



It's All About Love: *Félix Guattari's Minor Cinema*

Adam Szymanski
Concordia University

Abstract

This paper analyzes the film *It's All About Love* (Thomas Vinterberg, 2003) as a work of Félix Guattari's minor cinema. By assembling and outlining a selection of Guattari's writings on minor cinema, subjectivity and anti-psychiatry, the essay offers an understanding of minor cinema that questions the de facto yoking of minor cinema to (national) identity politics. Through a necessary return to Guattari's overshadowed solo writings, especially his chapter "Le cinéma: un art mineur" in the book *La révolution moléculaire*, the essay allows for a reading of *It's All About Love* that explores how the film constructs a potentially mad character subjectivity through colour and sound intensities or a-signifying cinematic part-signs. As a result, the essay argues that *It's All About Love* advances a necessarily collective notion of love based on shared movements of affect and desire which can form the basis of future bonds of social organization that function beyond the bureaucratic limits of the nation state and the subjective constraints of national identity.

Pour le résumé en français, voir la fin de l'article

The chapter "Le cinéma: un art mineur" in the book *La révolution moléculaire*¹ by Félix Guattari affirms desire and subjectivity as central to minor cinema. For Guattari, the question of what constitutes a minor cinema is inseparable from flows of desire and processes of subjectivization; flows and processes that unfold on the molecular level. To engage with the minor in a manner consistent with Guattari's thought is necessarily to understand the composition of subjectivity as a polyvalent operation of singularization across real semiotic, material and libidinal strata. A resingularization, a new composition/constellation of subjectivity, could take an infinite number of

¹ This chapter from the 1977 Encres edition of *La révolution moléculaire* was translated into English as the chapter "Cinemachines" in the collection of texts and articles by Guattari in the book *Chaosophy* (Guattari 2009a).

forms that correspond to the infinite number of possibilities for assemblage virtually immanent to multiple existential universes of reference. Subjectivity is usually discussed through the lens of identity. Though there is a political potentiality to identity politics, and any truly politicized cinema must be sensitive to gains made through these avenues of struggle, identity also has its limits and minor cinema must not be qualified solely as a cinema of minority identities. Often, identity marks adherence to an already-formed structure within the symbolic realm of established signifying codes that have been smoothly incorporated into the logic of semicapitalism. Subjectivity, overrunning a culturally pre-determined signifying logic and in reciprocal contact with the raw material of the universe constitutes a more all-encompassing field of activation for revolutionary becomings.

Subjectivity is usually discussed through the lens of identity. Under what Guattari terms Integrated World Capitalism, quite the opposite is true.

IWC asserts itself through a double oppression in modalities that vary according to the country or social stratum. First, by direct repression, both economic and social—controlling the production of goods and social relations through external material coercion and the suggestion of meaning. The second oppression, perhaps greater than the first in intensity, consists in the installation of IWC in the very production of subjectivity: *an immense machine producing a subjectivity standardized on a world scale has become a basic element in the formation of collective labour power and the force for collective social control* (Guattari and Rolnik 2007, 53).

Capitalism's production of a standardized subjectivity is exactly why revolutionary politics hinged on strict notions of identity must be considered with a dose of skepticism. There is nothing inherent in identity—no matter how oppositional—that prevents its co-opted reification; nothing that prevents even the most seemingly radical identity from turning into a new standardization of subjectivity.

The same is especially true for national identity. In *Chaosmosis: an ethico-aesthetic paradigm* Guattari writes:

Generally, one can say that contemporary history is increasingly dominated by rising demands for subjective singularity—quarrels over language, autonomist demands, issues of nationalism and of the nation, which in total ambiguity express on the one hand an aspiration for national liberation, but also manifest themselves in what I would call a conservative reterritorialization of subjectivity (1995, 3).

Even if it expresses an autonomist demand for national liberation, according to Guattari, national identity signals a conservative reterritorialization of subjectivity. Contemporary scholarship on minor cinema has not effectively incorporated this critical vein of Guattari's thought into its methodology. David Martin-Jones summarizes the writing on minor cinema and the nation as follows: "minor cinema is a product of attempts made by marginalised or minority groups to create a new sense of identity. Minor cinema is 'revolutionary' in its appeal to colonised, minority, postcolonial, neocolonial, or otherwise marginalised peoples to establish a new sense of identity" (2006, p. 6). Following Guattari's train of thought, I take issue with the de facto yoking of minor cinema to minority identity politics and the post-colonial or small nation. Even Deleuze's "people yet to come" that constitute the modern political cinema of *Cinema 2* need not be attached to a new national formation.² In theorizing minor cinema, I find the national cinema model overly reliant on the logic of the nation-state (a molar institution), and increasingly less suited to confronting the stratified cognitive, affective and libidinal forms of exploitation experienced under global capitalism.

