ibid.*, p. 162; see 'What Is Not Seen (by the Self)', *infra*, p. 238]. Andrew goes on to briefly analyse 'The Camera, a Pedagogical Tool' and compares it to Bazin's examination of Henri-Georges Clouzot's *The Mystery of Picasso* (1856).
- 27 La Grande Cordée Project Report sent to Louis Le Guillant, May 19, 1954, p. 4, my translation, in La Grande Cordée Archives. To date, these archives remain unpublished. They were compiled by Huguette Dumoulin and trusted to Daniel Terral.
- 28 'The authors of the film . . .', 1955, La Grande Cordée Archives, my translation.
- 29 Unpublished letter to François Truffaut, June 18, 1960, my translation, in the archives of La Cinémathèque française.
- 30 An exception before the war was the Cinematographic Cooperative for Laic Schooling and the two films made in 1927 by Freinet (both titled *Les Élèves de Bar-sur-Loup au travail*), who emphasised the importance of the act of filmmaking [Freinet 1928 *apud* Henri Portier, 'De l'utilisation du film comme outil pédagogique à l'appropriation du cinéma par les élèves comme outil de création', in D. Nourrisson and P. Jeunet (eds.), *Cinéma-école: aller-retour*, Université de Saint-Étienne, 2001, p. 118]. We can also mention the Ciné-Liberté Cooperative, created during the Front Populaire era, with the idea of bringing together technicians, workers, and artists to shoot activist films [cf. 'La coopérative Ciné-Liberté est créée' (1936) *apud* Valérie Vignaux, 'Ciné-Liberté ou l'autre cinéma du Front Populaire', in L. Creton and M. Marie (eds.), *Le Front populaire et le cinéma français*, No. 27, pp. 55–62]. After the war, a few initiatives sought to follow in the steps of Cine-Liberté and considered the possibility of creating a 'division of amateur filmmakers' ('La Fédération française des ciné-clubs', *Bulletin de l'IDFEC*, No. 3, July 1946, p. 16). In 1948, Bazin, who was Deligny's neighbour for a short period, also emphasised the necessity of 'cinematographic training workshops destined for educators' (*André Bazin. Écrits complets*, éd. Hervé Joubert-Laurencin, Paris, Macula, 2018, p. 446, my translation). However, no productions were made, and from 1945 onwards, the focus was mainly on the creation of a large network of cine-clubs, thanks to the initiative of names such as Georges Sadoul, Jean Painlevé, and Jacques Prévert. Their goal was to counterweight the presence of mass media and the emphasis was primarily on debate (cf. André Bazin, 'Le mouvement des ciné-clubs en France depuis la Libération', in *Ibid.*, pp. 429–433). See also Dudley Andrew, *André Bazin*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2013, in particular chapter 5, in which Andrew analyses this period, as well as the encounter between Bazin and Deligny.
- 31 In another letter to Truffaut (dated from 1958), Deligny wrote that Marker had been 'very tempted' to make a documentary on La Grande Cordée, but that in the end he unfortunately did not have the time (in Bernard Bastide (org.), 'Correspondance François Truffaut-Fernand Deligny', in *1895*, No. 42, 2004, <https://journals.openedition.org/1895/281>). Also of interest here is a film project Deligny conceived of during

- this period. He emphasised that the idea was to document how ‘the organisation is made’, as well as the ‘successive assemblies with the adolescents, the difficulties our organisation [*organism*] has to overcome. These gathering scenes should be shot in the facilities where they take place’ (‘Faire le film’. Letter to the friends of La Grande Cordée, January 24, 1956, La Grande Cordée Archives, my translation). The proposal is very close to those carried out years later by the Medvedkin Group inside factories.
- 32 La Grande Cordée Project Report, *op. cit.*, p. 13, my translation.
- 33 The word first appears in 1950, cf. ‘La Grande Cordée (2)’, in *Œuvres, op. cit.*, p. 413.
- 34 Michel Foucault, ‘The confession of the Flesh’, in *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews & Other Writings 1972–1977*, ed. by Colin Gordon, New York, Pantheon Books, 1980, pp. 195–196. This edition translates ‘*dispositif*’ as ‘apparatus’.
- 35 La Grande Cordée Project Report, *op. cit.*, p. 12, my translation.
- 36 ‘The Camera, a Pedagogical Tool’, *infra*, p. 60.
