

Introduction: Catherine Malabou, plasticity and film (Special Issue of *Film-Philosophy*: “Catherine Malabou, Plasticity and Film”, Volume 28, Issue 3, co-edited by Benjamin Dalton and Ben Tyrer)

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Benjamin Dalton, Lancaster University

b.dalton@lancaster.ac.uk

Ben Tyrer, Middlesex University

b.tyrer@mdx.ac.uk

Catherine Malabou is *the* contemporary thinker of plasticity: a term she excavates first of all from Hegel in order to consider time and transformation (1996/2005). Working with its variant meanings of giving, receiving but also, crucially, *destroying* form, Malabou has elaborated the concept of plasticity in relation to diverse subjects from Heidegger and the subject of change (2004/2011) to feminism and human and animal life (2009/2011), and contemporary neuroscience and biology. The effect of her project is to show that bodies, worlds, ideas are malleable – even in ways we had not yet anticipated – while also insisting upon *resistance* to forms of neoliberal control that would collapse this plastic capacity into the managerial injunction to be “flexible” (2004/2008). Of particular significance is *The New Wounded* (2007/2012), Malabou’s investigation of brain injury and what she calls the “destructive plasticity” of trauma that forms new identities often unrecognisable from past selves. A key reference point for Malabou here is “Beyond the Pleasure Principle” (1920/1953) – Freud’s most richly philosophical text on suffering, written in the wake of pestilence and war – and as these blights continue to be visited upon us over a century later it remains to be seen what new forms of post-traumatic subjectivity will appear in the world. More recently, Malabou has turned her attention to the topic of epigenesis, through a careful reading of Kant in relation

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to twenty-first-century genetics and artificial intelligence, in order to consider the foundations of consciousness and the emergence of reason. Malabou’s latest work journeys beyond the explicit focus on plasticity to explore questions of anarchism. Nonetheless, we still find Malabou evoking the “plasticity of the anarchist” (2022/2023, p. 215) and noting that “plasticity is the meaning of [anarchism’s] being” (p. 214). If plasticity inhabits anarchistic assemblages and collaborations to come and, as Malabou suggests in *Before Tomorrow* (2014/2016), epigenesis marks a space of reciprocal interference and transformation, then to what extent might such conceptions of co-operation and co-mutation offer ways of thinking about the relation between film and philosophy that defines our field?

This Special Issue developed out of a roundtable discussion session to which the editors contributed as part of the 2021 Film-Philosophy Conference, which explored potential forms or pathways for Malabouian film-philosophy. We considered topics as varied as animation, affect, and sexual difference but were united by the possibilities of thinking transformation, and transforming thought, in the encounters between film and plasticity. More generally, this project originally evolved from our shared interest in connections between Malabou’s philosophy and the films of Michael Haneke: including readings of Malabou’s notion of the destructive plasticity demonstrated in brain traumas through the portrayal of Anne’s transformation following a stroke in Haneke’s *Amour* (2012), as well as readings of more general post-traumatic “disaffection” via Malabou in Haneke’s “glaciation trilogy” (Tyrer, 2016; Dalton, 2017). Further work has activated Malabou’s philosophy of plasticity to approach queer bodies and ecologies in the films of Alain Guiraudie (Dalton, 2019) and Robin Campillo (Dalton, 2022). Overall, it is our contention that there remains huge potential in the connection between Malabou and film, which has yet to be fully realised.

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In this context, such thinking of the plastic might immediately evoke the cellulose acetate of traditional safety film whereby cinema is able to take and create form, but also – more strikingly – the *explosive* capacity of nitrate stock so memorably used for bombing (or *plastiquage*) at the climax of Quentin Tarantino's *Inglorious Basterds* (2009). As Malabou notes in her groundbreaking first book, *The Future of Hegel*:

Plasticity's range of meanings is not yet exhausted, and it continues to evolve with and in the language. Plastic material is a synthetic material which can take on different shapes and properties according to the functions intended. 'Plastic' on its own is an explosive material with a nitroglycerine and nitrocellulose base that can set off violent detonations. The plasticity of the word itself draws it to extremes, both to those concrete shapes in which form is crystallized (sculpture) and to the annihilation of all form (the bomb). (1996/2005, p. 9)