At first glance, *It's All About Love* (Thomas Vinterberg, 2003) attracts a reading through a national/transnational cinema model because it is a European co-production, directed by a famous Danish auteur, featuring Hollywood actors speaking faux-accented English-language dialogue. The film's political engagement does traffic in issues of nationalism, yet its political charge operates across diverse planes of semiotization, which allows for a rethinking of the concept of the minor cinema along Guattarian lines. *It's All About Love* makes multiple majoritarian structures stutter—Hollywood film and narrative

² One of the reasons why this attachment to the postcolonial or small nation persists in the scholarship on minor cinema stems from what I consider a reductive reading of Deleuze's concept of the "people yet to come" in *Cinema 2* (1989, 215-224). Though Deleuze does focus on postcolonial directors like Ousmane Sembene and Pierre Perrault, he never limits his conception of a "people yet to come" to the formation of a new national identity.

form, conventional movie dialogue, the heterosexual couple, etc. This article's linking of a-signifying cinematic part-signs and *amour fou*—both fundamental to Félix Guattari's own distinct conception of minor cinema—in *It's All About Love* aims to provoke a more nuanced and multi-faceted comprehension of minor cinema that accounts for the micropolitics of revolutionary subjectivity inextricable from movements of affect and desire that unfold on the molecular level.

*

First, some background on the origins and contemporary developments of the theory of minor cinema. Deleuze and Guattari's treatise *Kafka: Towards a Minor Literature* (1975) opens the discourse on "the minor" with a consideration of Franz Kafka's modernist writing as a unique political reconfiguration of literature and language. In this specific case, Kafka (1883-1924) was a Czech Jew living in Prague during the Austro-Hungarian Empire whose use of German made the major language take flight and stutter. Kafka effectively used art to politicize the language of the colonizer. After their collaborative text on Kafka, Deleuze and Guattari returned to the political importance of the minor, especially in relation to language in their collaborative volume *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (1980). Deleuze also further elaborated on the minor in *Cinema 2: The Time-Image* (1985), while Guattari continued to use the concept in numerous lesser-known texts on cinema, semiotics, and aesthetics that will be foregrounded in this article.

In *Kafka*, Deleuze and Guattari lay out the origins of the concept of minor literature, which paved the way for the later discussion of minor cinema. They posit that: "A minor literature doesn't come from a minor language; it is rather that which a minority constructs within a major language" (Deleuze and Guattari 1986, 16). Then Deleuze and Guattari outline the three characteristics of minor literature, the first being that its language is affected with a high coefficient of deterritorialization, the second that everything in minor literatures is political, and thirdly, that everything takes on collective value (16-17). These three characteristics compose the central arguments of Deleuze and Guattari's collaborative work on minor literature. Though the three-pronged definition of minor literature has proven malleable and multi-faceted, the heterogeneous quality of the concept can in part be attributed to its recurrence throughout Deleuze and Guattari's works. *A Thousand Plateaus* expands on the minor to include "musical, literary, linguistic, as well as juridical and political

references” (1980, 105). Deleuze continues to build on the concept he had developed earlier with Guattari in *Cinema 2* where he frames the minor in primarily postcolonial terms, citing Senegalese filmmaker Ousmane Sembene and Québécois documentary filmmaker Pierre Perrault as minoritarian artists. Current scholarship on minor cinema is predominantly indebted to *Kafka: Towards a Minor Literature*, *A Thousand Plateaus*, *Cinema 2*, and to a much lesser extent, Guattari's own writings on the topic, and has since expanded in a number of directions.

As Gary Genosko explains, Guattari's work is often overshadowed by his collaborations with Deleuze (Genosko 2009a, 1) and it should be pointed out that he has a distinct understanding of minor cinema, although it remains consistent with “Deleuze's deployment of the anti-colonialist, revolutionary Third Cinema” and its political implications (2009a, 134). Guattari's minor cinema diverges from Deleuze's minor cinema of subaltern peoples engaged in anti-colonial struggle to posit a minor cinema of anti-psychiatry, madness, desire, intensities, resingularization and *amour fou*.

