

*Difference and Repetition.* Duration may contain all images, but as the outside of the sensory-motor it can only exist as the intense possibility or as a sublime impossibility of any expression. This would make the movement-image immanent to the whole, but the whole remains transcendent to the movement-image. Deleuze finds in the crystal-image a cinema adequate to Nietzsche's declaration that "nothing exists apart from the whole!" (TI, "The Four Great Errors," 8) and its famous consequences, "when we have abolished the real world: what world is left? The apparent world perhaps? . . . But no! *With the real world we have also abolished the apparent world*" (TI, "How the 'Real World' at last Became a Myth"). We have already seen Deleuze privilege Nietzsche's ontological equivalence of being and becoming as univocity's true formula, and in cinema this equivalence means the abolition of real and apparent worlds in the crystal regime. Here time is no longer subordinate to a movement which measures it and movement—now understood as the vibration of time splitting in the crystal—creates images adequate to it. These images express time in duration, but only by constructing or hallucinating its movements, only in other words, by thinking it according to a new image of thought. The eye has seen something new, but only by discovering a new way to think. As Deleuze and Guattari put it elsewhere (in relation to painting, but it is a condition of their aesthetics which also applies to cinema), "vision is through thought, and the eye thinks" (WP, 195/184). This new thought of the seer escapes the interval-brain and its sensory-motor in order to, following Bergson's advice, install itself directly in the real. We arrive at the plane of duration, and a time-image adequate to the plane's becoming, only when an image expresses the plane by constructing it. Duration, life in its entirety as time, does not pre-exist the vision-thought which grasps it, because this vision thinks and constructs it *in its* expression. Duration is seen and thought in an image that expresses it, an image that is inseparable from a genetic impulse that is always constructing duration anew. This is the vitalism of cinematic "vision," its indiscernibility from the expression/construction of duration itself. Deleuze returns this image-thought to its Bergsonian origin, but only by breaking with the sensory-motor as its interval. A new body-brain must emerge adequate to the modern image-thought, no longer a sensory-motor interval, but a direct nervous and cerebral shock: "It is only when movement becomes automatic," Deleuze writes, "that the artistic essence of the image is realized: *producing a shock to thought, communicating vibrations to the cortex, touching the nervous and cerebral system directly*" (C2, 156/203). Here the image's power of the false is co-extensive with philosophy's power of thought. It is not surprising then, that the introduction of Nietzsche into Deleuze's account of cinema reintroduces the figure of the artist-philosopher. In relation to cinema this figure emerges from Deleuze's discussion of Antonin Artaud, and is called

the "spiritual automaton," the seer whose visions exist "flush with the real," and whose automatic image-thought is the appearance of the moving matter of duration in a nervous-cerebral shock.<sup>45</sup> This thought is equivalent to a new vision, because it no longer travels through a sensory-motor that carries perceptions into action, but hallucinates pure optical and sound situations that construct a crystal of time.

A good example of the "spiritual automaton" appears in Michelangelo Antonioni's beautiful film, *Il Deserto Rosso* (1964). Here, Deleuze finds Antonioni's typically banal, deserted and everyday any-space-whatevers absorbing all characters and their actions (C2, 5/12). The empty and rotten industrial landscape of *Il Deserto Rosso* often appears out of focus, emphasising its abstract color compositions over its representational "reality," and lending it hallucinatory qualities that are doubly disturbing. First, because the space is detached from the character, inasmuch as Giuliano, a woman struggling with her mental health, can no longer act. Second, because these hallucinatory images appear as an indirect discourse, as visions of the character, in the sense in which this of seems at once subjective (are they point of view shots?) and objective (the abstract qualities of the landscape are not hallucinatory but real). These two aspects of abstraction and hallucination often work together, as when an out of focus shot picks out certain objects by color rather than form, making the image swim in an entirely non-representational manner. No doubt it is no longer the point whether what we see is the vision of a character or the camera, because the question is no longer one of delirium or description, but the way these come together in a modern vision as crystal image. The abstract color compositions of Antonioni's any-space-whatevers do not, therefore, act as metaphorical descriptions of Giuliano's mental state. They mark the dissolution of the sensory-motor interval into pure and "truly false" visual and auditory situations which are neither subjective nor objective. These images no longer appear in the interval-brain, because Giuliano's "visions," which are ours too, are not located in relation to any "outside" by which they could be judged. Indeed it is precisely the detachment of her visions from any encompassing structures (from their cause, which is only sketched, and from any narrative development—very little "happens" and the film begins and ends with almost identical images) that eliminates action as such, and makes distinguishing between images of subjective hallucination and objective description impossible, and in fact this distinction ceases to be important. As Deleuze writes of neo-realist film in general, but it applies very precisely to *Il Deserto Rosso*, "we no longer know what is imaginary or real, physical or mental, in the situation, not because they are confused, but because we do not have to know and there is no longer even a place from which to ask" (C2, 7/15). This unknown constitutes the position of Giuliano and the

viewer, both are cast into a perceptual uncertainty which is not resolved but explored. Their vision is not other-worldly in any transcendental sense, nor does it attempt a higher order of truth (there is no romanticism in the woman's madness, nor any pity), it is simply a fact, the fact of a banal and everyday world stripped of its rational narratives and appearing in its pure visuality, beautiful but not extraordinary, sensual but not sensational.

Guiliano's struggle to integrate her experience of the "whole" into a social framework of expectations and roles leads to further hallucinatory passages and ek-stases.<sup>46</sup> But she fails. Sinking further into an emptiness where others cannot follow her, not her lover, nor her husband, who are all ill with action, with their meaningless lives, a point her lover acknowledges without knowing how to change it. Her vision of the young girl alone on a beautiful beach perfectly expresses Deleuze's words: "The world awaits its inhabitants who are still lost in neurosis" (C2, 205/267). Guiliano yearns for such a world, pure and sun drenched, where everything sings, but she is lost in sensory-motor banalities, a neurosis which represses her. This neurosis is a sensory-motor limit beyond which lies the psychosis of the "spiritual automaton," a schizo-sensation or vision of matter in its emergence, a sensation as participation, and Guiliano is continually shocked, overwhelmed, to the point of being a 'mouthpiece' of thoughts she cannot control but only react to. Her vision is a pure becoming in which she cannot maintain her identity, and which becomes increasingly abstract. Antonioni affirms both the beauty and the pain of this utterly modern vision, and the film registers both aspects in opening up spaces of virtual emergence, spaces on the one side unbearable and experienced as madness, on the other as abstract and tranquil spaces giving refuge from the active neurosis of the human interval.

In *Il Deserto Rosso* it is through Antonioni's use of color that a new world emerges, and it is in color that "the character or the viewer, and the two together, become visionaries" (C2, 19/30). Color is an abstract force encompassing viewer and image in the emergence of a new reality, a vision that is indiscernibly of being, and which produces being. This experience exceeds sensory-motor perception, both Guiliano's and our own, and the image and its abstract color compositions give a vision of a virtual infinity uncontained by any shared time, but nevertheless existing as a creative becoming, as the duration created by and expressed in this actual image. Guiliano becomes a visionary, a spiritual automaton who sees this unbearable excess of life, which is life, the virtual duration of actual events appearing in a time-image. This is a life that can barely be lived—and Guiliano barely lives—and appears in images which are often unbearable. This is life seen by the seer, Guiliano and us, those who "know how to extract from the event the part that cannot be reduced to

what happens: that part of inexhaustible possibility that constitutes the unbearable, the intolerable, the visionary's part" (C2, 19–20/31). This is, quite precisely, the part Guiliano experiences. There is something terrible in reality," she exclaims, "and I don't know what it is." But she sees it, and Antonioni shows it to us, not as a representation of madness, but in extraordinarily beautiful shots which envelop us, shots composed of abstract colors constituting a world both fresh and frightening, a world in which the virtual and creative powers of co-existence emerge for themselves. Once more, this is achieved through Antonioni's colorism, which at its abstract limit tends, Deleuze writes, to "efface" what it describes, and "carries space as far as the void" (C1, 119/168). This coloring void is not however, opposed to the genetic element, but is its emergence in any-space-whatevers (of which Guiliano's life is full—the red shack, the cream/purple hotel room, the half-painted empty rooms of her shop, the noisy functionality of her husband's factory). In these spaces the compositions of abstract color in the frame act as "the virtual conjunction of all the objects it picks up" (C1, 119/167). It is color then, that is able to transform the space of action into a space of virtual construction, a space opening out into a void of the sensory-motor indiscernible from the unthinkable plenitude of life. In *Il Deserto Rosso* the void of the any-space-whatever also has an amorphous enveloping power, appearing in the white mists of Ravenna in which the film's colors seem to swim, sinking below and rising to its surface. Indeed, Deleuze describes Antonioni's voided space as "amorphous," having "eliminated that which happened and acted in it. It is an extinction or a disappearing, but one which is not opposed to the genetic element" (C1, 120/168). Guiliano's sensory-motor is overpowered by this any-space-whatever of color, effaced by the mist, by the room, by the shop, in a continual fade. But in this void emerging around and in Guiliano a new life and vision appears, one, Deleuze writes, "all the more charged with potential" (C1, 120/168).

Antonioni pushes his abstract colorism as far as possible in *Il Deserto Rosso*. Guiliano's nervous and cerebral events, her visions, are both detached from any pre-existing world—as pure optical situations—and are themselves creative hallucinations of an unbearably vital world at the heart of this one. But Guiliano's wanderings never "cross the bridge" to the "other" side, whether this is imagined as a spiritual "ascension" or a psychological "descent." In her confusion Guiliano remains here and now and of this world. In one scene she drives to the end of a pier, a dead end in the sea and not the bridge she thought, as if to deny her the fatal allure of dissolution in a constantly moving ocean, an ocean she cannot look at she says, because then she loses interest in what happens on land, but a beyond she cannot reach because—as beyond—it does not exist. Color marks

the genetic explosion of the world, a “vision” abstract and real, an expression of the virtual in the actual (or an implosion of the actual in the virtual color conjunction), an explosion entirely cerebral and cinematic, nothing but (Guiliano’s) schizo-sensation. The brain, Deleuze claims, becomes adequate to the modern world in this genetic encounter with color (e.g. in Antonioni’s abstraction (C2, 317/266)). Deleuze’s equation of Antonioni’s color with modernism is consistent with Deleuze’s discussion of painting, which will be our subject in the chapters to come. To construct a world with color will be Deleuze and Guattari’s definition of artistic modernism, an art which will be anti-representational, and whose ontology will be shared equally by cinema and painting. For both, Deleuze writes, “Godard’s formula, ‘it’s not blood, it’s red’ is the formula of colorism” (C1, 118/166). Antonioni is in full agreement with this when he comments: “People often say ‘write a film,’ why can’t we arrive at the point of saying ‘paint a film?’”<sup>47</sup> Such a colorism will require a new brain, a brain detached from the sensory-motor and operating as a “void” through which and as which thought emerges as the “virtual conjunction” of “vision” with an abstract, “truly false,” but nevertheless actual hallucination.