- 37 *Ibid.* This viewpoint was commonplace at the time and voiced, for example, by a number of intellectuals connected with the Institute of Filmology (1948–1963). Though Deligny never associated himself with this circle, Wallon, the president of La Grande Cordée and a crucial reference for Deligny, was then an active collaborator with the institute and also acknowledged the ‘universality of film’ (Henri Wallon, ‘L’enfant et le film’, in *RIF (Revue internationale de filmologie)*, No. 5, 1949, p. 21, my translation). The institute was created by Gilbert Cohen-Séat and brought together figures such as Étienne Souriau, Edgar Morin, and even Maurice Merleau-Ponty (see François Albera and Martin Lefebvre, ‘La filmologie, de nouveau’, in *Cinéma*, vol. 19, No. 2–3, 2009, <https://www.erudit.org/fr/revues/cine/2009-v19-n2-3-cine3099/>).
- 38 ‘The Camera, a Pedagogical Tool’, *infra*, p. 58.
- 39 *Idem.*
- 40 One finds echoes here of several reflections that immediately precede or are contemporary to those of Deligny. The problem of cinema as a natural or total reproduction of reality was largely developed by André Bazin (see in particular ‘Le mythe du cinéma total’ (1946), in *Écrits complets, op. cit.*, pp. 2557–2560). The revolutionary necessity of producing materials such as images and writings by oneself, and of teaching peers these techniques was central to Walter Benjamin (see in particular, ‘The Author as Producer’, in *New Left Review*, No. 1/62, July–August 1970, <https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/benjamin/1970/author-producer.htm>). Finally, in a sense, we can affirm that Aleksandr Medvedkin was the direct predecessor to Deligny. With his Kino-Train, Medvedkin aimed at making interventional and local productions that were immersed in a specific territory—the production of a film is organically and intrinsically linked to its screening in the place of production’ (Medvedkin *apud* Emma Widdis, *Alexander Medvedkin*, London, I.B. Tauris, 2005, p. 25); the Kino-Train films were ‘helpful to us in interventions into crucial problems of those grim years—food, living conditions, physical and emotional well-being . . .’ (Medvedkin, ‘The Kino-Train: 294 Days on Wheels’, in *The Alexander Medvedkin Reader*, Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, 2016, p. 36). All in all, we can say that Deligny’s discourse updates those of Benjamin and Medvedkin, which are to be read in the context of ‘cinification’ (Cf. Pavlev Levi, *Cinema by other means*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2012), where the pursuit of the revolution, the transformation of society towards socialism, education, the seizure of power by the masses, and the fight for hegemony were indissociable from the massive investment in apparatuses and techniques, from the utopia of equipping the people with tools of representation.
- 41 ‘The Camera, a Pedagogical Tool’, *infra*, p. 60.
- 42 ‘Le Ciné-Ceil, le Radio-Ceil et le soi-disant “documentalisme”’, in *Dziga Vertov. Le Ciné-Ceil de la révolution. Écrits sur le cinéma*, Paris, Les presses du réel, 2018, p. 400, my translation.
- 43 ‘Un chef d’œuvre du cinéma à faire’ (Unpublished letter to Irène Lézine, April 1, 1955); ‘The film was there, ready to be made’ (‘The Camera, a Pedagogical Tool’, *infra*, p. 59); ‘Faire le film’. Letter to the friends of La Grande Cordée, January 24, 1956, La Grande Cordée Archives.
- 44 The term does not appear in ‘The Camera, a Pedagogical Tool’, but it is recurrent in the other documents of this period: ‘This “production”—a permanent documentary from which some shots could be cut and transformed into a presentable film’ (Unpublished letter to Irène Lézine, March 12, 1955, my translation); ‘This film, this permanent documentary’ (Unpublished letter to Alexis Danan, July 1955, in La Grande Cordée Archives, my translation); a ‘film being permanently shot’ (*film qui se tourne en permanence*, ‘The authors of the film . . .’, 1955, in La Grande Cordée Archives, my translation).
- 45 ‘We maintain that imperfect cinema must above all show the process which generates the problems. It is thus the opposite of a cinema principally dedicated to celebrating results, the opposite of a self-sufficient and contemplative cinema, the opposite of a cinema which “beautifully illustrates” ideas or concepts which we already possess’ (Julio García Espinosa, ‘For an imperfect cinema’, translated by Julianne Burton, in *Jump Cut*, No. 20, 1979, pp. 24–26, <https://www.ejumpcut.org/archive/onlinessays/JC2ofolder/ImperfectCinema.html>). Espinosa’s manifesto is written in the context of international recognition of Latin American cinema and it tackles the problem of *who* takes part in the cinematographic production process, *from where*, and according to which *forms*; it envisions production from the *periphery*, made by the *marginal*.

- 46 Indeed, referring to a discussion with Renaud Victor about La Grande Cordée, Deligny uses the formula 'to make a movie without film' ('The Distinctiveness of the IMAGES', *infra*, p. 180). It is impossible not to think of Lev Kuleshov, who found himself in a similarly precarious position in terms of materials, and along with his collaborators began to stage 'films/movies without film' (*Fil'my bez plenki*). These were theatrical performances of sorts that were presented before a camera and that followed the principle of montage (cf. *Kuleshov on Film. Writings of Lev Kuleshov*, Berkeley, University of California, 1975, in particular the introduction and the chapter 'Our first experiences').