Writing only a year before Malabou's first major works, Jeffrey L. Meikle also charts the cultural history between synthetic plastic materials and conceptual understandings of plasticity, focusing in part on celluloid (1995, pp. 10-30), but engaging only briefly with celluloid's use in photographic film (p. 28). Pansy Duncan also strikingly analyses how the plastic materiality of celluloid film influences film aesthetics, drawing upon Malabou's concept of destructive plasticity (2019, p. 97). More speculatively, we might consider the shift *away* from celluloid as such – from the supposed fixity of analogue photography to the infinite malleability of the digital – as another kind of specifically filmic plasticity.

Cinema has an elusive but unmistakable presence in Malabou's elaboration of plasticity. It appears across her oeuvre not only as means of illustrating plasticity in action, but also as intrinsic to the make-up of the concept itself. Following her initial conceptualisation of

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plasticity in the work of Hegel, Malabou's first filmic engagement occurs in her edited volume *Plasticité*. This work comprises interdisciplinary explorations of plasticity by scholars – including Meikle, mentioned above – working across art theory and history, neuroscience, cultural history, film theory and history, and sound studies. In her introduction to the text, Malabou notes how plasticity is emerging as a central concern of many disparate fields, from philosophy, to art, to neuroscience (2000a, p. 7). The influence of cinema on Malabou's thinking here is attested by the three accompanying stills from Alain Resnais' *Le Chant du styrène* (1958): a play on *le chant du syrène* (the song of the siren) and the French word for "styrene" (a chemical used to make latex and polystyrene). The film charts the cultural and philosophical history of synthetic plastics, as well as the processes behind their industrial production, beginning with striking imagery of every-day plastic objects animated to look like they are growing and evolving like organic plants. The collection also includes work on visual media that conceptualises plasticity through film theory and history (e.g. Fleischer, 2000; Païni, 2000).

"*Photogénie plastique*", the contribution of theorist and film director, Érik Bullot, is particularly resonant with Malabou's thinking of plasticity in its dialogue with Élie Faure's notion of cineplasticity, which will be adapted as a central concept in Malabou's subsequent work. The original text, "*De la cinéplastique*" (1922/1963), features Faure's account of the time he witnessed Mount Vesuvius erupting: observing the undulating and congealing forms of magma as they mutated, flowing down the volcano's side. Bullot brings Faure's visual plastic imaginary of the volcanic eruption into conversation with Jean Epstein's *Le Cinématographe vu de l'Etna* (1926), showing how Epstein also draws from the imagery of an erupting volcano (in this instance Mount Etna) in theorising his concept of "*photogénie*" as the formal generativity of cinema (Bullot, 2000, pp. 195). In Malabou's *The Heidegger Change*, Faure's

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“cineplasticity” then takes on a life of its own. Malabou draws on the concept to theorise “the imaginary as the opening of a line of flight, an originary glimpse of an exit or continuation; an imaginary that is necessarily cinematic—never thematic. A pure view onto movement” (2004/2011, p. 101). Further, Malabou states:

I will allow myself to speak of a Heideggerian “cineplastic”. The term is used by Élie Faure, in a 1920 article concerning cinema. He stresses there that the qualifier “plastic” is too often attributed to congealed configurations, even though it perfectly lends itself to the description of forms in movement, or mobile figures. The “cineplastic,” because it brings about a displacement of plastic processes, precisely allows for an interrogation of the plastic value of displacement. [...] [E]very course, insofar as it crosses thresholds, is creative of forms. (p. 100)