#### CINEMA CRACKS UP . . .

In this final intolerable vision of the life which exceeds her, and which she lives, Guiliano undergoes cinema’s final metamorphosis, and becomes an Artaudian body, a Body without Organs (BwO). It may seem paradoxical to say the cinema can exist without organs, but Artaud’s BwO is, as we shall see more fully in Chapter Six, without the organization of the organism rather than without organs. The BwO is not a spatio-temporal body, not a sensory-motor, but an inorganic or crystalline body, a crystal-image that creates as it expresses a perspectival and virtual whole of duration. In Artaud this body-image has a particular ontological status, it is the “innermost reality” of the cinema, but it can only be conceived of as “a fissure, a crack” (C2, 167/218). This crack is the nervous vibration which disrupts the organism, and gives the shock required to make the cinema think. The crystal-image is this crack, an image of time itself as the crack—and no longer the interval—of thought: Guiliano’s visions, her crack up . . . For Artaud, cinema expresses the powerlessness of human thought, the impossibility of thinking the whole except as impossible. For Deleuze this is the power of the crystal, it gives an image of “the inexistence of a whole which could be thought” (C2, 168/218). Of course it had to happen, the whole has become a hole, and the crystal-image is a hole in thought.

“Any work of art,” Deleuze has said, “points a way through for life, finds a way through the cracks.”<sup>48</sup> Art in this sense gives an image to the disruptive force which cracks open our thought, but only as a “figure of nothingness,” a

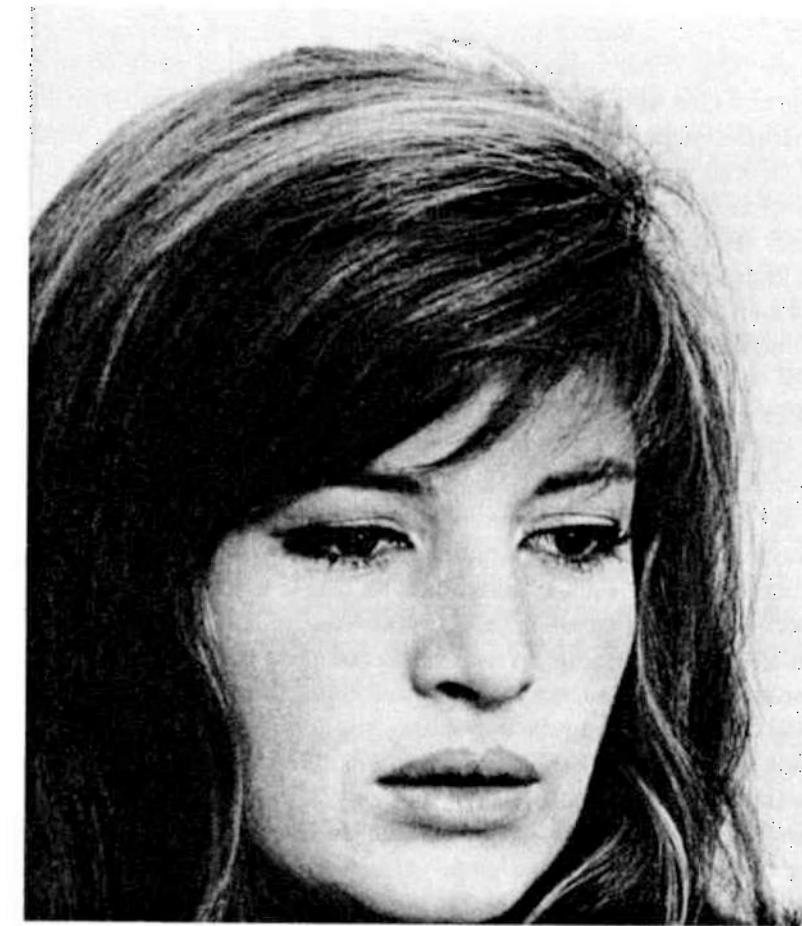


Figure 3 Michelangelo Antonioni, *Deserto Rosso*, 1964, Austrian Film Museum.

“hole in appearances” (C2, 167/218). Artaud’s crack, or (w)hole of thought, meets Nietzsche’s power of the false to provide an abyssal cinema of crystal-images. Artaud’s BwO, as the internal outside, as the (w)hole of thought which forces us to think, finds in Nietzsche’s power of the false a revalued physiology, the modern body-brain of cinema and of art. Modern cinema constructs this new physiology in its visions, its pure optical and sound situations in which we are animated by an image which forces us to think, a “neuro-physiological” vibration as Artaud put it, an image which is both the (w)hole which could not be thought, and the crack through which this (internal) outside thinks. In *Il Deserto Rosso* it is constructed by what Antonioni calls his “psycho-physiology

of color.<sup>49</sup> Here, Giuliano's increasingly nervous agitation and automation open onto a gap in her vision—her inability to see herself as whole—and she falls into this hole where things and people merge in an indeterminable mist. But what emerges in their place is a purely abstract vision, an inhuman convulsion of color as a living thing which attains a new determination beyond the sensory-motor. As a result, the climax of *Il Deserto Rosso*, the consummation of Giuliano's affair, offers no narrative closure, and culminates in her increasing distress in the throes of a hallucination turning the room purple. A vision of the (w)hole itself, a coloring void-vision. This image-thought can only be false, because it no longer has an outside which it represents, it is instead a crack in the world by which cinema goes beyond the true and the false to create the new. A cinema of conception/perception produces a vision, a BwO, a hole in/of the world, and requires the transformed regime of expression that emerges across the break between the two Cinema volumes. A modern cinema appears here that is not concerned with the movements of narrative, but with the duration that emerges through its cracks. As Deleuze has it: "We no longer believe in an association of images—even crossing voids; we believe in breaks which take on an absolute value and subordinate all association" (C2, 212/276). Montage takes on its modern meaning, no longer structuring the flow of time to give an indirect image of duration, but operating as a disjunctive conjunction, joining images in a break (breaking the movement-image) through which duration is expressed, constructing image-cracks or visions through which duration can emerge as what it is, the creative power of life.

Deleuze argues that when the crystal-image suspends the world with its aberrant movement, when it cracks open thought and appears as what was impossible to think, it produces an image of "what does not let itself be seen in vision" (C2, 168/219). As we shall see in the following chapter, this is also what Deleuze and Guattari will find in painting, a visionary power of inorganic life as the unthinkable that makes us think and see *something impossible to think and see*. An impossible thought and vision that requires a new body and brain, the BwO, as what sees (construction) and what is seen (expression). This (w)hole of duration is not totality, it is not a reassuring organic whole which is represented in our relations with the world, it is the (w)hole as break, this unthinkable crack, thought and seen as the being and becoming of thought itself. As ontological ground therefore, it is our very groundlessness. The whole is the virtual dimensionality to every actual thing, not pre-existing the thing, but continually re-constituting the thing according to the changing perspectives of its construction and comprehension in vision. The break or gap, in other words, is what is produced when we approach the reciprocity of virtual and actual in the image. This produces a break in our sensory-motor, as we have seen.

but more than this our own image, the Bergsonian image we have never stopped being, finds its own "vision" in expressing duration through its constructive—and no longer *reductive*—break, a break which changes duration's nature. Now we can see how the Bergsonian definition of duration Deleuze gave as "what differs from itself"<sup>50</sup> must, in its modern form, be qualified by the definition given by Deleuze and Guattari: "Duration is in no way indivisible, but is that which cannot be divided without changing in nature at each division" (ATP, 483/604). At each division, a division made by the "section" or "perspective" of vision, the virtuality of duration is actualised and expressed, but only by making duration change in nature, an expression of becoming inseparable from its very construction. The "outside" of thought is not "out there," no matter how close this may be, it is the abyssal splitting of time itself *within the image*, the ontogenesis of duration. Not then the virtual and the actual, whole and part, but the actual image *in* its virtual vitality, the actual image as the expression and the construction of its virtual becoming, inseparable and indiscernible. "This is why thought," Deleuze writes, "as power which has not always existed, is born from an outside [duration] more distant than any external world, and, as power which does not yet exist, confronts an inside, an unthinkable or unthought, deeper than any internal world. [ . . . ] Thought outside itself and this un-thought within thought" (C2, 278/363).

## THE METHOD OF BETWEEN

In the organic regime, the whole was the open, expressed in a temporal interval that produced an image that was always indirect. In this way, classical cinema created an out-of-field as, "a changing whole which was expressed in the set of associated images" (C2, 179/233). But if the whole is neither outside nor inside, Deleuze points out, "the point is quite different" (C2, 179/234). The whole, duration as crack, or internal outside, is instead the "between" of the cinematic time-image, rather than an outside the movement-image expresses. This interstice of images however, should not be thought of as the between *of* images, because thoughts and images are themselves this "between." Indiscernibly virtual and actual, their actual individuation emerges from the virtual (w)hole (expression), which they simultaneously are, as the creation of a perspective on duration (once more we think of Bergson's famous cone) as the process of its infinite and virtual movement (construction). The whole is this constant creative vibration, the rhythmic beatings of crystal-life.

Cinema becomes in modern times "the method of BETWEEN, 'between two images,' which does away with all cinema of the One" (C2, 180/235). But perhaps this is simply the cine-aesthetic of the contemporary itself, the moder-

nity of any and every age, a possibility we will come back to. This cinematic transformation parallels an ontological mutation of the whole that ceases being the One-Being, and becomes the constitutive “and” of things, the simultaneous construction and expression of a vital becoming. Deleuze’s ontological aesthetic of the cinema therefore culminates in this univocity of becoming, and our route through Bergson arrives at the same point as those we took through Nietzsche and Spinoza. Art, cinematic or otherwise, is the creative force of life inasmuch as this expresses an immanent whole it constructs. Cinema is in this way an atheistic and mystical practice, the production of a crystal-image in which, as Deleuze writes of Stanley Kubrick’s *2001, A Space Odyssey* (1968):

The identity of world and brain, the automaton, does not form a whole, but rather a limit, a membrane which puts an outside and an inside in contact, makes them present to each other, confronts them or makes them clash. The inside is psychology, the past, involution, a whole psychology of depths which excavate the brain. The outside is the cosmology of galaxies, the future, evolution, a whole supernatural which makes the world explode. (C2, 206/268)

## Chapter Four

# A Freedom for the End of the World: Painting and Absolute Deterritorialisation

Expression, like construction, signifies both an action and its result. [ . . . ] If the two meanings are separated the object is viewed in isolation from the operation which produced it, and therefore apart from vision, since the act proceeded from an individual live creature. Theories that seize upon “expression” as if it denoted simply the object, always insist to the uttermost that the object of art is purely representative of other objects already in existence. They ignore the contribution which makes the object something new.

—John Dewey, *Art as Experience*.<sup>1</sup>

## INTRODUCTION

The artwork, Deleuze and Guattari argue, is a productive machine that does not represent anything, is itself unrepresentable, and exists only as the conjunction of material flows and their traits of expression. Nevertheless, and consistent with what we have already seen in the last three chapters, art’s affirmation gets captured in forms which negate it, which imagine it as something sad, and which subjectivise, organicise, and temporalise its inorganic consistency and emergent becomings. Painting too, like all the other arts. But, like all the other arts, painting also finds a way through the cracks, and operates as a critical practice that resists its formalization and departs on its thousand lines of flight.

Once again, painting resists this “capture” on two fronts. On the one hand, the aesthetics of creation presupposes no material or meaning, and is precisely what escapes such presuppositions in creating the new. In this sense the creative process, the “art” of absolute deterritorialisation as it will be developed in this chapter, is at work everywhere. On the other hand, this revolutionary force only appears within a specific milieu, in more or less concrete assemblages, in paintings as such. The point is not to set painting up in, or as, a dialectic between its specific representations or forms and their absolute deterritorialisation, but to

understand how paintings are *already* the immanence of an absolutely deterritorialised plane and its territorialised formalization. What is required, as Guattari points out, is “a double enunciation: finite, territorialised and incorporeal, infinite” (Chaos, 55/82). Painting is, first of all, an articulation of its finite and infinite dimensions, an art of creation that in its finite processes of construction absolutely deterritorialises the world (destratifies it Deleuze and Guattari will say) and expresses its destratified and infinite “plane of consistency.”