Given Guattari's background training with Lacan and work at La Borde clinic, along with his life-long preoccupation with the psyche and political militancy, it only makes sense that these interests of Guattari's came to converge with the theory of the minor he developed with Deleuze. Much is at stake in considering anti-psychiatry films as works of minor cinema since Guattari urges us to consider psychiatry as inherently political because of its power to condition subjectivization. Molar psychiatric institutions, as dominant forces of subjectivization, especially in cases of the mentally-ill, operate on a micropolitical plane through political investments in certain familial, sexual, and psychical formations—political realms all-too-easily excluded from political discourse that unfolds solely the molar plane of political economy and sovereignty. Guattari's minor cinema works against and proposes alternatives to the tenets of psychoanalysis that form the dominant modes of thought in psychiatric institutions (for example, Guattari critiques the problematic notion of lack used to account for the psyche, neurosis, and the triangulation of desire that fuels the confining domain of the Oedipal trajectory). *Asylum* (Peter Robinson, 1972) *Fous à délier* (Marco Bellocchio *et al.*, 1976), *Ce gamin-là* (Renaud Victor, 1975), *Family Life* (Ken Loach, 1971), *La ville bidon* (Jacques Baratier, 1971), *Histoire de Paul* (René Feret, 1975) are included in Guattari's cinema of anti-psychiatry as “combat films” where speech emanates from a minor register of enunciation: in children, the mad, political militants, etc. (1995, 268-271).

In addition to envisioning a minor cinema of anti-psychiatry, Guattari also stresses the importance of a minor cinema that would depict concrete political struggles. Three of the films Guattari identifies as examples include *Coup pour coup* (Martin Karmitz, 1972), a documentary-style film about the solidarity of female labourers at a textile factory in France; *Germany in Autumn* (Alf Brustellin, Hans Peter Cloos, *et al.*, 1978) an omnibus film that mixes documentary and fiction in depicting the kidnapping of a businessman by the Red Army Faction in 1970s Germany; and *Mourir à trente ans* (Romain Goupil, 1982) a documentary about the suicide of far-left militant Michel Recanati who was friends with the film's director Romain Goupil. Guattari is attracted to how these films function as praxis on the level of micro-politics (focusing on the women of a particular factory or a particular militant faction) as opposed to the level of grand mass movements. These films dialogue with Guattari's cinema of anti-psychiatry, but they also expand on his idea of minor cinema and extend it to include political filmmaking aligned with minor political struggles inside schools and factories and on the streets.

Not surprisingly given Guattari's political commitments and interest in films that reflect these commitments, Guattari explicitly denounces commercial cinema for its co-option by capitalism and its tendency to control and manipulate like an inexpensive drug (2009a, 246). Guattari writes: "The successive inventions of the talkies, of colour, of television, etc. insofar as they enriched the possibilities of expressing desire, have led capitalism to take possession of cinema, and to use it as a privileged instrument of social control" (2009a, 244).³ Clearly for Guattari, any minor cinema that struggles on behalf of peoples oppressed by capitalism, needs to contest the capitalist interests embedded in the form and themes of mainstream, commercial filmmaking. But this condition does not predetermine what forms a minor cinema can take, or what themes will constitute a work of minor cinema. Guattari explains that "[o]ne can make a film having life in a convent as its theme that puts

³ Guattari also posits a similar phenomenon in the mass-media more generally. He writes: "Doesn't the all-powerful position of the mass media nowadays supply a perfect demonstration of the fact that any link in the social chain can lend itself, without the least apparent resistance, to the levelling and infantilizing effects of the capitalistic production of signifiers?" (1986, 41). But also see "Toward an Ethics of the Media" where Guattari advances the revolutionary potential of media. He argues that despite the dismal situation wherein "television winds up functioning like a hypnotic drug, cutting off subjects from their environment, and contributing to the dissolution of already thinly stretched family and social relationships" (2002, 17), the media, including the Internet (then in its infancy) could "open [individuals] up to helping one another, the thrill of knowing the other, liberating them from racism and xenophobia" (21).

revolutionary libido in motion; one can make a film in defence of revolution that is fascist from the point of view of the economy of desire” (2009a, 246). To categorically determine minor cinema solely through restricted notions of genre, form, nationhood or political sensibility would be to limit the micropolitical potential of minor cinema, and undermine its political-theoretical usefulness. Even the most commercial, popular film may contain the semiotic seeds of its own subversion.⁴ In summing up this important tendency of Guattari's minor cinema, Genosko argues that “dominant values can be attacked in a variety of ways within film praxis” (2009a, 149). The malleability of Guattari's minor cinema is another one of the reasons why *It's All About Love* can be considered a work of minor cinema even if it isn't an overtly militant film and overlaps with aspects of mainstream commercial filmmaking. As Deleuze and Guattari write: “the more a language has or acquires the characteristics of a major language, the more it is affected by continuous variations that transpose it into a ‘minor language’” (2004, 102).