- 47 For a further analysis of these themes and period, see my essay 'Mettre la vie en œuvre: autour de "La caméra outil pédagogique"', in *Camérer. À propos d'images*, *op. cit.*, pp. 341–348.
- 48 'The speeches would be the music of the film and be treated as musical material' (Letter from Deligny to Truffaut, October 8, 1959, in *1895*, *op. cit.*, my translation).
- 49 *The Slightest Gesture* was produced by SLON (which later became ISKRA), a cooperative created by, among others, Marker. SLON is an acronym for Société pour le lancement des œuvres nouvelles (Society for Launching New Works) and additionally means 'elephant' in Russian, a reference to Alexander Medvedkin. The cooperative also produced the Medvedkin Group films.
- 50 Before entering the 'story', the film begins with a presentation of sorts in which Deligny asks, 'Why should the speech belong to someone even if this someone is speaking?' (*Pourquoi faudrait-il que la parole appartienne à quelqu'un, même si ce quelqu'un la prend ?*), in *Œuvres*, *op. cit.*, p. 608, my translation.
- 51 Gilles Deleuze, *The Time-Image*, London, The Athlone Press, 2000, pp. 183–184. Deleuze refers thereafter to Jean-Luc Godard in his 'erasure of the internal monologue as whole of the film in favour of a free indirect discourse and vision; the erasure of the unity of man and the world, in favour of a break which now leaves us with only a belief in this world' (*Ibid.*, p. 188). Also, Jacques Rancière, commenting on Godard's *La Chinoise*, emphasises the importance of the dissociation of word and image, the division 'in two of the One of the representative magma: to separate words and images, to make perceptible the strangeness of the words and the foolishness of the images' (*La Fable cinématographique*, Paris, Seuil, 2001, p. 190, my translation).
- 52 'He's Still One of Us', *infra*, p. 64.
- 53 Jean-Pierre Faye, *Langages totalitaires. Critique de la raison / de l'économie narrative*, Paris, Hermann, 2004, p. 4. See also his *Le langage meurtrier*, Paris, Hermann, 1996. Both in 'Fossils Have a Hard Life: Apropos of the Image' and 'The Distinctiveness of the IMAGES', Deligny also associates language with the tyrant, and, inspired by La Boétie's reflection on 'voluntary servitude', he tries to deflate language and to think of a means of resistance against it: 'Language can undoubtedly be voted on. It's a tyrant with a good reputation. We sometimes speak about the power of words. Like the tyrant, language only ever has the power that is given to it—by its subjects. Certainly, and without doubt, language can say: it can say that it exists, it can also say that one has to say' (*infra*, p. 211).
- 54 Cf. Colette Soler, *L'inconscient à ciel ouvert*, Toulouse, Presse Universitaires du Mirail, 2012. In the voice-over text he wrote to accompany the images of *That Kid, There*, Deligny returns to the motif associating the roofless (*sans toit*) with the absence of the other (*sans toi*)—see 'Ce Gamin, là', in *Œuvres*, *op. cit.*, p. 1052; and 'Nous et l'Innocent', in *Ibid.*, p. 725. Regarding *The Slightest Gesture*, Deligny writes the following in 'The Distinctiveness of the IMAGES': 'I made a feature film in which the hero was a knot' (*infra*, p. 192).
- 55 In the sense given by Georges Canguilhem, i.e., the immanent norms corresponding to each individual (see *The Normal and the Pathological*, Princeton, Zone Books, 1991). By considering autism as another 'mode of being', Deligny's proposition is indeed a radical one and certainly anticipates some of the debates in what is today termed 'neurodiversity'—see for example *The Minor Gesture* (Durham, Duke University Press, 2016) by Erin Manning, who writes: 'Neurodiversity is the path I choose here to explore insurgent life' (p. 5). In spite of the title, Manning does not mention Deligny in the book, though she does refer to him in her earlier work (*Always More Than One*, Durham, Duke University Press, 2012, chapter 8). Other contemporary practitioners and thinkers also propose viewing autism as a distinct 'structure', one that differs from schizophrenia and psychosis (see, for example, Jean-Claude Maleval 'Pourquoi l'hypothèse d'une structure autistique?' (ii), in *La Cause du Désir*, No. 88, pp. 153–164, 2014, <https://doi.org/10.3917/lcdd.088.0153>).