This chapter will therefore have two main objectives: First, a general account of the terminological and theoretical terrain on which this “double enunciation” of painting takes place. Central to this account is an understanding of the concepts of deterritorialisation, both relative and absolute, and how these articulate the relations between the strata and the plane of consistency. This provides us with the components of a semiotics capable of revaluing the “sign,” a semiotic *practice* that Deleuze and Guattari call schizoanalysis. The second aim of the chapter will be the exploration of the schizoanalysed sign through the examples of Venetian Renaissance painting, and the work of Jackson Pollock. The first will involve a discussion of art’s “abstract machine,” while the second will extend this discussion to its painterly components; the abstract line, smooth space, and haptic experience. Thus, the two elements of this chapter will provide us with a new image of abstraction, one that departs from the work of Wilhelm Worringer, and challenges the classic modernist account of Pollock by Clement Greenberg and Michael Fried. This introduces Deleuze and Guattari’s concept of modernism, which will be taken up and developed in the next chapter.

## STRATIFIED

The material world, the Earth, is a plane of consistency, a genetic flux of unformed matter/energy existing at ontological ground zero. But, Deleuze and Guattari argue, the Earth is constantly conglomerating and concretising according to various axiomatic relations of content and expression, a “double articulation” of the Earth emerging through what they call the “strata.” The strata impose limits on the autogenesis of the Earth as if from above, and as such: “Every stratum is a judgment of God” (ATP, 44/58). It will come as no surprise that one of the first signs of painting, when it is truly art, is an atheism that attacks these judgments.

The strata consist of various axiomatic relations of content and expression that determine things and their meanings. This double articulation of the strata is doubled again by the distinction of form and substance, once for expression and once for content. Content consists of a formed matter (the

“chosen” or territorialised matter being its substance—canvas and paint in painting for example—and the order it is chosen in, its coding, giving its form—*this* painting). On the other hand, the “choosing” of functional structures determines a substance of expression (the genre of a painting for example), which it combines into forms (once more, *this* expression, the meaning of *this* genre painting). In both cases, form is the code, and substance the territory formed. Meaning and things (the meaning of things) are therefore produced through the reciprocal presupposition of content and expression and their mobile relations within and between strata, (expression in one relation can be the content of another, as when an art historian writes about a painting). Strata are actualised by what Deleuze and Guattari call “machinic assemblages.” These work in two directions, on one side they face towards the plane and employ “abstract machines” to “extract” a matter-function, and on the other the strata formalize this matter-function into “concrete assemblages,” the actual things and statements which emerge through the strata’s “pincers” of content and expression.

Deleuze and Guattari suggest three levels of strata, the geological or physiochemical, the organic, and the linguistic. Signs emerge in the organic and linguistic strata, where expression operates in a dimension separated from its content. This autonomy of expression means it can on the one hand reterritorialise a material form/substance as its content—constructing a sign—and on the other, it can itself be deterritorialised and re-formed as the content of another sign. At the organic level, the sign appears through the process of reproduction (life and death being the constant de- and re-territorialisation of content for new expressions), but the sign takes on its real meaning when this process is extended to language. Here the sign gains an autonomy from the “thing” it represents, things and signs being produced through different technical and linguistic regimes. The two regimes nevertheless operate in reciprocal presupposition, as the example of painting shows. A painting’s content as “thing” consists of the substances it is formed from, and the technical operations that form them. The painting’s expression, or what it represents, exists on another level and emerges through a formal organisation of functions or forms of expression.<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless, content and expression must be in reciprocal presupposition for a painting—as sign—to exist, but they remain distinct from each other as “meaning” and “thing.” The contours of this relation are, however, dynamic and multifaceted. The technological axiomatic that produces a painting, its historical trajectory of material substances and processes of formation have undergone continual change, and the move from a cave painting to Antonioni’s cinematic painting that we saw last chapter would describe only one possible history of painting’s innovation of material

and technique. Within the regime of expression there is also an extremely open process at work defining a painting's historical meaning (the form of expression), not to mention the history of the meaning of painting (expression's substance). For example, is the figure seated next to Christ in Leonardo's *Last Supper* a woman, as one recent theory has it? Similarly, the long debate around the relative merits of line over color marks only one possible "phylum" of the shifting meaning of painting. Nevertheless, some aspects of painting's expressive regime have remained stable, most notably a content-expression relation determined by what Deleuze and Guattari call the "imperialism of the signifier" in which "the semiotic of signs is necessarily linked to a semiology of the signifier" (ATP, 65/84–5). Here, where semiotics becomes semiology and structuralist linguistics becomes the dominant model, a representational relation is imposed on content and expression, an "oversimplified" model in which the painting as substantial "thing" is "subjugated" to the "increased despotism" of the regime of signification (ATP, 66/85–6). Painting's meaning now exists within linguistic assemblages of expressions (signifiers) and contents (signifieds), whose reciprocal presupposition with the techniques of formed substances ("things") remains, but this substance of painting is over coded by the meaning it represents as a sign. Painting's materiality and the processes that form it therefore find expression only through the constant circulation of signifiers, or "significance" as Deleuze and Guattari call it. Significance implies the autonomy of meaning from materiality in a seemingly free circulation of signifiers, but this freedom hides the face of another despot, that of the subject. The understanding of signs according to a signifier/signified relation implies for Deleuze and Guattari an individual subject who expresses it. In this way, *significance* and *subjectivation*<sup>3</sup> are the two facets of a representational economy that defines not only the meaning of painting (as what it means to paint), but also what it means to think.

In *Difference and Repetition* Deleuze explains the co-implication of significance and subjectivation in terms of a representational image of thought.<sup>4</sup> This "dogmatic" image of thought, as he calls it, assumes an "I think" which pre-exists and determines perception, and is therefore entirely relevant to a discussion of art. Here, Deleuze is critiquing the Kantian rationalist model where the faculties of conceiving, judgment, imagination and memory constitute a "common sense" shared by all, as the condition of possibility of any perception. Any perception presupposes this common sense, which in turn assumes a subjective identity—a "Self" as the unity and ground of common sense—and an objective identity in what the faculties sense and represent (DR, 226/291). A painting, in being experienced, becomes determined by "common sense" as a subjective sign representing a singular and self-same object, an object whose materiality is always already taken up in this representational economy of thought. As a result,

painting appears in a perception that has already been determined as a representation of an object for a subject, a representation given meaning by the signifier which expresses it and which gives its content. As we shall see, when painting emerges in its materiality, or more precisely when the construction of its material becomes expressive, it will no longer be representative, and it will create a sensation that assumes a new way to think.

Deleuze and Guattari's understanding of a semiotics of content and expression rests on the work of Louis Hjelmslev, who sought an alternative to the signifier/signified of structuralist linguistics.<sup>5</sup> But structuralism is only the latest symptom of a representational image of thought which has dominated our thinking since Plato. It's "the same circle," and "we're still spreading the same canker" (*le même gangrène*, ATP, 65/85). Against the "signifier enthusiasts" (ATP, 66/86) Deleuze and Guattari posit the Hjelmslevian sign, whose content-expression relation has, "the advantage of breaking with the form-content duality" (ATP, 43/58). In this sign expression is kept in direct contact with its material dimension, and stands, Deleuze and Guattari claim, "in radical opposition to the scenario of the signifier" (ATP, 66/85). We are not signified, Deleuze and Guattari argue, we are stratified, and engaging with this process begins with a "semiotic of signs" opposed to a "semiology of the signifier" (ATP, 65/85). This revaluing of the sign however, is only the first step towards a revaluation of painting, and now we must take the necessary further steps towards its absolute deterritorialisation.

## ABSOLUTE DETERRITORIALISATION

Content and expression allow us to understand the way signs only appear in a "specific, variable assemblage" necessarily involving both meaning and things (ATP, 66/85). But this "concrete assemblage" emerges from a deeper "machinic assemblage" it actualises. The machinic assemblage operates the articulation of content and expression on its side facing the strata, but on its other side it faces the plane of consistency, where its "abstract" machine composes material flows into traits of content (degrees of intensity, resistance, conductivity, heat and speed) and traits of expression ("tensors" or functions operating as differentials, such as clear-obscure, line-color, or closed-open form). Signs do not, on this account, appear as signifiers or as representations, but as particular assemblages of material forces and functions stratified into relations of content and expression. This understanding of the sign is therefore ontological, because it puts the sign back into contact with the material and vital plane of consistency that constitutes it. In this sense Deleuze and Guattari propose a critical semiotics that will reveal the signs abstract machine, and in so doing free a sign's material becomings from the strata,

allowing them to be sensed in themselves. The abstract machine, while immanent to the sign, is the “destratified” element that avoids any distinctions between content and expression. The abstract machine is the “pure Matter-Function” of a sign, operating on the plane of consistency where “it is no longer even possible to tell whether it is a particle or a sign” (ATP, 141/176). The task of semiotics will therefore be to interpret stratified signs in order to revalue (destratify) them, in order to make the operation of their abstract machines sensible.

Abstract machines are absolutely deterritorialised, and are the “primary” elements of any machinic assemblage, operating before its territorialisation and coding into signs. “This absolute deterritorialization,” Deleuze and Guattari write, “becomes relative only after stratification occurs on that plane or body: It is the strata that are always residue, not the opposite” (ATP, 56/74). The semiotic problem is therefore how to approach signs in their absolutely deterritorialised state, as particles-signs. This problem has as its condition Deleuze and Guattari’s assumption of the “perpetual immanence of absolute deterritorialization within relative deterritorialization” (ATP, 56/74).<sup>6</sup> Absolute deterritorialisation does not introduce an “excess or beyond” (ATP, 56/74) to the strata, but is the immanent operation of the abstract machine in stratification. Although the strata subjugate matter-function through processes of relative de- and re-territorialisation (relative that is to the axiomatic limits of the strata), the abstract machine is always seeking to conjugate these movements into an absolute deterritorialisation, a “destratification,” as “the abstract machines absolute positive deterritorialization” (ATP, 142/177). This absolute deterritorialisation of the abstract machine has two important elements that are necessarily related. First, it appears within the strata as the absolute deterritorialisation of content and expression, as the crack through which something new emerges. But second, on the absolutely deterritorialised plane of consistency the abstract machine operates in a “piloting role,” creating new possibilities for life, creating a real to come, “*a new type of reality*” (ATP, 142/177). As Deleuze and Guattari put it in an example that equally applies to painting: “Writing now functions on the same level as the real, and the real materially writes” (ATP, 141/177). We shall shortly see how Venetian Renaissance painting and the work of Jackson Pollock, each in its own way, achieves this.

The abstract machine appears according to two “complementary” movements, either within the strata which “harness” it and turn its deterritorialisations relative, or as the absolute deterritorialisation of the strata, in lines of flight on a “passage to the absolute” (ATP, 144/180). According to these two modes of effectuation we will either remain organicised, signified and subjectified in a stratified body and thought, or we will be absolutely deterritorialised, destratified in the creation of a new reality, emerging as a new I/eye adequate to its

“properly diagrammatic experience” (ATP, 145/180–1). As a result our question becomes, “given a certain machinic assemblage, what is its relation of effectuation with the abstract machine?” (ATP, 71/91). In other words, how is the abstract machine stratified, and in what ways does the assemblage open onto destratification? This question is not easy to answer, because its answer must be constructed through a process of critique, through, as Deleuze and Guattari call it here, a “schizoanalysis.” The immanence of the abstract machine implies that the new realities it creates do not exist apart from the strata, but only appear in the absolute deterritorialisation of the strata. Just what this appearance could be we shall now go on to see.