Rarely do theorists actually propose extremely detailed ideas for a film, but that is exactly what Guattari does in his “Project for a Film by Kafka”, a project that crystallizes how Guattari connects minor literature to minor cinema and to real-world politics. Guattari's “Project for a Film by Kafka” has been, for the most part, left uncatalogued in the discourse on minor cinemas, once again with the notable exception of Gary Genosko. Genosko wrote an introduction to Guattari's proposed film project in which he posits how the concrete example of Guattari's film project can overcome difficulties associated with the production of a minor cinema in largely economic terms. In his “Introduction to Félix Guattari's ‘Project for a Film by Kafka’”, Genosko writes that

it has to date been hard enough to think of Guattari as a film theorist, let alone as a filmmaker. Perhaps this fragmentary outline, which is not the only evidence we have, is most important for the role it may play in helping readers of Guattari to overcome existing difficulties, think of minor cinema, and join the Kafka assemblage (2009b, 148).

Of importance here is that for Genosko, minor cinema overruns the limits of cinema itself and joins assemblages with other artistic, social and psychic machines—the Kafka machine for instance. Such a multi-faceted concept of

⁴ Guattari claims to have memorized *Blade Runner* (Ridley Scott, 1982) by heart and he finds it a remarkable film about madness (see “La machine à images” 1990, 72).

minor cinema stands alone in the discourse on the topic. Other theorists describe, conceptualize, theorize, and apply minor cinema to film-texts, but Guattari's outline expresses his desire to make a minor movie. Guattari's project remains the sole explicit attempt to connect the theory of minor cinema to an active filmmaking practice. The project demonstrates provocative ideas about many aspects of the filmmaking process and constructs a minor cinema that consists of notes and fragments, a script-in-progress, and exact details about shot types and cinematography. And possibly most interesting when considering minor cinema from an economic standpoint as some theorists do, is Guattari's outline for how the film can be funded and exhibited. As a part of the project, Guattari envisions a television station absorbing much of the initial funding costs, and opens the possibility of the film appearing on television as a "cultural series" (Guattari 2009b, 152). This proposition expands the definition of minor cinema to encompass "made-for-tv" movies, television shows, mini-series and collaboration with state-sponsored funding sources more generally. The central role that television can play in the exhibition of a minor film moves away from any sort of film puritanism that Deleuze could be accused of in his cinema books as a result of his unabashed auteurism.

In addition to Guattari's innovative plans for funding, he provides a detailed script complete with notes on cinematography, *mise-en-scène*, and sound. Guattari lays out a number of scenes all centred around a massive wall that connects a number of vignettes and scenarios. The project rejects a linear plot and instead embraces Kafka's own fragmentary mode of writing, "bringing together people with different points of view and setting out from systems of specific singularities... to contribute in ways that make the themes, and the significations that tend to impose themselves, explode" (2009b, 152). The project's joint emphasis on the importance of both establishing funding and maintaining creative control resembles Vinterberg's ability to secure funds from institutions that are friendly to his artistic preoccupations (such as Lars von Trier's Zentropa studio which is known for financing unorthodox films and the Danish Film Institute's state subsidies for films that embody a perceived cultural value).

In total, Guattari's diverse writings on cinema do not eliminate the possibility for minor cinemas of small or postcolonial nations, the avant-garde, queer or gendered filmmaking—the three types of minor cinema found in contemporary scholarship on the topic.⁵ Yet Guattari's thought locates instances

⁵ For a couple examples of each of these types of scholarship on minor cinema see: Hjort 2005 and Martin-Jones 2004; White 2008 and Butler 2002; James 2005 and Gunning 1989–90.

of the minor outside, or even in opposition to many of the aforementioned structures of (national) identity and allows for a bearing witness to processes of becoming minoritarian across multiple cinematic forms, styles, and historical constellations. Guattari's minor cinema is about producing new becomings of subjectivity along lines of desire that confound the molar plane of consistency on which the very principle of identity lies, privileging resingularization of an auto-enriching subjectivity that traverses diverse universes of reference, not reterritorialization of identity around ethnic, linguistic, or national distinctions and divisions.⁶ The base operation of Guattari's minor cinema is to make a majoritarian assemblage engage in becoming minor, becoming other, becoming revolutionary. In reconfiguring majoritarian filmic assemblages, subjectivity is produced differently so that the possibility of weaving new, revolutionary collective subjectivities comes into view.

*

It's All About Love is set in 2021 New York, and narrates a story about John (Joaquin Phoenix), a professor of Polish literature and Elena (Claire Danes), a famous figure skater. They are a divorced couple that reignites their love after discovering that Elena's father is involved in a grotesque cloning plot designed to profit from Elena's figure skating performances. In escaping the evil father's patriarchal oppression, the couple traverse an apocalyptic world mired by heart failure, extreme weather, and gravitational black holes attempting to find a space where love can thrive in such a deeply troubled world (not at all completely unlike our own).