Malabou clarifies the place of this cineplastic in *Plasticity at the Dusk of Writing*. It is central to her thinking of plasticity’s relationship with otherness and alterity. Plasticity, for Malabou, places alterity within transformation itself; alterity is not opposite to form, but precisely the movement, metamorphosis or becoming-other of forms: “the *movement of alterity is a cineplastic, not a revelatory aplastic or akinesia*” (2005/2010, p. 40, original emphasis). The Malabouian cineplastic, then, as a thinking of alterity, is intimately connected with ethics. Noting the tendency in conceptualisations of ethics to “privilege the formless, the unrepresentable, the ‘disfiguration’, the scenic removal”, Malabou in contrast argues that there is no need to remove the form from the ethical (p. 54). Again, the example given by Malabou is cinematic: referring to Claude Lanzmann’s *Shoah* (1985) to insist that the concept of form does not contradict the ethics of unrepresentability explored by the film, she notes that “Lanzmann nevertheless describes his film as clearly and explicitly as a form [...]. This

Introduction: Catherine Malabou, plasticity and film (Special Issue of *Film-Philosophy*: “Catherine Malabou, Plasticity and Film”, Volume 28, Issue 3, co-edited by Benjamin Dalton and Ben Tyrer) shows that form goes far beyond the naïve type, evidence, or sensibilization of truth” (p. 55).¹

Further, and in a very different exploration of plastic alterity through cinema in “The Living Room: Hospitality and Plasticity”, Malabou analyses Stanley Kubrick's *The Shining* (1980) as an example of another encounter with alterity which avoids aligning alterity with form. For Malabou, the graphic architecture of the hotel denotes a hospitality to alterity conceived of in terms of thresholds rather than forms: “It is striking to see how every single spatial lay-out in which the war between paranoia and schizophrenia unfolds is made up of effects of the threshold, never effects of forms: rooms, corridors, labyrinths, races in the snow” (2013a). Apropos of the Overlook, then, for Malabou the contemporary scene of hospitality is always a hotel.

In what seems to be her only screen credit to date, Malabou features as one of several “talking head” academics in *Love in the Post* (2014), Joanna Callaghan's cinematic reimagining of Derrida's *The Post Card* (1980/1987). Malabou's first two appearances in the film are relatively straightforward. The screenplay describes them as “documentary” inserts: of Malabou speaking from the Jardin de Luxembourg, Paris, in September 2012, offering reflections on the contemporary relevance of her mentor's *envoies*. In the first, she suggests that modern technology tends to “erase the *différance* (with an ‘a’) [sic] in order to gain immediacy into reading each others' minds”; while, in the second, she describes Derrida's text as “theatricalising this discussion between the two principles, that of pleasure and the death drive”. Malabou's comments are clearly inserted at points where they will resonate with the fictional drama that makes up the rest of the film, but her interventions here are also marked as ontologically distinct from that

¹ Lanzmann's documentary about the Holocaust is famously told entirely through eye-witness testimonies rather than archival images or materials.

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storyworld. Malabou’s third appearance, however, is more complex in its plastic engagement of film and philosophy. Here, the footage of Malabou is framed diegetically by the act of viewing, as Joanna (Lucinda Lloyd) is shown editing the interview itself. Joanna looks up, off screen, as Malabou’s voice is heard – now relating Derrida and cinema more explicitly than in her previous appearances – before a cut replaces Joanna with Malabou’s image occupying the full frame. In an explicitly reflexive commentary, Malabou observes: “The visual equivalent of deconstruction would be the impossibility, which perhaps we’re experiencing at the moment [she gestures to the camera], of really recreating what we are saying”. Before Malabou has finished this sentence, however, another cut returns us to Joanna in the edit suite and, now acousmatically, Malabou continues, “I think she has no access. There is no telepathy”. Cut back to Malabou, “she can’t read our minds”; then back to Joanna, “She is listening to us but she cannot read within us, into us”. This back-and-forth continues until we land on a reverse shot, over Joanna’s shoulder, of the editing timeline on her laptop and a more fantasmatic projection of the interview footage, seeming to float on the wall beyond her. The rhythm of the intercutting of images and overlaying of soundtracks thus put film and filmmaker into a plastic exchange, in a metacommentary on the relation of co-creation and co-implication that characterises the hybrid, docu-fictional and film-philosophical form of Callaghan’s work.