With the absolute deterritorialisation of signs, with their destratification, the possibility of signs no longer defined by distinctions between contents and expressions, or forms and substances is introduced. Once more this begs the question, and Deleuze and Guattari ask it, “how can one still identify and name things if they have lost the strata that qualified them, if they have gone into absolute deterritorialisation?” (ATP, 70/90). The answer has two parts. First, such a sign appears through the conjugation of deterritorialising movements in the strata, accelerating (or decelerating) deterritorialisations to an absolute speed, by which the sign appears as destratification. This process frees “variables” to “operate in the plane of consistency as its own functions” (ATP, 70/90). This brings us to the second part of our answer, that absolutely deterritorialised “variables” appear under their own, destratified conditions. Here the abstract machine constructs continuums of intensity which appear as *particles-signs*, as the non-representative “asignifying traits” (FB, 100/94) which constitute the plane. These signs appear when relations of content and expression no longer define the abstract machine, and it emerges “flush with the real, [as] it inscribes directly upon the plane of consistency” (ATP, 65/85). This second sense of an abstract machine “inscribing” “flush with real” implies that in destratifying signs the abstract machine does not simply “return” them to the plane of consistency, but that particles-signs construct the plane at the same time as they express it. How? Particles-signs, we know, are asignifying traits, but as their hyphenation suggests, they are composed from traits of content and traits of expression as the matter-function of the abstract machine. As we have seen, traits of content are absolutely deterritorialised contents (matter-flows), and traits of expression are “tensors” inseparable from matter and determining its tendency in relation to its immanent functions. The abstract machine conjugates certain traits of content to construct a material plane of consistency, and it is this plane that the abstract machine’s functions express (in its traits of expression).

The question for painting is how its signs appear as particles-signs, how painting is sensible beyond the common sense of subjects, their objects, and

their representational image, or signifier. Particles-signs express a destratification, a radical break with, or line of flight from the strata that introduces something new. But in another sense, they express an abstract machine as the “diagram” of the plane, a force of construction by which the plane’s vital ontogenesis is expressed in signs. Particles-signs will therefore appear in painting both as its destratification, as what escapes the stratifying articulations of content and expression, and as a new reality they construct. No creation without destruction. Destratification fractures our harmonious common sense to construct a new sensibility, a destratified, desubjectivised sensibility adequate to the asignifying particles-signs it produces. A particle-sign will therefore require a new sensibility, because it “is not a sensible being but the being of the sensible. It is not the given but that by which the given is given. It is therefore in a certain sense the imperceptible. It is the imperceptible precisely from the point of view of recognition” (DR, 140/182). A-subjective and a-signifying particles-signs are released by the imperceptible and continuous variation of matter-function, by which the abstract machine constructs and expresses the plane of consistency. And if particles-signs are flush with the real, then so is their sensation. They can only be sensed outside of the schema of subjects and their objects, as the insanity of common sense, and the imperceptible of rational perception. They are mad rather than meaningful, and appear, Deleuze and Guattari argue, in the asubjective sensations of the schizophrenic. “Someone” Deleuze tells us, “who neither allows himself to be represented nor wishes to represent anything” (DR, 130/177).

### SCHIZOANALYSIS IS LIKE THE ART OF THE NEW

Schizoanalysis will be, quite precisely, the analysis of stratified matter that liberates its deterritorialisations and turns them absolute. In this way, schizoanalysis will construct sensations as particles-signs. Consistent with its immanence to the material it attempts to destratify, schizoanalysis is a process and not a goal, a pragmatics, a continued experimentation. “The completion of the process,” Deleuze and Guattari state, “is not a promised and pre-existing land, but a world created in the process of its tendency, its coming undone, its deterritorialisation” (AO, 322/384).<sup>7</sup> Schizoanalysis will be the continual process of freeing matter from its determination by the strata, a never-ending process of revolution that leaves “physical and semiotic systems in shreds,” and produces from their ruin “asubjective affects, signs without significance” (ATP, 147/183). The schizoanalyst is a “mechanic” because “schizoanalysis is solely functional” (AO, 322/385). He or she is a “handyman,” one who destratifies signs in order to create a new reality.<sup>8</sup> In this way, “the negative or destructive

task of schizoanalysis is in no way separable from its positive tasks—all these tasks are necessarily undertaken at the same time” (AO, 322/384–5). The mechanical nature of this process is important, because it suggests the way in which it is achieved through direct material interventions rather than through a psychoanalytic interpretation of symbols.<sup>9</sup> The “schizoanalysis” of particles-signs is a material process, an intervention rather than an interpretation. “For reading a text,” Deleuze and Guattari write in a passage clearly also applying to painting, “is never a scholarly exercise in search of what is signified, still less a highly textual exercise in search of a signifier. Rather it is a productive use of the literary machine, a montage of desiring machines, a schizoid exercise that extracts from the text its revolutionary force” (AO, 106/125–6).

Schizoanalysis is an analysis of stratified signs, Deleuze and Guattari write, and is “the only way you will be able to dismantle them [strata] and draw your lines of flight” (ATP, 188/230). Schizoanalysis attempts to accelerate (or decelerate) the deterritorialising movements of the strata beyond their threshold of reproduction and towards an irrevocable “breakdown,” a breakdown through which matter-functions “break through” the strata. But how does the artist achieve this, how does he or she construct the new? The artist and art-work begins by creating a “catastrophic” breakdown. “The artist,” Deleuze and Guattari write, “stores up his treasures so as to create an immediate explosion” (AO, 32/39). Their example is Turner’s late land and seascapes, and especially his last watercolors, which produce an “explosive line,” a line without outline or contour (i.e. it is non-representational), that “makes the painting itself an unparalleled catastrophe (instead of illustrating the catastrophe romantically)” (FB, 105/98). This explosive quality (its anti-romantic quality will become important in the next chapter) of the line will be a constant feature of Deleuze and Guattari’s painting diagram, one we will see them trace in Venetian painting, Gothic art, and the work of Jackson Pollock and Francis Bacon. Deleuze and Guattari devote a particularly beautiful passage to Turner’s “breakthrough” paintings:

the canvas turns in on itself, it is pierced by a hole, a lake, a flame, a tornado, an explosion. The themes of the preceding paintings are to be found again here, their meaning changed. The canvas is truly broken, sundered by what penetrates it. All that remains is a background of gold and fog, intense, intensive, traversed in depth by what has just sundered its breadth: the schiz. Everything becomes mixed and confused, and it is here that the breakthrough—not the breakdown—occurs.” (AO, 132/157–8)<sup>10</sup>

There are a couple of important points to note here. The first is one I have already mentioned, that what appears in this work is precisely the “breakdown”

of stratified signs by which the particles-signs of the plane appear as a "breakthrough": an absolute deterritorialisation necessarily immanent to the strata. But this break is productive, and the "schiz" appears as intense matters-functions at work on/in the plane. This means the "breakthrough" of the painting is not utopic in the sense in which it, with Jim Morrison, would break on through to the other side (although it does, perhaps, kiss the sky). The utopia of Turner's paintings is not another world, but is the appearance of *this* world in its reality, in its being as becoming, in its ontological emergence as a sensation. In this sense, schizoanalysis is a utopian pragmatics, for, as Deleuze and Guattari explain: "Utopia does not split off from infinite movement: etymologically it stands for absolute deterritorialisation but always at the critical point at which it is connected to the present relative milieu, and especially with the forces stifled by this milieu" (WP, 99–100/95–6).

The schizophrenic, in his or her "misery and glory" (AO, 18/25) experiences matter as destratified, as an atemporal and intense matter. "The schizophrenic," Deleuze and Guattari write, "is as close as possible to matter, to a burning, living centre of matter" (AO, 19/26). Schizoanalysis experiments with stratified signs in order to bring them as close as possible to the matter they already are, to the point where, as in Turner, the "artisan" paints flush with the real. The schizo-artisan in his or her glory is however, clearly distinguished from the misery of the schizophrenic clinically defined. The schizophrenic as patient escapes the strata of significance and subjectivation only at the price of his or her ability to produce signs. The schizophrenic steps into a silent and painful outside, a madness, living from 'the other side' an opposition between the strata and plane of consistency that the strata enforce.<sup>11</sup> The schizo-artisan on the other hand, "scales the schizophrenic wall" (AO, 69/81) and makes what they are escaping from escape itself. Their artistic creativity lies in being able to destratify an assemblage and through this process express its immanent material flows in particles-signs (AO, 341/407–8). We don't have to look far amongst artists to find examples of a schizoanalytic practice, and a schizoanalytic life. Henry Miller describes it beautifully as that moment when "the world ceases to revolve, time stops, the very nexus of my dreams is broken and dissolved and my guts spill out in a grand schizophrenic rush, an evacuation that leaves me face to face with the Absolute."<sup>12</sup>

As the passage from Miller implies, schizoanalysis is neither a psychotic breakdown, a terrifying and painful autism, nor a purely theoretical aphasia, but a practice, something we must accomplish for ourselves, in schizoanalysing our own lives. Not least the thinker, who's thought must not simply represent the schizo-production of others, but must take a little of their 'madness' in order to construct something new. Deleuze makes this point in a well-

known passage from *The Logic of Sense*. Commenting on the alcoholism of Malcolm Lowry and F. Scott Fitzgerald, and on Artaud and Nietzsche's madness, Deleuze asks:

Are we to become the professionals who give talks on these topics? Are we to wish only that those who have been struck down do not abuse themselves too much? Are we going to take up collections and create special journal issues? Or should we go a short way further to see for ourselves, be a little alcoholic, and a little crazy, a little suicidal, a little of a guerrilla—just enough to extend the crack, but not enough to deepen it irremediably? [ . . . ] How is this politics, this full guerrilla warfare to be attained? (LS, 157–8/184)

This politics of self-schizophrenization will emerge more fully in the next chapter, but it is also implicit in Deleuze and Guattari's suggestion—a suggestion I have tried to extend—of a schizoanalysis of Venetian painting.

### A THOUSAND LINES OF FLIGHT, THE CASE OF VENETIAN PAINTING

Deleuze and Guattari argue that the strata of significance and subjectification form a "sticky mixture," a mixture of a white wall (significance) and black holes (subjectivation) creating faces as recognizable forms of our generic humanity and individual identity (ATP, 138/172). As such, faciality is the means by which all faces may be compared through a sliding scale of similarity that determines their relative positions. But the face is not an expression of impartial or universal judgment, although it likes to appear as such, for the face is that of the White Man himself, Jesus Christ Superstar, the typical European. Quite simply, "you've been recognized," Deleuze and Guattari write, and faciality "has you inscribed in its overall grid." Faciality is ultimately a form of policing, a "deviance detector," which inscribes any attempt to escape its normative system within its boundaries, for all there is, is divergence from the white-man's face, without outside. "There are only people who should be like us and whose crime it is not to be" (ATP, 177–78/218). Their punishments include racism, poverty, confinement or death. Obviously: "The face is a politics" (ATP, 181/222), and in this political dimension it is easy to see how the ubiquitous production of faces within the arts is only one aspect, and not necessarily the worst, of its pernicious powers.