- 56 It is not surprising, then, that many readers of Spinoza in France were immediately drawn to Deligny's reflection, beginning, of course, with Deleuze, though we can also mention Pierre-François Moreau, who wrote the first monography on Deligny in 1978 (*Fernand Deligny et les idéologies de l'enfance*, *op. cit.*), and who has recently returned to his work (see in particular the volume Moreau co-edited with Michael Poutey, *Deligny et la Philosophie*, Lyon, ENS, 2021), Pierre Macherey (see, for example, *Le sujet des normes*, Paris, Les éditions Amsterdam, 2014, and the postface for *Lettres à un travailleur social*, *op. cit.*), and Pascal Sévérac (see, for example, 'L'agir au lieu de l'esprit', in *Intellectica*, 2012/1, No. 57, pp. 253–268, republished in Marlon Miguel and Maurício Rocha (eds.), *Cadernos Deligny*, Rio de Janeiro, PUC-Rio, 2018, <https://cadernosdeligny.jur.puc-rio.br/index.php/CadernosDeligny>). Spinoza's reflection on the perfectibility of each singular body and his critique on the notions of 'analogy' and 'privation' are well known. In his famous Letter 21 to Blijenbergh, the Dutch philosopher claims that one can only say that a blind man is deprived of something

- (here his sight) as the effect of an impossible and thus imaginary analogy between two singular beings (cf. *The Collected Works of Spinoza*, ed. and trans. by Edwin Curley, vol. 1, Princeton, NJ, Princeton University Press, 1985, pp. 375–382).
- 57 Deligny refers, in the first place, to Claude Lévi-Strauss to think about the diversity of ‘life forms’ (*Les Dé-tours de l’agir ou le Moindre geste* (1979), in *Œuvres, op. cit.*, pp. 1272–1274, where he quotes excerpts from an interview with the anthropologist, ‘On m’a souvent reproché d’être antihumaniste’, January 21–22, 1979, in *Le Monde*). We can also consider the famous chapter on ‘The Archaic Illusion’, in *The Elementary Structures of Kinship* (Boston, Beacon Press, 1971), in which Lévi-Strauss develops the idea of ‘a common basis of mental structures and schemes’ (p. 85) that is very diverse but will be the aim of a selective operation by a certain culture. Deligny is, of course, more interested in emphasising that this ‘virtual’ diverse ‘substructure’ (*soubassement*) remains present and active as a sort of *stratum*. His other reference to the reflection on stratification and fossilisation is André Leroi-Gourhan, in particular, *Gesture and Speech*, Cambridge, MA, MIT, 1993.
- 58 ‘We have to suppose—out of our own concern for seeing them as similar [*de les semblabiliser*], a concern that certainly comes from good intentions [...]. And we make a gift to the other of our own intention, so great is our generosity with respect to him or her. Once again we discover the image of human beings [the image of the Man] that is supposedly the same for one and all’ (*The Arachnean and Other Texts, op. cit.*, p. 167). See also ‘Miscreating’, where *camering* and the whole ‘attempt’ appear as an effort to ‘evade our inclination to similarise the other, whether or not they be autistic’ (*infra*, p. 84).
- 59 ‘One eye + closer + closer / one no longer knows what it is / one is lost (finally / this one colonises us / everyone / and prevents us from seeing, from inventing, from divining / for one knows the name of things’ (*un œil + près + près / on ne sait plus ce que c’est / on est perdu / enfin / cet on qui nous colonise / chacun / et nous empêche de voir, d’inventer, de deviner / parce qu’il sait le nom des choses*), ‘Repères’, unpublished, circa 1971, my translation). It is also interesting to note how Deligny, following a comment by Ivan Illich, associates Christopher Columbus’s discovery enterprise with the project of imposing ‘a maternal grammar as the language of the state’ (*The Arachnean and Other Texts, op. cit.*, p. 104). In this sense, the colonisation process is indissociable from the institution of a ‘major’ language.
- 60 In *Œuvres, op. cit.*, p. 700, my translation.
- 61 *Ibid.*, p. 691, my translation.
- 62 Letter to Althusser, September 1976, in *Correspondance des Cévennes 1968–1996, op. cit.*, p. 565, my translation.
- 63 ‘Cahiers de l’immuable / 1’, in *Œuvres, op. cit.*, pp. 847–848, my translation. The *Cahiers de l’Immuable* (The Notebooks of the Immutable) are a series of three volumes (a fourth was planned and begun but never finished) that compile texts, documents, and images produced by Deligny, the close presences, and different collaborators and interlocutors involved with the network. They were published in 1975–1976 as separate volumes of the *Revue Recherches*, created by Guattari.
- 64 For more on the maps see, *Cartes et lignes d’erre / Maps and Wander Lines, op. cit.*
- 65 Despite this and the fact that another important word in Deligny’s vocabulary is the *dérive* (drift), his approach is far from a romanticisation of the children’s movements and is also very distant from the ‘psychogeography’ developed by the Situationists.