Importantly, Malabou also discusses cinema at further length in the full interview filmed for *Love in the Post*, and transcribed in Callaghan and McQuillan’s *Love In The Post: From Plato to Derrida: The Screenplay and Commentary*.² Here, Malabou reflects on film and

² The full interview is also available on the Heraclitus Pictures Vimeo channel: <https://vimeo.com/86822428>.

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filmmaking, the dialogue evolving out of the "translation" of Derrida's text into cinema.

Malabou, arguing that "there is no translation without plasticity", notes that "There is of course a frontier between the visual and the intellectual, or philosophical but at the same time this frontier is not rigid and there are equivalents". She goes on to suggest that "[c]inema has become the motif of a certain philosophical interrogation" and that this is to do with how cinema engages with the question of consciousness. However, engaging here with Bergson, Malabou refers to cinema as something that deconstructs consciousness rather than representing it directly, and that "this deconstruction of consciousness is the very equivalent of deconstruction in cinema" (Callaghan and McQuillan, 2014, p. 168).

Film continues to inform Malabou's turn more explicitly to neuroscience and neuroplasticity in *What Should We Do With Our Brain?*. Here, Malabou refers to the work of Resnais (*Je t'aime, je t'aime* [1968]; *Providence* [1977]; *Mon Oncle d'Amérique* [1980]) and Kubrick (*2001: A Space Odyssey* [1968]) as analysed by Deleuze in *Cinema 2* (1985/1989) in terms of the adequation of brain and world. Malabou notes that we are unaware of plasticity precisely because we are ourselves plastic: "because plasticity is precisely the form of our world and because we are so immersed in it [...] we experience it without either thinking it or being conscious of it" (2004/2008, p. 39). This, Malabou suggests, leaves us susceptible to misrepresentations of both brain and world as *centralised* "because power [...] has every interesting in our imagining it that way" (p. 40). Malabou elaborates, evocatively: "We are perhaps always and necessarily blind [...] to the political functioning and import of the brain-world [...]. We are perhaps always and necessarily blind, at first, to our own cinema" (p. 39). And then, in a further, explicitly cinematic invocation, she observes, "The screen that separates us from our brain is an ideological screen" (p. 40), erected by those clichéd representations of centrality while being maintained both by philosophy's resistance to

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neuroscience and by the inability of science to critique its own worldview (i.e. its resistance to politics and philosophy).

Malabou’s line of reasoning becomes slightly ambiguous here, and opens the possibility of (at least) two different interpretations. On the one hand, she could be read as suggesting that cinema *reproduces* the occlusion of plasticity. On the other, Malabou seems to be showing that film itself has the capacity to *lift* this screen through what Deleuze identified as the “cinema of the brain” articulated by Kubrick and Resnais (Deleuze 1985/1989, pp. 205-207). These works “display the identity of the brain and world” as *fragmented* rather than centralised (Malabou 2004/2008, p. 39), thus rendering visible and discernible on screen that which remains invisible and indiscernible in the cinema of our own brains: which is to say its *plasticity*. We therefore find a complex and partially unresolved relation between film and Malabou’s philosophy. Where, in *The Heidegger Change*, cineplasticity – as the visibility of plasticity and change – appeared to be related to its cinematic roots only via reference to Faure and suggests a more general understanding of *kine-* (from the Greek for “movement”), here cinema itself potentially *screens* (in both senses) the true plastic makeup of our brains – situating film almost uniquely as a gateway into Malabou’s philosophy.