The face and its faciality machine have their correlate in the landscape. Landscapification codes the world, imposing physical and psychological hierarchies (determining my "place" in the world) that compliment the process of

facialisation. In this sense, a sense both aesthetic and political: "The 'problem' within which painting is inscribed is that of the *face-landscape*" (ATP, 301/369).<sup>13</sup> Painting approaches this "problem" from two sides, on the one hand enabling its reproduction, but on the other creating deviations from its normative axiomatic. This latter process is painting's "brighter side" (ATP, 178/218) where, and here Deleuze and Guattari are beginning to talk about the Venetians: "Painting has taken the abstract white wall/black hole machine of faciality in all directions, using the face of Christ to produce every kind of facial unit and every degree of deviance" (ATP, 178/218–9). Painting becomes a deterritorialisation machine: "The aim of painting," Deleuze and Guattari rather generously argue, "has always been the deterritorialisation of faces and landscapes, either by a reactivation of corporeality, or by a liberation of lines and colors, or both at the same time" (ATP, 301/370).

Venetian painting of the Renaissance is a "reactivation of corporeality" and a "liberation of line and colour" that introduces material and iconographic innovations (new traits of content and expression) to painting, and does so in a way that attacks its representational regime, its face-landscape machine. This movement of deterritorialization emerges in painting with the shift in the Renaissance towards a theology of the incarnation. Debates about the meaning of the incarnation were explored in painting, which developed a new iconography centring on the passion story, and the Madonna and Child.<sup>14</sup> But more fundamentally, Deleuze argues, with this shift in theological focus God is no longer a pure transcendent essence, but has become its opposite, the event or "accident" of a man's death. This "accident," especially as it appears in painting, embodies Christianity's inherent atheism, an atheism that would liberate painting in a dramatic way: "Christianity contains a germ of tranquil atheism that will nurture painting;" Deleuze argues, "the painter can easily be indifferent to the religious subject he is asked to represent" (FB, 124/117). An atheist painting produced from within the church structure that nurtures it emerges when "the form begins to express the accident and no longer the essence" (FB, 125/117). It becomes a small step for the painter to use the accident of Christ on the cross to explore completely different concerns: a landscape, some drapery, or other more bizarre twists of the imagination. This is, Deleuze claims, the "radical break" in painting that occurs around 1450, in which "the flows of painting go insane."<sup>15</sup> At this time, Deleuze and Guattari write: "The most prodigious strokes of madness appear on canvas under the auspices of the Catholic code." They mention: "Christ-athlete at the fair, Christ-Mannerist queer, Christ-Negro" (ATP, 178/219). It is not the case however, that painting turns against the church, and starts to disbelieve.<sup>16</sup> Instead, painting discovers the atheism that is the

creative part of Christianity, the descent of the divine into the flesh, and begins to experiment with this new corporeality, pushing it to extremes: "Christ's body is engineered on all sides and in all fashions, pulled in all directions, playing the role of a full body without organs [i.e. the plane of consistency], a locus of connection for all the machines of desire, a locus of sadomasochistic exercise where the artist's joy breaks free. Even homosexual Christs" (AO, 369/442–43). Although this last claim seems optimistic, it is certainly true that iconography at this time breaks with the rigid codes of Byzantine and Gothic art. What is crucial however is that these deterritorialisations of the expressive regime are conjugated to others taking place on the level of content, most importantly the introduction of new painting materials in Italy at this time. Although these deterritorialisations will be reterritorialised by the classical aesthetics dominant in central Italy, the Venetians will project the deterritorialisation of material into the absolute, their technique and use of color inventing a new painting machine. This will be the abstract machine of modern painting, where painting breaks with representation because "the semiotic components are inseparable from material components and are in exceptionally close contact with molecular levels" (ATP, 334/413). Here painting emerges in particles-signs, where the semiotic components (traits of expression) are inseparable from their material elements (traits of content). Painting will become, with the Venetians, a materialist experimentation inseparable from the vitalism of the plane, a materialist-vitalism no longer representational but real. Venetian art succeeds in making painting *live*, and this will be its value for Deleuze and Guattari. It is not a representation of the ideal and eternal, but a material vitality that finds expression in the construction of a new reality, a reality painting will not exhaust, to this very day (there is no "death of painting"). In this way, Venetian art fulfils one of Deleuze and Guattari's clearest affirmations of a vital art:

art is never an end in itself; it is only a tool for blazing life lines, in other words all of those real becomings that are not produced only *in* art, and all those active escapes that do not consist in fleeing *into* art, taking refuge in art, and all of those positive deterritorializations that never reterritorialize on art, but instead sweep it away with them toward the realms of the asignifying, asubjective, and faceless. (ATP, 187/230)

At this point however, we must turn to a much more precise account of Venetian art to understand, exactly, how it achieves this. Venetian painting emerged in part from a Byzantine tradition of images especially present in Venice. Under Byzantine control early in its history, Venice, even once independent, maintained

significant economic links to Constantinople and its empire. As Venice was without classical ruins, the great Byzantine church, San Marco, dominated the city physically and aesthetically, its lush decoration and spectacular mosaics being an important influence on Venetian painting.<sup>17</sup> These are some of the reasons why Venice, unlike central Italy, did not break with the Byzantine influence in painting, and in many ways continued its lines of research.<sup>18</sup> Beyond their aesthetic influence however, the function of Byzantine mosaics within the church was to provide a path by which the viewer could transcend their body and regain the divine realm of the spirit, and this spiritual path was one Venetian painting rejected. Nevertheless, Byzantine mosaics offered an alternative to the classical subordination of light to line that dominated the Italian Renaissance, an alternative the Venetian painters developed in their own direction.

Classical representation utilized the line as an expressive contour imposing an ideal and organic form on matter. The classical line was hylomorphic, and operated as a mould, this function being privileged over light and color, which merely provided the material elements of the picture. Representation was first of all the representation of the organic world, of man's world, and in the realm of art it was first of all the line that described this world. Byzantine art developed an alternative to this type of representation in abandoning the contour-line, and using instead the modulation of areas of light and shadow to construct form. This 'reversal' provided a means of composition Venetian art was to exploit against the classical emphasis on line favoured in the Renaissance of central Italy, a reversal the Venetians accelerated into the absolute deterritorialisation of color.<sup>19</sup> In the Byzantine mosaic, Deleuze writes: "Beings disintegrate into light," (FB, 129/121) and this was a deterritorialisation of both organic representation and the human essence it represented. This Byzantine deterritorialisation nevertheless introduced its own reterritorialisations, for the alternations of "black shores and white surfaces" (FB, 128/120) composing Byzantine figures involved an equally rigid system of faciality. Byzantine art was in fact typified by an extreme emphasis on the face of the "old despot," God the father and the son, who appeared in hieratic isolation in the upper reaches of the church. Venetian painting before 1450, Deleuze and Guattari write, "molds itself to the Byzantine code where even the colors and the lines are subordinated to a signifier that determines their hierarchy as a vertical order" (AO, 369/442). This vertical hierarchy works to lead us towards our essence—that to which we are compared and that to which we aspire—but this essence doesn't define our "natural" organism, but is the spiritual "grace" of a heavenly world appearing in the brilliance of the mosaic's divine light. To ascend into this divine light means transcending our organic form, and the church in this sense was a machine through which we

could achieve this transfiguration.<sup>20</sup> But this ascension into pure light meant more than a break with the beautiful classical body and its representation; it meant the evaporation of all materiality into a spiritual void. In this sense, Byzantine art expresses the philosophical transition from Plato to Plotinus. Plotinian mysticism demanded a dematerialization of the soul that was also a radical negation of consciousness. This final step in retracing God's emanation into being travels up, into the light defining the spiritual and visual presence of God in San Marco, allowing our gaze to pass through the black holes of God's eyes in order to gaze upon the internal abyss from which Plotinus' God emanates his gift. Being must disintegrate in light, in order to discover the divine void.<sup>21</sup>

Venetian painting will borrow the Byzantine dissolution of classical line in the modulation of light, but it will do so through affirming rather than negating corporeality and the materiality of paint. In taking up the Byzantine modulation of light in its own ways (ways we shall have to elaborate) Venetian painting broke with the classical line, but more importantly it broke with this line as it was "re-born" in central Italy in the fifteenth century. For painters of central Italy line was the most important element in painting because it defined form, while light was only a secondary element that revealed it. This approach drew on the classical philosophical tradition articulated by Aristotle, who elevated form over matter and the intellectual over the sensuous. In his *Poetics* Aristotle privileged line over color because it had the clarity necessary to translate the intellectual act of invention, whereas color was merely a property of matter, both of the thing and of the medium used to represent it.<sup>22</sup> This was a more optimistic response to Plato's view of the material world as a dim and deceptive shadow of the transcendent realm of ideas and essences, and found in art the possibility of representing the essential and true. Line was the fundamental means by which art could approach the ideal, and light merely gave volume to the forms a line defined and revealed their color. As the most important element in the construction of form, line was the first step in a painting's composition, and by the middle of the fifteenth century was achieved by making a full scale cartoon, which was then transferred to the painting surface. The colors of each object had also been determined in advance, and these were applied following the linear contours. Color theory at this time also appealed to an Aristotelian metaphysics, and every effort was made to retain a color's purity as a supplement to the painting's linear clarity. An important element in this practice was the belief, once more inherited from Aristotle, that light was separate from color, and inasmuch as light and shadow created an object's volume these effects were gained through the mixture of the "non-colors" white and black with the color. The first account of such a method appeared around 1390 in

Cennino Cennini's *Libro dell'Arte*, which claimed to explain Giotto's painting technique. This involved the practice of "modelling up," where the pure color was placed in the shadowed areas of an object, and two lighter tones were then mixed by adding white, and were used to create plasticity. This method had mutated by the time of Leon Battista Alberti's *Della Pittura*, written in 1435–6, where the perspective system and the color theory of the Renaissance appeared in a systematized form. Alberti proposed a method whereby a space was defined by perspective, forms were drawn within this space, their color determined by drawing an imaginary line through their centre, and then modelled "up and down" through the addition of black and white according to the degree of illumination. The light source was fixed at a right angle to the picture plane, and gave the direction and strength of the shadows and highlights. The object's color was understood (once more following Aristotle) as being a "local tone" or true color belonging to the object itself apart from any visual factors such as light conditions or proximity to other colors. This "true" color was revealed but not produced by light, which was believed to have no color. In Cennini's system, colors had different value ranges depending on the intensity of their pigments, making consistent modelling a problem. Another difficulty from the point of view of naturalism was that the pure pigments placed in the shadowed areas tended to project forward because of their intensity, counteracting the painting's illusion of depth. Alberti's system solved both problems by placing the pure color in the middle, and so most projected part of the object, and standardized the tonal range of all colors by adjusting them both "up" and "own" through the addition of black and white.<sup>23</sup>

Although giving greater naturalism, Alberti's coding of color retains the classical emphasis on a true, ideal color consistent with its metaphysical commitments. Central Renaissance painting idealises color and light effects, because its color system ignores empirical experience, giving central Italian painting its timeless, eternal appearance. In empirical experience an object's color is inseparable from the quality of light illuminating it, and the colors of the objects surrounding it. The Venetians were the first to respond to these conditions, and this led them to revalue color's value. Starting with Giovanni Bellini, painters in Venice began to explore the empirical lighting effects of the time of day, or the weather conditions (a good example is Giorgione's *La Tempesta*, c.1509, Accademia, Venice<sup>24</sup>). They realized that light did not effect color through a simple binomial graduation of value, and began to experiment with other forms of mixing which lead to what Deleuze defines as a Modern colorism, where light and dark is achieved through the mixing of pure color. But before we analyse this change in the Venetian regime of expression we will have to turn to the various new materials being introduced at the time that made it possible.