The film unfolds like one of Félix Guattari's "schizo journeys" of *amour fou* wherein character perception and (dis)orientation is communicated through a-semiotic material such as "pure" colours and noises that act prior to representation. The concept of a cinema of *amour fou* stems from a little-cited interview between Guattari and the Parisian (then) leftist newspaper *Libération* where they discuss Terrence Malick's 1973 "schizo film" *Badlands*. In this film of *amour fou* "it's absolutely impossible to separate the normal and the pathological" (Guattari 1995, 247). Guattari expresses interest in the film's dual representation of love and madness and its "paradoxical structure [wherein] the film is built around the idea that [Kit, the main character] is not really mad," but Guattari insists that he is (2009a, 247). The same paradox rests at the heart of

⁶ Guattari writes: "The only acceptable finality of human activity is the production of a subjectivity that is auto-enriching its relation to the world in a continuous fashion" (1995, 21).

It's All About Love. John and Elena don't know who to trust, authenticity is in question, paranoia sets in, and the absurdity of the world, rendered sonorous in part by their absurd accents, distances the characters from the possibility of establishing stable mental co-ordinates in a universe of inconsistencies. *It's All About Love* constructs a diegesis within a fuzzy zone of indeterminacy between a potentially mad character subjectivity and objectivity in a mad world; and this is precisely what Guattari identifies in *Badlands* as constitutive of a "schizo journey," where "at every turn, we are on the edge of madness" (2009a, 247).

The mad journey of escape from society through becoming-nomad that pervades *It's All About Love* is triggered when John first catches sight of Elena, and both characters wear eye-catching purple.⁷ *It's All About Love's* costuming in this scene where the lovers meet, and throughout much of the film, visually links the couple through colour, and distinguishes them from their architectural surroundings and social milieu. Of importance here is that the couple's shared colour palette corresponds to a shared consciousness about the state of the world. Unlike everyone else in the city, they are seemingly the only two people affected by death and the fact that there are dead bodies scattered throughout the city. Their shared aversion to the dead body on the subway steps, for example, distinguishes their behaviour from the normal etiquette in Vinterberg's 2021 New York which is simply to "step over it," as is remarked in the opening minutes of the film. Colour is consciousness and its movements are analogous to movements of affect, thought, and sensation. The way that perception is coloured (and discoloured, over-coloured, or repetitively coloured) reflects the fusing and formation (or even cloning) of character and spectator subjectivities—their psychic constitution through colour-consciousness.

Through such a use of colour, *It's All About Love* constructs a world on the edge of madness through what Guattari terms "a-signifying part-signs" which, according to Gary Genosko "provide lines of escape from the snares of representation" (2009b, 146) and take the form of "colours, non-phonetic sounds, rhythms, [and] faciality traits" (148). Similar to the intensity of disorienting a-signifying components that attract Guattari to *Badlands*,⁸ *It's All About Love's* film-style visualizes a narrative of *amour fou* through a colour palette of

⁷ This parallels how according to Guattari, in *Badlands* "[f]rom the moment [Kit] sees the girl, a machine of *amour fou* is triggered" (2009a, 253).

⁸ Guattari says: "At the level of intensities, where you don't know if you are a man, woman, plant, or whatever, you stand directly in relations of desire, the relations of love with Holly. One no longer knows who is who, or who speaks to whom. Everything becomes an interrelational fabric—the eyes, the machines, the gestures" (2009a, 250).

piercing blues, purples and yellows that act in conjunction with the film's sonorous intensities.

Before looking at some examples of how the aesthetics of *It's All About Love* construct a potentially mad character subjectivity which short-circuit dominant modes of representation, it is worth briefly quoting some of Guattari's most provocative thoughts on love and sexual relations, and the connection between sense/perception (which is undoubtedly ever-present in loving and/or sexual relations) and its possible aesthetic expression. Guattari points out that "the despotism which exists in conjugal or familial relationships arises from the same kind of libidinal disposition that exists in the broadest social field" (2009a, 156). This echoes Suely Rolnik's critique of closed familial relations with reference to Hollywood and its perpetuation of constraining (gendered) social types. Rolnik writes:

The fact that a certain figure of the family has imploded is something we already know. It is not new: it becomes deterritorialized in the same speed of Integrated World Capitalism, spurred in fact by its very logic. What is left of it is an empty repetition of the post-Fordist conjugal cell and Hollywoodian characters – a certain figure of man, a certain figure of woman; a certain heterosexuality – entirely devoid of sense. Left without compass, diverse are the paths that we experiment⁹ (Guattari and Rolnik 2007, 417).