Malabou’s shift in focus to the “destructive plasticity” of the injured or traumatised brain in *The New Wounded* and *Ontology of the Accident* also demonstrates a latent interest in screen media. Both works look to cultural texts as ways of envisaging the kinds of radical transformations that occur in identity following traumas to the brain. *The New Wounded* references the memoir of Iris Murdoch, written by her husband following her death after living with Alzheimer’s: “He evokes, for example, the mornings that Iris spent watching *Teletubbies*, a show intended for little children that she was especially fond of. Bayley notes that that the writer had become childish but not a child. Childish but not the child that she had been”

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Later, in an analysis of "Literary forms of Neuropathology", Malabou considers the strangely detached, disaffected characters who populate Samuel Beckett's plays as examples of destructive plasticity at work. She conceptualises their disaffected states via Deleuze's theory of the "exhausted" (1992/1995), developed in response to Beckett's television play *Quad* (1981) in which four figures move around a stage according to tightly choreographed movements, repeating these movements without ever meeting and without anything happening. Although Malabou does not reference *Quad* explicitly here, her reliance on Deleuze's televisually-inspired concept of exhaustion highlights the latent presence of the moving image in Malabou's conceptualisation of destructive plasticity.

Ontology of the Accident also offers references to photography and cinematographic techniques in its exploration of metamorphosis: elaborating destructive plasticity via depictions of transformation in which identity is violently and wholly transfigured, for instance through brain injury or simply for no discernible reason at all. Malabou refers to Antoni Casas Ros' description of the violent transfiguration of his face following a road accident, citing Ros' appeal to visual media to describe his transformation: "Picasso would have hated me, for I am the negation of his invention. [...] I am a blurred photograph, one that might remind you of a face" (Ros cited in Malabou, 2009/2012, p. 12). Malabou also strikingly refers to cinematography to differentiate between different modes of transformation in her analysis of the representation of ageing in Proust. This, Malabou says, takes two different forms,

Introduction: Catherine Malabou, plasticity and film (Special Issue of *Film-Philosophy*: “Catherine Malabou, Plasticity and Film”, Volume 28, Issue 3, co-edited by Benjamin Dalton and Ben Tyrer) comprising both the linear process of “becoming-old” and the sudden, destructive-plastic ageing in which one becomes completely unrecognisable: “The old people in Proust’s scenario are both disguised as what they are and transformed into entirely different characters. They are both tracking shots of themselves and snapshots of an absolute metamorphosis” (2009/2012, p. 53).

In *Self and Emotional Life*, in a chapter entitled “The Face and the Close-up”, Malabou engages with Deleuze’s analysis in *Cinema 1* (1983/1986) of Descartes’ reading of the face as the site upon which the passions are expressed: “Deleuze shows [...] that Descartes, in a way, would have invented the ‘close-up’” (2013b, p. 46). The face and the cinematic close-up thus play a central role in Malabou’s conception of the functioning of affect in the self, and how affects can disappear or be separated from the subject in neuronal trauma. Malabou writes:

affects and autoaffections are heteroaffections to the extent that they separate the human subject, the “I”, from itself. The I becomes an ‘icon,’ that is, nobody in particular, a nonsubstantial instance, just like in a close-up, where the actor disappears as an individual to become “the” face. (p. 49)

More recently, Malabou’s philosophical engagements with anarchism have included important encounters with cinema. Her text *Pleasure Erased: The Clitoris Unthought* – which undertakes to think the clitoris an “organ of thought” – dedicates an entire chapter to analysing the place of the clitoris (or indeed its absence) in Lars Von Trier’s *Nymphomaniac* (2013): offering perhaps Malabou’s most sustained close analysis of a film in her work so far (2020/2022). Her most recent work, *Stop Thief! Anarchism and Philosophy* (2022/2023), also returns to Lanzmann’s *Shoah* as read by Jacques Rancière in a discussion of the relationship between witnessing and anarchy.

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The role of cinema within Malabou's oeuvre has only begun to be explored relatively recently, with a growing body of work that activates Malabou's philosophy in and for film. These texts show the beginnings of a diverse range of contact points between Malabou and cinema, from analyses of mutable bodies, genders and sexualities on screen; to the filmic engagements with the brain and neuroscience; to studies of film form and genre more broadly.