- 66 Deligny and his collective perceived what they call the importance of the ‘immutable’ (*immutable*)—which of course resonates with Leo Kanner’s first definitions of autism in 1943 through his ideas of ‘sameness’ (*immutabilité*) and ‘aloneness’, but also shifts them, since the *immutable* is not conceived as total unchangeability. It is now known that autistic persons have an acute sensibility, a permeability to the environment, a ‘sensory openness which is experienced as a bombardment of sensa’ (Donald Meltzer, ‘The Psychology of Autistic States and of Post-Autistic Mentality’, in Donald Meltzer, John Bremner, Shirley Hoxter, Doreen Weddel, Isca Wittenberg, *Explorations in Autism. A Psycho-analytical Study*, Scotland, Clunie Press, 1975, p. 20). See also the descriptions by Temple Grandin, an autistic person, in her *Thinking in Pictures*, London, Bloomsbury, 2006. She claims that her stereotypies such as ‘rocking’ and ‘spinning’ were reactions whenever she felt ‘overloaded’ (p. 34) by perception. Interestingly, Deligny also often refers to autistic perception as ‘thinking in pictures’.
- 67 ‘The distant and the close’, *lointain prochain*, is also the title of a trilogy of texts by Deligny. Jean Oury, who wrote a good deal on this particular mode of ‘proximity’, might have been one of Deligny’s interlocutors, and as was mentioned earlier, they did indeed spend time side by side at La Borde. Oury also reflects on these dialectics and claims that ‘the greater proximity is to assume the distance of the other. This gives a sort of definition of the transference’ (Jean Oury, ‘Utopie, atopie et eutopie’, in *Revue Chimères*, No. 28, Spring-Summer 1996, p. 75).
- 68 Deleuze perceived precisely how, on the one hand, the cartography developed in the network did not aim at ‘interpreting’ the children’s behaviours (‘What Children Say’, in *Essays Critical and Clinical*, New York, Verso, 1998) and on the other, how it implied a form of ‘performance’ rather than revealing pre-given knowledge (Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, ‘Rhizome’, in *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophre-*

- nia, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 2005, p. 12). Unfortunately, Deleuze and Guattari do not really analyse the cartographies in detail and surely the best text written during this period on the subject is that by Françoise Bonardel for an exhibition at the Centre Georges Pompidou in which some of the cartographies were displayed. As she writes, ‘the “person” can no longer be designated by what they are (name, personality, intellectual aptitude reduced to nothing by psychosis), but by that which “takes place” through them. We watch the remarkable replacement of the usual and here ineffective psychology by a topography and topology’ (‘Lignes d’erre’, in Giulio Macchi and Jacques Mullender (curators), *Cartes et figures de la Terre*. Exhibition Catalogue, Centre Georges Pompidou, May 24–November 17, 1980, p. 194, my translation).
- 69 This perspectivism does not of course mean putting oneself in the standpoint of the other. One can think here of Eduardo Viveiros de Castros and his reflections on the anthropological work he has carried out and on the notion of perspectivism: ‘What I did in my article on perspectivism was a thought experiment and an exercise in fictional anthropology. The expression ‘thought experiment’ does not have the usual meaning of accessing the imaginary in an experience through one’s (own) thought, but rather of accessing the (other’s) thought through the real experience: it is not a question of imagining an experience, but of experimenting an imagination. In this case, the experience is mine as an ethnographer and a reader of an ethnological bibliography on indigenous Amazonia, and the experimentation is a fiction controlled by this experience. That means that the fiction is anthropological, but its anthropology is not fictive’ (Eduardo Viveiros de Castro, ‘O nativo relativo’, *Mana*, vol. 8, No. 1, 2002, p. 123, my translation). The ideas of a ‘thought experiment’ and an ‘imagined experiment’ are taken from Ludwig Wittgenstein (*Philosophical Remarks*, Oxford, Blackwell, 1998, p. 52; and *Philosophical Investigations*, \$265, Oxford, Blackwell, 1986, p. 94e), who was also an important reference for Deligny in his later years and is quoted in some of the texts included in this volume.
- 70 Deligny claims he is the ‘storyteller rather than the leader’ (*le conteur plutôt que le meneur*) of the different ‘approaches and attempts’ in which he engaged himself (‘Des réseaux et des hommes’, in *Revue Méléé*, Nîmes / Marseille, Offset avenir, No. 2, November 1981, p. 10, my translation).
- 71 It is also worth mentioning that Deligny was against his name appearing on the cover, but finally agreed as a result of Guattari’s insistence. For a reflection (and critique) of the author’s name, see his ‘L’homme sans convictions’, in *Ceuvres, op. cit.*, pp. 1845–1854.