The type of love that a minor cinema of *amour fou* could set into motion must counter the enclosed parameters of the Hollywoodian characters and bourgeois romantic love, if such a construct can even be termed "love" at all.

It's All About Love counters the empty repetition of canonized romances through two aesthetic strategies. Firstly, through repeated cutaway shots that occur throughout the film to other geographical areas and peoples, including the arid Ugandan landscape and the flying people who populate it, and snow covered Paris and Venice. Secondly, through a-signifying part-signs such as

⁹ Hardt and Negri echo Guattari and Rolnik's thoughts on the bankruptcy of familial and conjugal affairs under capitalism. They write: "The modern concept of love is almost exclusively limited to the bourgeois couple and the claustrophobic confines of the nuclear family. Love has become a strictly private affair. We need a more generous and more unrestrained conception of love. We need to recuperate the public and political conception of love common to premodern traditions" (Hardt and Negri 2004, 351).

intensive colours and noises. The first strategy is based on certain principles of parallel editing montage, and links the events taking place in 2021 New York with those of other parts of the globe, as they are all affected by a diverse set of freak phenomena—human heart failures, spontaneous elevations, and extreme weather disruptions. The editing pattern insists on the presence of a global perspective, and the consideration of global peoples even while focusing on the protagonists that form the romantic couple. The editing strategy results in a certain opening up of the couple so that the sensation of love that they share is not bracketed off from its global, transnational and trans-linguistic social context.

The second strategy compliments the first, yet it overruns dominant modes of signification within narrative cinema through aural and sonic intensities constitutive of Guattarian a-signifying cinematic part-signs. *It's All About Love* has been mistaken for bad-Hollywood fare because it overlaps with certain Hollywood strategies, but its radical political potentiality is fostered by the film's use of a-signifying material that proliferates molecularly on the *excess* of Hollywood signification, or what Guattari metaphorically terms the "manure of signifying components."¹⁰ A few illustrative examples are necessary for visualizing these claims.

In an extreme close-up shot of John's face, highly saturated and constructed colour schemes unhinge the character's frame of mind from a state of stability that would more commonly be associated with a naturalized, realist colour palette. The blues and greens in this image do not take on a symbolic value, and they do not *represent* a state of mind; rather it is through the force of their intensity that they doubly circumvent the signifying logic often grafted to colour and the co-ordinates of a romance narrative based on coherence between a character's mental state and the diegesis. A similar use of colour occurs when John comes close to having a mental breakdown. Just before this occurs, a shallow-focus close up shot shows a distressed John in the foreground and blurred out lights in the background. John's mental state is externalized and visualized through blurred light and colour. This scene signifies in excess of symbolic semiologies *representing* mental-states; this excess is precisely the a-signifying force that remains. These uses of colour and light—a-signifying material—shift an otherwise cause-and-effect narrative onto a plane of affects, impressions and appearances. A minor cinema of intensities rather than

¹⁰ Guattari writes: "Asignifying components develop to some extent on the manure of signifying components; they proliferate like microscopic parasites on modes of subjectification and consensualization" (2011, 51).

identities.

But colours do not act alone. “Colors do not move a people. Flags can do nothing without trumpets” (Deleuze and Guattari 2004, 348). Later in the film, John has a paralyzing headache and anxiously drinks a glass of water. A loud rumbling of static and thunder takes over the soundtrack, but does not correspond to any specific source within the diegesis. The a-signifying noise again evokes the sensation of John’s mental state, as John’s tormented psyche runs along these a-semiotic currents, expressing rather than representing itself, connecting to the vibrations of cosmic disturbances. The rumbling shakes the diegesis, yet it is arguably emitted from within John’s head. Is the spectator then provoked to identify with John to the extent that he or she is “in John’s head,” so to speak? Does this mean that the rumbling is only something John experiences, or is the noise coming from a storm outside? Once again, indeterminacy characterizes the links between the characters’ psyche and its broader universe precisely because they are constructed of the same (semiological, biological, libidinal) material and actually mutually condition each other. Bodies and psyches connecting on a continuum of affect.

Analogically, the almost indistinguishable clothes, make-up and bright red lipstick worn by Elena’s clones does not represent their similarity, but rather aesthetically constructs them through the same a-semiotic building materials (which parallels how they are all constructed out of the same genetic material). The clones are as real as Elena and Elena is as artificial as the clones. A confusion between authenticity and artifice plays out between the singular (Elena) and the multiple (her clones). Can Elena’s visions of the clones be trusted? Is she hallucinating or has the unimaginable become a reality? Who is the “real” Elena? In a world where colours, noises, intensities and affects confuse the original and the clone, sanity and madness are similarly confused and scrambled.