Approaches to plastic embodiment, gender, and desire in film include Benjamin Dalton's approaches to queer cinema, in particular in the work of Alain Guiraudie and of Robin Campillo. Here, Malabou's plasticity intervenes in exploring how Guiraudie's cinema negotiates queer identity precisely through, and not against, a relationship to nature as a source for transformability and mutability (Dalton, 2019); and in conceptualising the filming of microbiological environments and individual human cells in Campillo's exploration of queer activism amid the AIDS crisis in '90s France (Dalton, 2022). Katie Goss also reads the queer potential in Malabou's philosophy through film, drawing from Malabou's work on epigenetics in an analysis of intersex embodiment and identity in Lucía Puenzo's *XXY* (2007) (Goss, 2022). Maggie Hennefeld draws on Malabou's destructive plasticity from feminist perspectives to analyse the explosive bodies of women who are pictured inexplicably blowing up or encountering other exaggeratedly violent and cartoonish fates in the domestic sphere in early twentieth-century film comedies such as *Mary Jane's Mishap* (1903) (2014, p. 176).

Malabou's work has also been deployed dynamically in readings of representations of neural processes and brain injuries in film. Ben Tyrer, for instance, reads the profound transformations undergone by the protagonist Anne in Haneke's *Amour* to argue that "the cinematic form of neuropathology that Haneke presents can serve to stage, to evoke, for the psyche this unknowable, unthinkable event while at the same time retaining an element of its fundamentally unrepresentable nature" (Tyrer, 2016, p. 36). In a different way, Patricia Pisters

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– in a presentation reproduced on her personal blog – considered Malabou’s approach to brain injury and how it might relate to her own work on cinematic representations of neural worlds and processes then being developed for *The Neuro-Image* (Pisters, 2012). Providing examples of how cinema allows us glimpses into the processes of suffering brains (amnesia, schizophrenia, PTSD, etc.), Pisters claims that “the neuro-image is actually an image of ‘the new wounded’” (2011). Michael Grace also draws importantly on Malabou’s figures of the new wounded in his theorization of a “disaffection-image” in the cinema of Bruno Dumont (Grace, 2023); while Greg Hainge revisits Faure’s cineplasticity via Malabou’s destructive plasticity in order to read the annihilation of cinematic form in Olivier Assayas’ *Demonlover* (2002) (Hainge, 2023).

Other authors have brought Malabou’s theory of plasticity into dialogue with questions of genre and form more broadly. In *Living Screens: Melodrama and Plasticity* (2015), Monique Rooney argues for melodrama as a particular plastic aesthetic form, drawing from the scenes of sculpting and animation central to Jean-Jacques Rousseau’s melodrama *Pygmalion*. Malabou also appears in brief, but striking moments of Sarah Cooper’s theorisation of the relationship between film and imagination (2019) and Eugenie Brinkema’s elaboration of a radical formalism in film (2022).

What, then, might a Malabouian film-philosophy look like? While, as noted above, Malabou relates the plasticity of the brain to Resnais’ later films, the title proper to a film-philosophy of destructive plasticity might be that locus classicus of trauma cinema: Resnais’ and Duras’ *Hiroshima mon amour* (1959). Indeed, this film makes a strikingly Malabouian claim for a sort of flat ontology of trauma: for the proximity of atomic annihilation in Hiroshima to psychic destruction in Nevers, asserting no priority or hierarchy in terms of the severity of a

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catastrophe on a personal or global scale. In the language of Resnais’ film, this is made clear from the very start: the famous slow dissolves of the lovers’ bodies – coated in ash, and in sweat – creating a visual parallel between states, the intimate entwining of forms in one image entering us into a film-world that emphasises the plasticity of devastation in *both* nuclear and neuronal violence.

Put another way, we might describe the logic of *Hiroshima* as *trauma by analogy*: drawing upon Nancy Wood’s analysis of the film, wherein she conceptualises the process of shared remembering and forgetting that passes between the couple as “memory by analogy” (1995, p. 310). While, as Wood notes, *Hiroshima* insists there was no simple *equivalence* between the traumas (because “any pain is incommensurable”), the putting into relation of the two disasters produces a “compelling form of analogy” (p. 310). Emphasising the biological signification of “analogy” as things irreducible but having a common function, Wood’s reading of the film thus echoes – we could say, *by analogy* – Malabou’s philosophy where the apparently incommensurable “accidents” of personal and historical trauma serve equally to bring about psychic destruction.