The most significant of these factors was the introduction to Italy of a new medium—oil—in the 1460s. This development is usually attributed to the painter Antonello da Messina. Vasari claims Da Messina learnt the technique directly from Jan van Eyck, and although we now know this was impossible (van Eyck died before da Messina was born), recent research indicates he may have visited Flanders to learn the technique.<sup>25</sup> Additionally, some of van Eyck's works had come to Italy, and the painters Rogier van der Weyden and Petrus Christus had visited by this time. Oil as a medium dramatically effected Renaissance painting, giving a greater depth and vibrancy to color than that achieved by mixing the pigments with egg tempera. Most importantly it meant that the layering of glazes could create shadow, and black no longer needed to be mixed with a color, a practice often producing murky effects. Black was still used in the monochrome under painting that gave the lighting structure of a scene, but a color's value could now be controlled through the overlay of different amounts of similar pigments (for example, a series of reds and pinks achieved through the layering of different intensities of each). This practice did not however, contravene the classical demands of "pure" color and its condemnation of "corrupt" colors (those created through direct mixing) as in glazing each color retained its integrity, and only similar colors were overlaid. Oil began being used in Venice in the early 1470s, most notably by Giovanni Bellini, but da Messina's presence there in 1475–7, and the influence of the work he did there (especially the altarpiece for S. Cassiano, now in the Kunsthistorische Museum, Vienna) was an important factor in its quick adoption. The Venetians accelerated the possibilities of the oil medium beyond its use in central Italy in numerous ways. They began to overlay glazes of complementary colors to create shadows (the so-called "colored grey"), meaning the inseparability of light and color in nature could find its adequate expression in a painting technique. They also began to inflect an object's shadow with color from nearby objects, which gave a much more realistic light effect. Finally, they directly mixed colors together, adding "broken tones" to their palette. In these ways the Venetians absolutely deterritorialise the classical line to start painting with color-light. Deleuze and Guattari put it very succinctly: "what would appear to be another world opens up, an *other* art, where the lines are deterritorialized, the colors are decoded, and now only refer to the relations they entertain amongst themselves, and with one another" (AO, 369/442). As we shall see, Deleuze will claim that this liberation from the systematic addition of white and black to create a color's value will be the definition of colorism, and the condition of possibility of a painter being able to paint inorganic forces. This deterritorialisation of the Renaissance line-color value system did not emerge in isolation however, and was conjugated to other important "traits of expression" of the new oil medium. These were concentrated in

technique, where oil's greater fluidity and slower drying time enabled the painter to work up the composition on the canvas, and to explore the affects of a much freer brushwork.

Venetian painters, starting with Giorgione, stopped working out their compositions in detail before beginning to paint. Drawing no longer predetermined the composition, the composition was worked out through the process of painting.<sup>26</sup> This is another major break with central Renaissance methods, for, as Marcia Hall points out: "Color, rather than line, is the primary means of constituting the image, [ . . . ] making the painting process the process of creation."<sup>27</sup> The picture's composition and color scheme were often reworked during painting, and this required a new technique. First of all faster, more intuitive and empirical, with the painter responding to problems and inspirations generated through the material process of painting. Painting no longer simply represented the idea of the painter, or his patron, but began to express its matter-force, its paint-painting machine. The central Renaissance painters had a three step practice, drawing the forms, applying a monochrome lighting scheme, and adding the color last. Giorgione, and Titian after him, begins with a very broad laying-in of light and dark areas within which colors are increasingly integrated.<sup>28</sup> "Titian," Deleuze and Guattari note, "began his paintings in black and white, not to make outlines to fill in, but as a matrix for each of the colors to come" (ATP, 173/212). Titian develops this technique to a point in the late paintings where there was no longer a clear distinction between the "under painting" and the application of color (Tintoretto also used this technique extensively). Light and color were applied together in the gradual working up of the forms, a process relying less on a preconceived drawn plan, than a series of continual reworkings. In the late Titian opaque and translucent paint and dark and bright colors are applied simultaneously. Furthermore, some passages in the later work seem to have been applied with Titian's fingers. Truly an artist painting flush with the real!<sup>29</sup>

In emphasising the importance of the Venetian deterritorialisation of the line in a painterly construction of color-light, we are not only following Deleuze and Guattari, but one of their major art-historical references on this point (and on others), the German art historian Heinrich Wölfflin. Wölfflin's *Principles of Art History* is a remarkable forerunner to what we could call a 'diagrammatic' understanding of art, and provides a taxonomy of five "tensors" or functions through which to understand art. Each function was bi-polar (linear-painterly, plane-recession, closed-open form, multiplicity-unity and clear-unclear) and an art work, Wölfflin argued, appeared in relation to these poles.<sup>30</sup> Wölfflin's principles are not outside history, but in Deleuze and Guattari's terms are "prior to"

history (ATP, 142/177). This is the position of the abstract machine, and Wölfflin's principles are important examples of how traits of expression appear in the realm of art. The most important of Wölfflin's principles for our purposes are those of linear-painterly and clearness-unclearness.<sup>31</sup> Wölfflin explains how a "depreciation" of the line emerges in "the emancipation of the masses of light and shade till they pursue each other in independent interplay," producing what he calls "a painterly impression."<sup>32</sup> The art work no longer appears according to the linear determination of forms, each separate and distinct, but in an "all-over" affect in which "everything was enlivened by a mysterious movement," a movement in which an "interflow of form and light and color can take effect."<sup>33</sup> This new "interflow," along with the broken tones and loose brushwork we will shortly examine, breaks out of the eternal forms of Renaissance painting to directly involve us. We must reconstitute the painting through the active participation of our eye, and in this way the paintings appeal to our sensual rather than cerebral or religious instincts, enfolding us into the diagram of/as their real conditions. Like Byzantine art then, Venetian painting rejects the line for an expression that "has its roots only in the eye and appeals only to the eye."<sup>34</sup>

As Wölfflin's principle suggests, the Venetian renunciation of the line and their use of the new medium of oil led to an emphatic "handling" of the paint, and the force of the brushes movement became immediately visible in the work. This was partly a change in Venetian taste, and reflected the elevation of the artist above mere craftsman. But it was also a technique that Titian developed into an alternative to the layering of glazes. By juxtaposing and overlapping daubs of unbroken paint, he could modulate color-light in a faster and more calligraphic style, the activity of his brush adding drama to his scenes. Form now appears through the composition of colored patches punctuated by the tesser passages of impasto.<sup>35</sup> Once more this innovation shows how traits of expression, here the expressivities of the brush, are directly connected to the new material traits of content liberated in the Venetian abstract machine

Titian conjugated this deterritorialisation of the brush stroke with another innovation on the level of content, the move from gessoed panels as support to canvas. The painters of central Italy preferred gessoed panels because they provided a very smooth surface that received the brush much like paper received chalk, and suited their emphasis of the line. Canvas however, had a weave that when pronounced remained visible, and disrupted the application of the paint. This disturbed the linear qualities of the stroke, and amplified the softer and more diffused modelling preferred by the Venetians. It also introduced a new possibility for producing broken tones, when colored under painting lying in the recessions of the weave showed through a color applied over it with a fast brush.

Tintoretto employed all of these material and expressive innovations in his work, but he pushed the Venetian reversal of the Renaissance separation of color and light to a new level. He did so through the practice of working on dark grounds, on which he laid on light areas with a rapid and often translucent stroke. In a remarkable affirmation of the new materiality of the Venetian abstract machine Tintoretto sometimes seems to have mixed his dark grounds simply by scraping together all the paint on his palette.<sup>36</sup> At this point, Deleuze claims, Venetian painting becomes "baroque" inasmuch as in it everything illuminated emerges from an infinity of shadows. Although it is not my intention to focus on Deleuze's work on the baroque here, it is worth noting as a broader abstract machine that functions within Venetian painting as well as philosophy and mathematics. The baroque emerges from the absolute deterritorialisation of the organic line of classical representation into folds, folds that give form by descending to and rising from a dark obscurity. The dark obscurity of matter itself, which in Venetian painting is folded by the brush into expressive and abstract patches of color-light to reveal form. In Venetian painting as "baroque" machine (Tintoretto is Deleuze's specific example):

the painting is transformed. Things jump out of the background, colors spring from the common base that attests to their obscure nature, figures are defined by their covering more than their contour. Yet this is not in opposition to light; to the contrary, it is by virtue of the new regime of light. (TF, 31–2/44–5)

This new regime of light takes the luminism the Venetians inherited from Byzantine mosaics and deterritorialises it, before extending it into a new colorism where relations of light and dark are not added to, but constructed by, forces of color. Wölfflin anticipates Deleuze here, arguing that the baroque is a new regime of expression emerging within the tensor "clearness-unclearness." "For classic art," Wölfflin writes, "all beauty meant exhaustive revelation of the form; in baroque art, absolute clearness is obscured even where a perfect rendering of facts is aimed at. The pictorial appearance no longer coincides with the maximum of objective clearness, but evades it."<sup>37</sup> Deleuze will push this diagrammatic definition of the baroque even further however, claiming that it is "the inseparability of clarity from obscurity" which produces "the effacement of the contour" (TF, 32/45). It is the new visual clarity of color-light, and its hazy, flowing forms in Venetian painting that is inseparable from its dark material obscurity (Tintoretto's scraped palette). Semiotic and material dimensions are in absolute proximity. This is where the Venetian abstract machine constructs a new plane of consistency, invents a new materiality of painting, but not without unleashing new traits of expression, new ways to paint. Not least of these is



Figure 4 Titian, *The Death of Actaeon*, 1565–76, National Gallery, London.

the discovery of color-light, which will make Venetian painting adequate to the material-vitalism, the inorganic life it expresses. Once more Wölfflin describes this new living dimension of Venetian color in a beautiful passage that could be Deleuze's: "We see that the emphasis lies no longer on being, but on becoming and change. Thereby color has achieved quite a new life. It eludes definition and is, at every point and at every moment, different."<sup>38</sup>

Deleuze and Guattari give an account of the deterritorialisation of the line by color that can easily be applied to Venetian painting. The representational line, they argue "proceeds by articulating segments" in order to delimit form (in other words, like the Albertian value scale, the line works by over coding matter). The deterritorialised matter-function of Venetian color-light on the other hand, draws "a metastratum of the plane of consistency" (ATP, 56/74). This introduces new traits of expression that no longer function through line, but through "the architecture of planes and the regime of color" (WP, 179/170). This is not the abandoning of line, but its transfiguration, the

Venetian response to Deleuze and Guattari's cry: "Free the line" (ATP, 295/362). With the Venetians, the line loses "any function of outlining a form of any kind," and joins the absolutely deterritorialised traits of content, to emerge again in matter-flows of color animating the surface of the painting. "By this token," Deleuze and Guattari write, "the line has become abstract, truly abstract and mutant, a visual block, and under these conditions the point assumes creative functions again, as a color-point or line-point" (ATP, 298/366). The "living blocks" of Venetian color-light are no longer preformed by common sense into an object the subject represents, nor are they formed by semiological and technical stratifications of the plane. In the abstract machine of Venetian painting matter and function are co-extensive, and color and technique are the inseparable elements of its construction and expression of a new plane of consistency for painting. This finally defines Venetian particles-signs; they are no longer representational, for in them it is "*the material that passes into sensation*" (WP, 193/183). This means the technical plane (the new traits of content and expression affecting the painting's construction) is inseparable from the sensation expressing the aesthetic plane of composition. In this sense, Deleuze and Guattari write, the technical plane "ascends into the aesthetic plane of composition and, [ . . . ] gives it a specific thickness independent of any perspective or depth. It is at this moment that the figures of art free themselves from an apparent transcendence or paradigmatic model and avow their innocent atheism, their paganism" (WP, 193–4/183).