- 72 This is the case with Lin’s recent *Aucun d’eux ne dit mot* (‘None of them says a word’), in which he presents later images of the work continued by himself and another close presence, Gisèle Durand. The film was screened for the first time in 2020 at the *Cinéma du Réel* festival. It was produced by Richard Copans (Les Films d’ici), who also worked with Victor and Deligny, and recently directed the more commercial documentary *Monsieur Deligny, vagabond efficace* (2019). Lin is additionally the author of *La vie de radeau* (Marseille, Le mot et le reste, 1996/2007), a crucial account of life with the autistic persons in the network.
- 73 The silence is very much inhabited and the many sounds one hears of everyday life and elements of the landscape are a crucial aspect of the film. It is ‘a rich, living silence’ as Marguerite Duras said of her own films (‘Cinéma’, in *The Suspended Passion*, London, Seagull Books, 2016). A few lines later, she affirms: ‘the reality reproduced by classical cinema has never been of any interest to me’. Indeed, many connections can be made between Marguerite Duras’s thoughts on the practice and role of writing about/on cinema and those of Deligny. They offer similar and interesting reflections on the ways in which the image and words can collaborate. ‘It was as though the word I wrote already contained its image within itself. To film it was to pursue the discourse and amplify it. It was to continue writing—on the image’ (*Idem*).
- 74 It is difficult to state precisely which movies served as references for Deligny. One does know that he was fond of experimental European avant-garde works such as those by Man Ray and Walter Ruttmann—*The Starfish* (1928) and *In der Nacht* (1931) are cited by him in the first text in this volume; Soviet productions, including *Storm Over Asia* (Vsevolod Pudovkin, 1928), which was screened many times by the adolescents of La Grande Cordée, and *Road to Life* (Nikolai Ekk, 1931), mentioned in a few of the texts published here; *The Threepenny Opera* (G. W. Pabst, 1932), and the films of Jean Epstein. It is also known that Deligny (with Lin) screened movies at La Borde on the Vietnam War, such as Wilfred Burchett’s *Maquis Viet Cong* (1965). During this time, he met Jean Renoir at the clinic; Renoir had watched, and liked, according to Deligny, some of the rushes from *The Slightest Gesture*. Deligny also mentions Jean Rouch—prior to seeing his films—as an inspiration for *The Slightest Gesture*; Czech animation films, possibly those by Karel Zeman; and Herbert J. Biberman’s *Salt of the Earth* (1954).
- 75 Deligny wrote many ‘scripts’, particularly in the 1980s. Most of them remain unpublished and are stored at the IMEC. They are curious in that they fall somewhere between true scripts, novels, and long synopses; they often have several variations and in general are quite repetitive and would be difficult to publish as such. Among the numerous pieces Deligny wrote, we can mention, for example, *Peaux d’argile* (Clay skin), a sort of fable of beings who live inside a cave and their encounter with a young boy from the Cévennes. The

- director Fernand Moskowicz showed interest in filming *Peaux d'argile* and a version of the manuscript includes a short text by him. Other works of note are *Toits d'asiles* (Asylum rooftops), which Renaud Victor had planned to direct, and which addresses the rumours around and disappearance of a Brazilian boy living in Graniers—some shots of the film can be seen in *Fernand Deligny. À propos d'un film à faire* (Fernand Deligny. *About a film to make*, 1989); and *Rue de l'Oural*, a fictional piece written in 1981 about the post-war period in Paris, which takes place in an occupied theatre.
- 76 Who directed, among other films, *Week-end à Sochaux* (1972), in the context of the Medvedkin Group.
- 77 Letter to Isaac Joseph, March 3, 1977, in *Correspondance des Cévennes, op. cit.*, p. 648.
- 78 'Camerer' [1978], *infra*, p. 74.
- 79 'Camerer' [1978–1983], *infra*, p. 165.
- 80 'Miscreating', *infra*, p. 83.
- 81 'Camerer' [1978–1983], *infra*, p. 167.
- 82 The text is in fact the compilation of extracts from an interview by Renaud Victor and Serge Le Péron. Numerous conversations between Victor and Deligny took place during this period and are stored in the archives at the IMEC.
- 83 'What Is Not Seen (by the Self)', *infra*, p. 237.
- 84 'Miscreating', *infra*, p. 78.
- 85 *Ibid.*, p. 84.
- 86 He is even clearer on this in one of the 'Camerer' texts: 'Projections are consumer goods. Thus functions a recovery circuit in which household rubbish holds on tight to what's imagined, projected' ['Camerer' [1978], *infra*, p. 69]. In another text, he criticises the cinema as a spectacle, and again its provision of ready-made images for the viewer. 'The work resulting from "camerage" is in fact not a spectacle. It is instead an attempt in which the "viewers" are invited, impelled, to take part. [...] ONE proposes—imposes—cars, travels to Singapore, HI-FI audio systems [...] Folks are served [*servis*]—enslaved [*asservis*]. [...] They must be provided with ready-to-see [*prêt-à-voir*]—as one would say ready-to-wear [*prêt-à-porter*]' (Notes on *A Better Life*, p. 6, unpublished, circa 1985, in IMEC Archives).