In the context of the “new wounded”, Malabou argues for an ontology of the accident that does not necessarily distinguish between different types or causes, focusing instead on the similar *effects* on the subject – the destructive plasticity of both “social” and “biological” violence – because, she states, “the social itself can be the cause of traumas that induce behaviors *analogous* to those of neuropaths” (2007/2012, p. 160, emphasis added). And so, when Malabou notes, “How could we not be struck by the obvious similarity between the general comportment and behaviour of a social outcast and a person with a brain lesion?” (p. 159), we should indeed picture here *Emmanuelle Riva*: as “Elle” on the one hand, and as “Anne” (in Haneke’s *Amour*) on the other.

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This analogy between film and philosophy brings out the ethical dimension of *The New Wounded*. If, by Malabou’s reckoning, Anne is ultimately rendered “unrecognisable” by the accident, it cannot be *to herself* because that self no longer as exists as a reflexive point of reference. Instead, she is unrecognisable *to the other*, to Georges, whose task it is, then, to register this traumatic loss in her place. As Malabou notes, in the poignant final lines of the book: “To gather the other’s pain is not to take [their] place, but to restore it to [them]” (p. 215). While destructive plasticity would call responsibility into question – in the sense that the new wounded might not respond to traditional forms of therapy – it becomes *our* responsibility to relate back to the one who is wounded the contours of an injury to which they themselves might be oblivious, and film could provide a recuperative space for such work (see Quinlivan, 2015).

However, we must also sound a note of caution regarding this reparative gesture. In her conclusion, Malabou returns to the connection between biological and sociopolitical destruction – or, as we might put it, between Riva’s Anne and Elle – to note a blurring of the distinction between organic and political traumas. But their “obvious similarity” should not, in the final analysis, be considered complete ontological flattening. As *Hiroshima* demonstrates, while injured, Elle *is* able to articulate her trauma: belatedly tracing her memories through her encounter with Lui. She can register her wound within the symbolic for herself. If survivors of social exclusion are conflated entirely with those of brain lesions – which is to say, forms of living death where no rapport or transference is possible – then there is the risk of severing the former from historical context in a way that would obscure the global causes of their injury, and of leaving them with as little to say about their plight as one rendered minimally conscious by brain damage. In other words, the attempt to politicise the new wounded here could instead depoliticise trauma as such. We might register their

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analogous conditions, but examining Resnais’ and Haneke’s subjects here demonstrates that it must be *Anne alone* who stands as the paradigm of the new wounded – just as Malabou herself claims that “Alzheimer’s disease is a particularly important example of such loss” (2007/2012, p. 213) – for she is the one decisively, irreversibly cut off from her own identity. Film, here, thus compels us to clarify our understanding of Malabou’s central concept of destructive plasticity and arguably to look elsewhere for its political valence.

Beyond such work of *analogy* and a more referential sense of (neuro)plasticity *in* film, then, how might we conceive of the relation between Malabou and cinema in the context of film-philosophy? How, for example, might film be understood to *think* plasticity through sound and image? How might it be conceived as plastic (beyond its material substrate) as a *medium* that gives, receives (and potentially destroys) form?

The articles assembled in this Special Issue explore such possibilities in a rich variety of ways. The first collection stage encounters between Malabou, film form, and film theory. Martin O’Shaughnessy traces further Malabou’s concept of “cineplasticity”, putting it to work in readings of transformable bodies and identities in the cinemas of Jacques Audiard, Céline Sciamma and Mia Hansen-Løve. O’Shaughnessy’s readings of the three filmmakers witness the multiplicity of cineplastic readings that Malabou’s philosophy might open up, from analyses of the mutability of the subject in Audiard; to the changeability of identity and gender in Sciamma; to the expressions of time and mobility in Hansen-Løve’s work. Marco Grosoli, meanwhile, underlines the potentiality of Malabou’s philosophy to challenge and extend key concepts within film theory and film-philosophy. In particular, Grosoli draws from Malabou’s initial conception of plasticity in *The Future of Hegel*, arguing that Jacques Rivette’s own use of Hegel resonates productively with Malabou’s reading of plastic temporalities. For