Such indeterminacy stands in opposition to standardized romance narrative arcs premised on the *individuated* mental stability of both characters where stability is implicit in representational conventions of Hollywood realism (like intelligible dialogue/accents, uncanted frames, diegetic consistency, etc.). The aesthetics of *It's All About Love* express *amour fou* and the madness of such a love is productive precisely because it re-organizes the romance film and redefines love—tapping into its political potential for reconfiguring the social fabric along new axis of interpersonal and ecological care, not identity politics.

If identity places limits on a singularity's frame of reference,¹¹ then it also places limits on a people's capacity to become-other, to open onto new modes of social organization, to love outside of the couple. This insistence on becoming-different, on creating a new humanity based on love is important because becoming is central to the transformations of John and Elena's subjectivities throughout the course of *It's All About Love*.

As John and Elena take flight from an absurd form of familial repression, their movement and possible madness effectively shakes off prior constellations of subjectivity that grounded their identities. On the run, John is no longer a literature professor, and Elena is no longer a world-renowned figure skater; their flight from the order of their past lives results in their becoming-nomad. More importantly, John and Elena were unable to love each other when they were both firmly wedged into Elena's familial assemblage. In taking flight, they escape the familial hierarchy and their past positions within it, and by extension their previous responsibilities within the capitalist system more generally. Love becomes possible only once John and Elena reconstruct their subjectivities outside of the standardized dictates of family and capitalist-sponsored identity; when they acknowledge the state of the world and critique their place in it, and then act and move in accordance with this new (self-) knowledge. The turbulence of the world and their connections to its raw energy forces John and Elena to relate to one another on a new plane of subjectivization. They do not rediscover their love, but love each other differently. The love story between John and Elena is truly a case of *amour fou* because the rekindling of their love is predicated on a delve into madness. The lovers were unable to love each other when their identities were yoked to molar subject-formations, but as their previous beliefs about the coherence of the world comes undone and gives way to a shared consciousness expressed through germinating colour, love deterritorializes from the constraints of marriage and family, and thrives on the margins of society in smooth, snowed-over spaces of unmappable territory.

It's All About Love opens up the claustrophobic confines of the romantic couple through the film's colour and sound intensities that multiply connections between disparate elements: the lush yellow of Elena's ritzy hotel room to the arid yellow of the Ugandan landscape, the purple of John and Elena's clothes to the purple skyline over a snow-filled Paris, Elena's red lipstick to the blood-

¹¹ Guattari writes that "identity is what causes singularity to pass from different ways of existing to a single identifiable frame of reference" (Guattari and Rolnik 2007, 94).

stained assassinated clones, the green in John's eyes to the New York traffic lights, etc. As a result, flows of affect and desire establish new, shifting coordinates of love that are necessarily collective, yet collective without being subsumed under conventional categories of (national) identity that are often deployed to organize yet confine collectivities.

If "love serves as the basis for political projects in common and the construction of a new society," as Hardt and Negri suggest (2004, 351), then Vinterberg's report on the state of the world which concludes with the title line "it's all about love," is really about re-defining love, and advancing a mad-love that renders the most seemingly personal of all emotions, collective, and thus political.

MEDIAGRAPHY

- Baratier, Jacques, dir. *La ville bidon*. Parc Film, 1971. Film.
- Bellochio, Marco, Silvano Agosti, Sandro Petraglia, and Stefano Rulli. *Fous à Délir*. March 11 Collective, 1976. Film
- Butler, Alison. *Women's Cinema: The Contested Screen*. London: Wallflower, 2002.
- Deleuze, Gilles. *Cinema 2: The Time-Image*. Trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Robert Galeta. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989.
- Deleuze, Gilles, and Félix Guattari. *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*. Trans. Dana Polan. Minneapolis, London: University of Minnesota Press, 1986.
- Deleuze, Gilles, and Félix Guattari. *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. Trans. Brian Massumi. London: Continuum, [1980] 2004.
- Feret, René, dir. *Histoire De Paul*. Les Films De L'Arquebuse, 1975. Film.
- Genosko, Gary. *Félix Guattari: A Critical Introduction*. London: Pluto, 2009a.
- Genosko, Gary. "Introduction to 'A Project for a Film by Kafka'." *Deleuze Studies*, vol. 3, no. 2 (2009b): 145-49.
- Guattari, Félix. *La révolution moléculaire*. Fontenay-sous Bois: Recherches (Encres), 1977.
- Guattari, Félix. "The Postmodern Dead End." *Flash Art*, no. 128 (May/June 1986): 40-41.
- Guattari, Félix. "La machine à images." *Cahiers du cinéma*, no. 437 (November 1990): 71-72.