- 87 'Miscreating', *infra*, p. 85.
- 88 'What Is Not Seen (by the Self)', *infra*, p. 237.
- 89 'Camerer [1982]', *infra*, p. 106.
- 90 Jean Epstein, *Écrits sur le cinéma*, Tome 1, *L'objectif lui-même*, p. 128, my translation.
- 91 *Idem*, p. 129.
- 92 'Acheminement vers l'image', in *Camérer. À propos d'images, op. cit.*, p. 189, my translation.
- 93 'The Alga and the Fungus', *infra*, p. 117. The symbiosis motif also appears in 'The Distinctiveness of the IMAGES', *infra*, p. 173.
- 94 'What Is Not Seen (by the Self)', *infra*, p. 236.
- 95 'Miscreating', *infra*, p. 84; 'Acheminement vers l'image', in *Camérer. À propos d'images, op. cit.*, p. 206.
- 96 'Fossils Have a Hard Life: Apropous of the Image', *infra*, p. 129.
- 97 *Idem*.
- 98 It is for this reason that Deligny's reflection is to be inscribed in the avant-garde tradition of Epstein or Vertov rather than that of Harun Farocki, who largely developed the question of visibility (the word appears for example in the original title of his 1981 *Etwas wird sichtbar / Before Your Eyes Vietnam*). For Deligny, the camera conceived of as a tool is indeed a prosthesis, an extension of the human, rather than its substitution. Farocki intimates that a new "robo eye" is in place, one that, unlike the "kino eye" celebrated by modernists like Dziga Vertov, does not extend the human prosthetically so much as it replaces the human robotically' (Hal Foster, 'Vision Quest: The Cinema of Harun Farocki', in *Artforum*, November 2004, p. 160).
- 99 'Miscreating', *infra*, p. 98.
- 100 'In a given "milieu", there is what we see from us—regarding us and from our point of view—and, implicitly [*en filigrane*], appears what is spotted from the point of seeing of an individual, and is refractory to what the environing society has proposed and imposed in terms of what they acquire and are. [...] There is the "point of view" and there is the "point of seeing" that is refractory to the formulable' (Atelier INA, in *Camérer. À propos d'images, op. cit.*, p. 45, my translation).
- 101 Robert Kramer, Letter to Deligny, May 30, 1979, in *Correspondances des Cévennes, op. cit.*, p. 873.
- 102 Deligny, Letter to Kramer, in *Ibid.*, p. 876.
- 103 'Notes pour "Mécéer"', in *Camérer. À propos d'images, op. cit.*, p. 72, my translation.
- 104 *Idem*.
- 105 'Fossils Have a Hard Life', alternative version, in *Camérer. À propos d'images, op. cit.*, p. 143, p. 146 and 'Acheminement vers l'image', in *Ibid.*, pp. 167–168. According to Deligny, the term was taken from Néstor Almendros. Deligny relates an interesting reading of the cinematographer's obsession with natural light.

- He does not see it as a sort of naturalism, but on the contrary, as an artifice that ends up artificially imposing a longer temporality on shooting. One has to wait for the perfect light, and this opens the space to time and thus to chance. It is the introduction of such detours that, according to Deligny, provide the occasion to perhaps shoot in a different manner.
- 106 'What Is Not Seen (by the Self)', *infra*, p. 235.
- 107 'Fossils Have a Hard Life: Apropos of the Image', *infra*, p. 140. One can think here of a similar reflection by Einstein, quoted by Isabelle Stengers and Ilya Prigogine in their 1984 book that was almost contemporary to Deligny's text (1982): 'Man seeks to form for himself, in whatever manner is suitable for him, a simplified and lucid image of the world (*Bild der Welt*), and so to overcome the world of experience by striving to replace it to some extent by this image', Albert Einstein, 'Prinzipien der Forschung, Rede zur 60. Geburtsdag van Max Planck' (1918) *apud* Isabelle Stengers and Ilya Prigogine, *Order out of chaos*, London, Verso, 1984/2017, Introduction, section 5.
- 108 In a letter to Claude Chalaguier (May 6, 1988) written during the same period as 'The Distinctiveness of the IMAGES', one finds: 'I have recently realised that ONE uses the word image to plug the hole, because language has a hole; the word image is the hole' (in *Correspondance des Cèvennes, op. cit.*, p. 1143, my translation).
- 109 'Fossils Have a Hard Life: Apropos of the Image', *infra*, p. 141.