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Cassandra Guan, Malabou’s philosophical exploration of the mutability of form is vital to approaching the formal inventiveness of animation. Whereas plasticity is already a recurrent concern of animation theory – the article refers, for instance, to Sergei Eisenstein’s concept of “plasmaticness” in the changeable and ever morphing animated bodies in the work of Disney – Guan shows how animation theory’s concentration on plastic mutability within space misses the temporal dimensions of plasticity elaborated by Malabou as an anticipatory mode of remaining open to the future.

The next selection focuses on dialogues across Malabou, plasticity, and filmic images of the metamorphic organic body. Katie Goss and Benjamin Dalton’s articles, in different ways, explore Malabouian approaches to cinematic engagements with the corporeal, material landscapes, and (health)care. Goss’s article maps representations of embodiment in Lucile Hadžihalilović’s *Evolution* (2015), staging encounters between Malabou’s work on epigenetics, feminist and queer thought, and ongoing innovations in biotechnological and biomedical science. Goss traces in particular the ways in which *Evolution* radically re-imagines modes of reproduction and gestation, arguing that the film challenges and extends Malabou’s feminist theorizations of plasticity. Dalton’s article explores how Malabou’s plasticity might serve as a lens for approaching filmic representations of medicine and healthcare. Looking in particular at representations of brain death and heart transplant in Katell Quillévéré’s *Heal The Living* (2016), based on Maylis de Kerangal’s novel *The Heart* (2014), Dalton explores how cinematic engagements with the biomedical resonate with Malabou’s approach to the biological as a resource of transformation and metamorphosis.

The final two articles of the Special Issue, in different ways, explore the political force of Malabou’s thought within film-philosophy. Scott Krzych’s reading of financial collapse in Adam McKay’s *The Big Short* (2015) offers productive intersections between Malabou and the

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Lacanian film-philosophy of Todd McGowan to examine late capitalism and the temporalities of the brain in terms of an epigenesis of desire. Finally, Monique Rooney mobilises Malabou's more recent work on anarchy for film-philosophy, focusing in particular on Malabou's elaboration of the clitoris as an embodied locus of anarchy in *Pleasure Erased*. Putting this new political turn in Malabou's thought into dialogue with the work of Agnes Varda, Rooney identifies Mona, the protagonist of *Sans Toit ni Loi* (1985), as a figure of clitoridean anarchy collapsing or dissolving social hierarchies and governances.

This Special Issue asks: What transformations occur in the encounter between Malabou and film? It seeks to establish a series of methodologies whereby Malabou's philosophy of plasticity can be brought into contact with film and vice versa. It will consider how a thinking of film can be analysed, extended and challenged in relation to plasticity, whilst also exploring how film can analyse, extend and challenge Malabou's own work. Dialogues across Malabou, film and philosophy, then, are evolving and emerging, and this Special Issue seeks to provide a space to assemble new and developing approaches to Malabouian film-philosophy, observing the plastic forms that such thinking might take.

In closing, let us return to Faure gazing out upon the plastic forms of the volcano's eruption, as generative of Malabou's own understanding of the "cineplastic". Faure saw in the restless, congealing, and ever-mutating forms of the erupting Vesuvius the promise of a cineplastic cinema. He imagined artists like Rubens, Goya and Michelangelo casting their creations onto the screen as a moving cineplastic. This cineplastic, still yet to come, gestures towards the relation of plasticity to the cinematic image as the promise of something that has not yet arrived: we are still to discover fully the shifting shapes of its expression. This Special Issue

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takes a few steps further in sketching the outline of these metamorphic forms across Malabou, plasticity, and film.

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