-
- Guattari, Félix. *Chaosmosis: an Ethico-aesthetic Paradigm*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995.
- Guattari, Félix. "Toward and Ethics of the Media." *Polygraph: An International Journal of Culture and Politics*, no. 14 (2002): 17-22.
- Guattari, Félix. *Chaosophy: Texts and Interviews 1972-1977*. Sylvère Lotringer, Ed., Trans. David L. Sweet, Jarred Becker, and Taylor Adkins. Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2009a.
- Guattari, Félix. "Project for a Film by Kafka." *Deleuze Studies*, vol. 3, no. 2 (2009b): 150-61.
- Guattari, Félix. *The Machinic Unconscious: Essays in Schizoanalysis*. Trans. Taylor Adkins. Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2011.
- Guattari, Félix and Toni Negri. *Communists Like Us*. Trans. Michael Ryan. New York: Semiotext(e), 1990.
- Guattari, Félix and Suely Rolnik. *Molecular Revolution in Brazil*. Trans. Karel Clapshow and Brian Holmes. Cambridge/London: Semiotext(e), 2007.
- Gunning, Tom. "Towards a Minor Cinema: Fonoroff, Herwitz, Ahwesh, Klahr, Lapore and Solomon." *Motion Picture*, vol. 3, nos. 1-2, 1989-90, pp. 2-5.
- Hardt, Michael, and Antonio Negri. *Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire*. New York: Penguin, 2004.
- Hjort, Mette. *Small Nation, Global Cinema*. Minneapolis/London. University of Minnesota Press, 2005.
- James, David E. *The Most Typical Avant-garde: History and Geography of Minor Cinemas in Los Angeles*. Berkeley: University of California, 2005.
- Loach, Ken, dir. *Family Life*. EMI Films, 1971. Film
- Malick, Terrence, dir. *Badlands*. Badlands Company, 1973. Film.
- Martin-Jones, David. *Deleuze, Cinema and National Identity: Narrative Time in National Contexts*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2006.
- Martin-Jones, David. "Orphans, A Work of Minor Cinema from Post-Devolutionary Scotland." *Journal of British Cinema and Television*, vol. 1, no. 2 (2004): 226-41.
- Robinson, Peter, dir. *Asylum*. Peter Robinson Associates, 1972. Film.
- Scott, Ridley, dir. *Blade Runner*. Warner Bros, 1982. Film.
- Stevenson, Jack. *Dogme Uncut: Lars Von Trier, Thomas Vinterberg, and the Gang That Took on Hollywood*. Santa Monica: Santa Monica Press, 2003.
- Victor, Renaud, dir. *Ce gamin-là*. 1975. Film.

-
- Vinterberg, Thomas, dir. *Festen*. Nimbus Film Productions, 1998. Film.
Vinterberg, Thomas, dir. *It's All About Love*. Focus, 2008. Film.
White, Patricia. "Lesbian Minor Cinema." *Screen Winter*, vol. 49, no. 4 (2008):
410-25.

Biographical notice

Adam Szymanski (M.A. Global Film Cultures, The University of Western Ontario) is currently a PhD student in the Film and Moving Image Studies program at Concordia University in Montreal. His dissertation takes up Félix Guattari's writings on the machinic unconscious in analyzing cinema's capacity to convey and interrogate experiences of depression.

Key words

Félix Guattari, minor cinema, national cinema, subjectivity, *amour fou*

Résumé

Cet article analyse le film *It's All About Love* (Thomas Vinterberg, 2003) comme une œuvre de cinéma mineur tel que définit par Félix Guattari. En combinant les approches de Guattari sur le cinéma mineur, la subjectivité et l'antipsychiatrie, l'article propose un regard sur le cinéma mineur qui remet en cause le lien *de facto* que l'on établit entre ce type de cinéma et la politique d'identité (nationale). En effectuant un retour nécessaire à des textes méconnus de Guattari, principalement le chapitre « Le cinéma : un art mineur » du livre *La révolution moléculaire*, cet essai permet une lecture d'*It's All About Love* qui explore la manière dont le film construit — à travers les couleurs et les intensités sonores ou les signes partiels a-signifiants cinématographiques — la subjectivité d'un personnage fou. Au final, l'article soutient qu'*It's All About Love* propose une notion nécessairement collective de l'amour qui se construit à partir de mouvements partagés d'affect et de désir, qui peuvent former la base

It's All About Love:
Félix Guattari's Minor Cinema

des liens futurs d'une organisation sociale qui fonctionnent au-delà des limites bureaucratiques de l'État-nation et des contraintes subjectives de l'identité nationale.