- 110 'Acheminement vers l'image', in *Camérier. À propos d'images, op. cit.*, pp. 1667–1671, my translation. This text was also written in 1982, likely just after 'Fossils Have a Hard Life: Apropos of the Image' (and its alternative version 'Fossils Have a Hard Life'). Since it is quite long and in many aspects similar to the latter, the decision was made not to include it in this volume, despite its importance.
- 111 'What Is Not Seen (by the Self)', *infra*, p. 236. See also the short aphorism in 'The Distinctiveness of the IMAGES', where he claims that 'The imaginary [...] has nothing to do with the IMAGES' (*infra*, p. 202).
- 112 Marker begins *Sans Soleil* (1983) with the idea of a non-editable image, an impossible image that 'cannot associate itself with other images'; he finishes it with 'these images already affected by the lichen of the Time' ('Sans soleil', in *Trafic*, No. 6, 1993, p. 79 and p. 96). The lichen is also a recurrent motif in Deligny's writing.
- 113 'Caming' [1978–1983], *infra*, p. 169.
- 114 João Moreira Salles in his film *Santiago* (2007) quotes Werner Herzog to claim that the most important thing in cinema is probably that which is 'leftover'. Indeed, Salles's film was made of material filmed thirteen years prior that sought to portray his bourgeois family's peculiar butler. The film is a reflection on the impossibility of such a project and the fact that he knew *a priori* what and how he intended to represent Santiago.
- 115 'Fossils Have a Hard Life: Apropos of the Image', *infra*, p. 138.
- 116 'What Is Not Seen (by the Self)', *infra*, p. 235.
- 117 See, for example, 'The Distinctiveness of the IMAGES', *infra*, p. 181.
- 118 One can think of course of critiques of the overburdening of culture and memory, such as those developed, for instance, in *On the Genealogy of Morality*. In an unpublished text entitled *Être sans avoir (Being Without Having)* stored at the IMEC archives, likely contemporary to 'The Distinctiveness of the IMAGES', Deligny does indeed mention Nietzsche. His critique of culture and civilisation is no doubt also related to his readings of authors such as Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Lévi-Strauss, who emphasised the notion that there is no progress without damage—*pas davantage sans dommage*: 'But "like us" implies a necessary belief in the validity of this "us," of the-humans-that-we-are [*le bonhomme*, the "everyman"] as we think and conceive of ourselves, after millennia of symbolic domestication, and Lord knows what advantages humanity has drawn from this. But at the expense of what? – this is what we still have to find out. There is no advantage without damage' ('The missing voice', in *The Arachnean and Other Texts, op. cit.*, p. 206). All these problems are synthesised in the motif of the 'detriment' that appears in the 'The Distinctiveness of the IMAGES' (see *infra*, p. 186): 'Since language has existed—and all that it allows: the detriment.'
- 119 The motif of the 'asylum' appears in a number of texts contemporary to 'The Distinctiveness of the IMAGES'. Indeed, Deligny gives it the positive sense of refuge, protection, shelter, and throughout his work, he describes the network for autistic children as a sort of asylum for another form of life. His reflection on the asylum is of particular interest today. We might also consider Donna Haraway's emphasis on a similar preoccupation when thinking about the need for refuge: 'Perhaps the outrage meriting a name like Anthropocene is about the destruction of places and times of refuge for people and other critters. [...] The Anthropocene marks severe discontinuities; what comes after will not be like what came before. I think our job is to make the Anthropocene as short/thin as possible and to cultivate with each other in every way imaginable epochs to come that can replenish refuge. Right now, the earth is full of refugees, human and not, without refuge' ('Anthropocene, Capitalocene, Plantationocene, Chthulucene: Making Kin', in *Environmental Humanities*, vol. 6, No. 1, pp. 159–165, p. 160, <https://doi.org/10.1215/22011919-3615934>).

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

- 120 'The Distinctiveness of the IMAGES', *infra*, p. 214 and p. 222.
- 121 'Singulière Ethnie, ou l'Être et l'être', end of 1979, unpublished, in IMEC Archives.
- 122 'The Distinctiveness of the IMAGES', *infra*, p. 173. It is indeed, as Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui puts it, a sort of 'logic of the included third', of the 'ch'ixi' ('Ch'ixinakax utxiwa: A Reflection on the Practices and Discourses of Decolonization', in *South Atlantic Quarterly*, vol. 111, No. 1, 2012, pp. 95-109, p. 105, <https://doi.org/10.1215/00382876-1472612>). Cusicanqui thinks, with this term, of a 'contradictory equilibrium that is even interwoven with irreducible differences' (Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui, *Un mundo ch'ixi es posible. Ensayo desde un presente en crisis*, Buenos Aires, Tinta Limón, 2018, p. 56, my translation).