Venetian painting is in this respect, Deleuze and Guattari argue, modern. Here, "art accedes to its authentic modernity which simply consists in liberating what was present in art from its beginnings, but was hidden under aims and objectives, even if aesthetic, and underneath recodings or axiomatics: the pure process that fulfills itself, and that never ceases to reach fulfilment as it proceeds—art as 'experimentation'" (AO, 370–1/445). What emerges in Venetian painting is a "pure" process of experimentation comprising the modern "phylum" of art, a phylum defined by its non-representational abstract machine, defined by in other words, its abstraction. Nevertheless, art's modernity—its abstraction—appears in concrete historical assemblages that are obviously very different. In fact, Deleuze identifies two general directions that modernist painting assemblages may take. One, taken by the Venetians, is to dissolve the representational line in the pure opticality of light-color. The other direction available to abstraction is what Deleuze and Guattari call the "Gothic" line, for which they offer another famous example, the painter Jackson Pollock. Pollock does not dissolve the line in light, but deforms it through a continual movement, a constant changing of direction in which it is either "splitting in breaking off from itself or turning back on itself in whirling movement" (FB,

129/121). This line is very different from that of the Venetians, but nevertheless performs a similar deterritorialisation, for it is "never the outline of anything" (FB, 130/122).

### ABSTRACTION—THE RETURN TO SMOOTH SPACE

Pollock's paintings are composed of "drips," swirling lines of paint sometimes coalescing into patches of color. But rather than dissolving the line into color-light, as the Venetians did, Pollock frees the line from itself, by unleashing its abstract vitality. "With Pollock," Deleuze writes, "this line-trait and this colour patch will be pushed to their functional limit: no longer the transformation of the form but a decomposition of matter which abandons us to lineaments and granulations" (FB, 105/98–9). This is a succinct statement of the transition we will now make from Venetian painting to that of Pollock, from the transformation of form to the decomposition of matter. This transition will involve new materials and new techniques, and will require a new terminology to describe it. Pollock's abstract line is clearly both material and non-representational, its thick skeins of paint weaving a "smooth" space without depth and in which relations are dynamic. "Smooth" and its antipode "striated" are terms for the ontological "space" of the plane of consistency and the strata respectively.<sup>39</sup> Lines and their trajectories appear within striated space according to their articulation of points. A line becomes a contour when it moves from one point to another, or when it is itself a sequence of points delimiting inside from outside. This line-point system establishes an extensive space of measures and properties through perspective, and populates it with signifiers and subjects. "Abstract lines" escape the "false problem" of perspective by no longer appearing within its striations, they do not represent things, but compose a moving visual block that returns striated space to smooth. Smooth space is traversed by the absolutely free line, a line that enjoys infinite movement and is, as Deleuze and Guattari will say, "an absolute that is one with becoming itself, with process. It is the absolute of passage" (ATP, 494/617). This free and abstract line traverses the plane of consistency in constructing its matter-flows and expressing its functions. The abstract line, Deleuze and Guattari write, and here we are once more approaching Pollock's paintings, is "without origin, since it always belongs off the painting, which only holds it by the middle; it is without coordinates, because it melds with a plane of consistency upon which it floats and that it creates; it is without locatable connection, because it has lost not only its representative function but any function of outlining a form of any kind—by this token, the line has become abstract, truly abstract" (ATP, 298/366, *italics added*).

The first matter-force, or trait of content of Pollock's abstract line is the "drip," both the paint and its various forces of fall and splatter, its gravity, speed and projection. The "drip" is important for two reasons. First, it implies the horizontality of the canvas, its famous descent onto the floor of Pollock's studio, which turns the "drip's" matter-force expressive in a new way (no sign in Pollock's painting of the 'vertical drip' and splash favoured by his contemporaries). Second, the removal of the painting from the wall deterritorialises Pollock's relation to it, allowing him to work 'within' it, from every side and even walking through it. Pollock thereby exemplifies Deleuze and Guattari's "law of the painting," that it be done at close range, without any optical distance.<sup>40</sup> This new physical relation to paint and canvas liberates the artist's hand from traditional signs of 'handling,' producing new asubjective traits. Furthermore, applied with sticks, sponges, and even icing syringes, Pollock's "drip" is the catastrophic breakdown of traditional techniques in a manual power that decomposes the paint material, freeing it from conscious control to release new traits of expression. This is Pollock's schizoanalytic diagram, an absolute deterritorialisation of painting's content into matter-forces (traits of content) inseparable from the absolute deterritorialisation of paintings expression onto new functions (traits of expression). No more representation, no more artist. Through this absolute deterritorialisation of painting something "abstract" appears, something Pollock called the unconscious, but which can only be understood in Deleuze and Guattari's terms as something real, "a non-figurative and nonsymbolic unconscious, a pure abstract figural dimension ('abstract' in the sense of abstract painting), flows-schizzes or real-desire apprehended below the minimum conditions of identity" (AO, 351/421). This abstract dimension emerges in Pollock's "drips" and their abstract lines, these "*traits of expression*" of his abstract machine, expressing the "plane of consistency upon which it floats and *which it creates*." In this way, a very different way from the Venetians, Pollock's abstract lines "assemble a new type of reality."

Although it is true that modernism and the abstraction that defines it have a long history for Deleuze, it is important to see how its abstract machine does not remain the same, and how its experiments have a definite history. Venetian painting constructed form through the modulation of color-light, which despite its radicality remained within an optical regime, and did not entirely abandon a representational function. The human face emerged from color-light, and although this process was abstract, the face was not significantly deformed by it, meaning the Venetian abstract machine retained a certain subjective dimension, a "homely atmosphere" as Deleuze calls it (using Francis Bacon's term), which "still conserves a menacing relation with a possible narration" (FB, 134/126). There seems little danger of narration appearing in Pollock's work of 1947–50

(the period of the "drip" paintings). On the one hand there is his non-representational line, and on the other his refusal to use value—the interplay of light and dark—to create form or depth. Clement Greenberg had already emphasized this aspect of Pollock's work, even though, as we shall see, he interprets it in a very different way from Deleuze. "In several of his 'sprinkled' canvases of 1950," Greenberg writes, "*One* and *Lavender Mist* as well as *Number One* (1948), he had literally pulverized value contrasts in a vaporous dust of interfused lights and darks in which every suggestion of a sculptural effect was obliterated."<sup>41</sup> Deleuze's difference with Greenberg is not over Pollock's "pulverising" of value-effects, but with Greenberg's argument that the results are entirely optical. For Deleuze there are two possible rejections of the representational line; one, and it is the one we have seen the Venetians take, is through light, and remains optical. The other is through the Gothic line, the line Pollock takes, which escapes the optical to become haptic. Painting, Deleuze writes, "can only move in one of the following two directions: *either towards the exposition of a purely optical space, which is freed from its references to even a subordinated tactility [i.e. the colour-light of the Venetians . . . ] or, on the contrary, toward the imposition of a violent manual space*" (FB, 127/119–20). In this manual, haptic space, it is the hand and not the eye that operates as an organ of touch and connection. Everything works here through continuity and conjunction, the hand is disorganized, removed from the human body and its organic representation through a pure activity, "a speed, a violence, and a life the eye can barely follow" (FB, 129/121).<sup>42</sup> We can already feel that just such a hand, a hand that extends beyond the organism, executes Pollock's work.

Before going on to elaborate this Gothic line, and Pollock's use of it, two things need to be noted. First, Venetian painting clearly retains a degree of representation and narration, and develops them within the still subjective atmosphere of its color-light effects. This does not negate the absolute deterritorialisation Venetian painting achieves, but it is an aspect of their abstract machine that is deterritorialised in turn by a painting that is even more abstract. Second, this evaluation should not be seen to privilege Pollock over the Venetians (as we shall see Deleuze will point out other problems with Pollock's abstract machine in his book on Bacon), but rather, as with the classical and modern regimes of cinema, each have their own beauty and achievement which shouldn't be heirarchised in being identified as different.

## ABSTRACTION AND EMPATHY

Deleuze and Guattari's understanding of Pollock's abstraction, and more specifically their reading of his abstract line, draws heavily on the German art

historian Willhelm Worringer. His book *Abstraction and Empathy* develops the opposition of classical and non-classical regimes of artistic expression as different types of aesthetic enjoyment, different types of "will to art."<sup>43</sup> Empathy is an "objectified self-enjoyment,"<sup>44</sup> pleasure taken in an object as the affirmation and confirmation of human "volition in motion," a pleasure in other words, in our apperceptive activity and organic vitality. As Worringer puts it: "In the forms of the work of art we enjoy ourselves" (AE, 14). Empathy tends towards an aesthetics of organic naturalism, a subjective appreciation of the beauty of "nature." Here: "Man was at home in the world and felt himself at its centre" (AE, 102). The world of Poussin, not of Pollock. Empathy is, in classical terms, Apollonian, inasmuch as it overcomes the individuated perspectives of human consciousness by giving us an experience of our shared, harmonious, beautiful and "purely organic being" (AE, 33). Through empathy, Worringer writes, "chaos becomes cosmos."<sup>45</sup>

The "urge to abstraction," on the other hand, is "directly opposed to the empathy impulse" (AE, 14). As such, the aim of abstraction is "de-organicising the organic," (AE, 129) in order to become "part of an increasing order superior to all that is living" (FG, 17). Abstraction seeks these transcendent essences in order to express them through an "abstract eternalisation of existence in the crystalline body" (AE, 87). Abstraction therefore departs from mimetic naturalism and favours geometric designs, or positioning schematised figures on a flat plane that does not imitate space.<sup>46</sup> Abstraction rejects the organic and optical world of classical art in favour of a haptic sensation, a touch revealing the certainty of inorganic truths, as the "irrefragable necessity of [an object's] closed material individuality" (AE, 41). As a result in the haptic world of abstraction, Worringer writes: "Life as such is felt to be a disturbance of aesthetic enjoyment" (AE, 24). Worringer achieves for aesthetics a Nietzschean "revaluation of values" (which is how Worringer puts it (FG, 9)). Like Nietzsche, he finds the value of aesthetic value in the "will" (to art), understood in its onto-aesthetic antipodes of empathy and abstraction. This revaluing of aesthetics in ontological terms is clearly very important for Deleuze and Guattari, but nevertheless Worringer's duality of empathy and abstraction is not sufficient for them, because the abstract alternative to classical organic representation is a wholly transcendent one. Finally Deleuze and Guattari replace Worringer's opposition with their more "primordial duality" (ATP, 496/619) of the smooth and the striated.

To understand this "primordial duality" and its relation to the abstract line however, we must pass through Worringer's discussion of what he calls the "northern line," and Deleuze and Guattari's understanding of this as the defining feature of Gothic art. The northern line, Worringer argues, is an abstract line that is no longer 'crystalline' but has become mobile and expressive.

This abstract line is divorced from organic life but is, as Deleuze and Guattari put it, "all the more alive for being inorganic" (ATP, 498/623). The abstract line of Gothic art Worringer argues, expresses the "cloudy mysticism" of the German peoples of northern Europe (AE, 107). It's cloudy because it never achieves the clear necessity and regularity of a transcendental abstraction, it is forever searching for crystalline vision, a search inspiring an "ecstasy of movement" (FG, 41). This movement does not express an organic thing, or an ideal and transcendent "non-thing," but a hybrid "will" in which empathy turns away from the human to discover the "mechanical laws" of a "living" matter (AE, 113). These mechanical laws determine the "living movement of forces," (AE, 117) an inorganic life constructing, to use a phrase from Worringer which Deleuze and Guattari take as their own, the "vitalized geometry" (FG, 41) of Gothic art. Gothic art carries us into the infinite in an "extravagant ecstasy" (AE, 117) but this infinity is constructed by the mechanical forces of an immanent inorganic life. The infinity of the abstract line, in other words, is none other than our own, once "we lose the feeling of our earthly bonds; [and] we merge into an infinite movement which annihilates all finite consciousness" (FG, 108). In the Gothic abstract line, Worringer writes (and it is a line Deleuze will also echo), northern man "finds himself only by losing himself, by going out beyond himself" (FG, 115).<sup>47</sup>

The man or woman who loses their self in going beyond themselves is, for Deleuze and Guattari, the nomad, who in expressing this movement creates nomad art. The Nomad shares some features with Worringer's northerner, first of all what Deleuze and Guattari call a "vagabond monotheism" whose abstract line constructs a smooth space, or what they here call a "local absolute" (ATP, 382/474). Unlike the mystics of medieval times however, nomadic monotheism is, Deleuze and Guattari claim, "singularly atheistic" (ATP, 383/475). This marks the beginning of Deleuze and Guattari's deviation from Worringer, as they peel the abstract line away from the necessary connection it retains for him with religious worship.<sup>48</sup> Indeed at this point they "take some risks ourselves, making free use of these notions" (ATP, 493/615).

This "free use" begins with Deleuze and Guattari's understanding of inorganic life as a vital materialism. It is nomad art ("and its successors," Deleuze and Guattari note, "barbarian, Gothic, and modern" (ATP, 492/614)), which expresses this vital materialism through the "science" (but it is equally an aesthetics) of "metallurgy." Metallurgy acts as an expressive "will" of matter itself, and as such is a schizoanalytic work, flush with the real. We can understand Deleuze and Guattari's point, and its deviation from Worringer, through their respective discussions of the Gothic cathedral. Worringer argues that Gothic architecture is inorganic because the mechanical energies of the stone that it re-

leases are not material but mystical. Gothic architecture expresses these abstract and spiritual forces of transcendence despite the stone, by negating stone's material properties (FG, 106). Deleuze and Guattari on the other hand argue that Gothic cathedrals were constructed according to a "nomad science" that rather than using off-site and on-paper plans which provided a hylomorphic form and required a uniformly prepared matter, these schizo-scientists—metallurgists—constructed their cathedrals through on-the-ground projections which took into account the singular properties and forces of each material element. This required cutting stones according to their particular position in relation to all the others, and was achieved by a technique of "squaring" rather than with a template. The building is no longer a form that defines a space, nor the expression of immaterial and ideal forces, but a construction of abstract lines expressing the continual variations of the stones matter-force. In this way, Deleuze and Guattari write: "It is as if Gothic conquered a smooth space" (ATP, 364/451). Gothic construction was not achieved through a transcendent plan, and this, perhaps, makes it "atheist."

Deleuze and Guattari's abstract line is neither abstract nor Gothic in Worringer's sense, because its inorganic vitality is immanent to its material, rather than that which attempts to transcend it. For Deleuze and Guattari, the "prodigious idea of *Nonorganic Life*" that Worringer considered the invention of the Barbarians, was in fact "the intuition of metallurgy" (ATP, 411/512). The metallurgist—a nomad schizoanalyst—produces art in which a "dynamic connection between support and ornament replaces the matter-form dialectic. [ . . . ] Nomad art *follows* the connections between singularities of matter and traits of expression, and lodges on the level of these connections, whether they be natural or forced" (ATP, 369/457). Rather than *search* for the transcendent, as Worringer's Gothic line does, the nomadic abstract line *follows* a vital matter, and in so doing expresses its construction of smooth space.

The abstract line, "this vital force specific to Abstraction is what draws smooth space" (ATP, 499/623). The abstract line draws a smooth space in which one senses this force (and has a haptic sensation), "only by touching it with one's mind, but without the mind becoming a finger, not even by way of the eye" (ATP, 494/616).<sup>49</sup> The mind participates in what it sees, beyond subject or object (and beyond significance and subjectivation), in a sensation inseparable from the action of a force. The haptic, for Deleuze and Guattari, is the tactile function of the eye, a "grabbing" or "touching" specific to a "connective function" of the gaze. Smooth space therefore emerges through this material participation of the eye—its "touch"—which constructs "visual-blocks" by following the matter-force on the inorganic plane. The haptic eye produces a metallurgical vision, a participatory modulation of the plane of consistency as an

open ended "work in progress." As Deleuze and Guattari describe it: "In striated space, one closes off a surface and 'allocates' it according to intervals, assigned breaks; in the smooth, one 'distributes' oneself in an open space, according to frequencies and in the course of ones crossings" (ATP, 481/600).

If the abstract line is the vital force specific to Abstraction, how should we understand it in relation to art, and more specifically painting? As Deleuze and Guattari ask: "What then should be termed abstract in modern art?" Their answer follows directly: "A line of variable direction that describes no contour and delimits no form . . ." (ATP, 499/624). This abstract line is immediately referenced to Michael Fried's definition of the line in "certain works by Pollock" (ATP, 575/624), the works, obviously enough, of 1947–50. In these works the line has been set free and attains its Gothic dimension, an absolutely unrepresentational line both mystical and atheist in its expression/construction of inorganic life. Pollock's abstract line and the smooth space it draws produces a mystical modernity, one whose description is now somewhat familiar, in Pollock's work "the absolute is local, precisely because place is not delimited" (ATP, 494/617).

### CERTAIN WORKS BY POLLOCK . . .

The definition of Pollock's line by Michael Fried to which Deleuze and Guattari refer is one Fried shares with his contemporary, the great modernist critic Clement Greenberg. Greenberg saw Pollock as a crucial moment in painting's move towards its constitutive essence, its material flatness,<sup>50</sup> and its production of "sensations, the irreducible elements of experience."<sup>51</sup> For Greenberg "pure" (i.e. modernist) painting rejects both the representational line, and value contrasts in creating a new kind of space:

The picture has now become an entity belonging to the same order of space as our bodies; it is no longer the vehicle of an imagined equivalent of that order. Pictorial space has lost its "inside" and become all "outside." The spectator can no longer escape into it from the space in which he stands. If it deceives his eye at all, it is by optical rather than pictorial means: by relations of color and shape largely divorced from descriptive connotations, and often by manipulations in which top and bottom, as well as foreground and background, become interchangeable.<sup>52</sup>

It is interesting to note the seeming similarity to Deleuze and Guattari's account, inasmuch as in both the painting exists in a corporeal space, and produces an asubjective affect. "You become," according to Greenberg, "all attention, which means that you become, for the moment, selfless and in a sense

entirely identified with the object of your attention.”<sup>53</sup> But it is precisely at this point of seeming similarity that we can begin to map their divergence. Greenberg was also sensitive to the importance of the Byzantine break with classical representation, and also located it in the ‘quasi-abstract’ use Byzantine mosaics made of light and shade. This dissolved the sculptural illusion of volume, Greenberg argued, in favour of affirming the flatness of pictorial space.<sup>54</sup> Pollock achieved this Byzantine effect in his “middle period” (1947–50) where the aluminium paint and “interlaced threads of light and dark pigment” of the paintings come forward “to fill the space between itself and the spectator with its radiance.”<sup>55</sup> Despite this effect being achieved through the materiality of Pollock’s paintings, finally for Greenberg it “uses the most self-evidently corporeal means to deny its own corporeality.”<sup>56</sup> Greenberg argues that Pollock’s paintings “deceive the eye” into leaving the body for a pure opticality. This opticality is essential to modernism as such, Greenberg argues, because it enables painting’s “spiritualizing escape” towards its “fundamental language.”<sup>57</sup> If Byzantine art dematerialised reality by invoking a transcendental one, then modernism does something similar through its paradoxical invocation of the material against itself. Modernism’s purity of material and flatness of surface can finally only be seen, and in becoming purely optical it is dematerialised, and reaches an essence that escapes representation by being addressed to eyesight alone. For Greenberg, Byzantine and modernist art, the “radically transcendental and the radically positivist” extremes of art, meet in a “counter-illusionist art.”<sup>58</sup> “For the cultivated eye,” he claims, “the picture repeats its instantaneous unity like a mouth repeating a single word.”<sup>59</sup> Modernist abstraction therefore achieves an optical mysticism in which painting is able to transcend its representational function, but only by leaving the body to arrive at its spiritual “beyond.” Our merge with the painting is achieved only in our disembodiment, and its truth is ideal rather than haptic. Once more, we’re back to Plato, and Greenberg’s still spreading the same canker. Where Greenberg sees Pollock as a Byzantine, he is, according to Deleuze and Guattari, Gothic.<sup>60</sup> The aluminium patches of Pollock’s work (*Cathedral*, 1947, Dallas Museum of Fine Arts) do not reveal the glowing light of the transcendent, but rather the pouring of a metallurgist.

Deleuze and Guattari part ways with Michael Fried at a similar point, that at which he starts talking about the “disembodied energy”<sup>61</sup> and the “negation of materiality” in Pollock’s paintings.<sup>62</sup> Fried writes that Pollock’s line “is a kind of space-filling curve of immense complexity, responsive to the slightest impulse of the painter and responsive as well, one almost feels, to one’s own act of looking.”<sup>63</sup> Thus, perception begins to approach participation, but for Fried, as for Greenberg, this optical participation transcends the body. Pollock’s line, Fried



Figure 5 Jackson Pollock, *Cathedral*, 1947, Dallas Museum of Art. © 2004 Pollock-Krasner Foundation / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

writes, "addresses itself to eyesight alone. The materiality of his pigment is rendered sheerly visual, and the result is a new kind of space—if it still makes sense to call it space—in which conditions of seeing prevail rather than one in which objects exist, flat shapes are juxtaposed or physical events transpire."<sup>64</sup> We have left a perspectivised space for a pure material flatness, but as soon as we have done so this materiality evaporates in a disembodied "opticality" existing as the "conditions of seeing." Pollock's "purity," his pure "opticality" transcends all theatricality (representation) in Fried's account, but only in an apotheosis arriving at its transcendental conditions of possibility, the ideal conditions of sight itself.<sup>65</sup> This "visual plenum" transcending subject and object and uniting eye and painting in Pollock's work forms, Fried and Greenberg argue, a 'continuum' in which the viewer is in indissoluble connection with eternity, but it is an unchanging eternal, making the painting curiously monosyllabic, the mysterious repetition of, as Greenberg put it, a single word.<sup>66</sup> Ummmmmmmmmm.<sup>67</sup> We have arrived at a space far away from that created by Pollock's writhing and cacophonous surface of lines.

Pollock's abstract line is "visionary" in the sense we have seen Deleuze define it in relation to modern cinema. The "vision" of the abstract line is achieved through and in the body, a body whose affectual capacities are no longer organised and subjectivised—a vision that is no longer optical. Painting's task has always been to render forces visible, but the haptic eye constructed by Pollock's paintings and the visions they produce, are very different from the purely optical perception Greenberg cannot get beyond (because, precisely, it is the ideal beyond). Pollock's visions are, on Deleuze and Guattari's account, irreducibly physical, and their expression of movement cannot be separated from the continual variation of their material plane. Rather than a disembodied and disinterested eye, Deleuze and Guattari see Pollock's work as producing (and being produced by) a schizo-eye/I, an eye *in* matter. "Where there is close vision," they write, "space is not visual, or rather the eye itself has a haptic, nonoptical function" (ATP, 494/616).

Pollock's line is, as Deleuze and Guattari write, a "local integration moving from point to point and constituting smooth space in an infinite succession of linkages and changes in direction" (ATP, 494/617). Pollock's abstract line constructs a haptic space in which the distinction between what is material and what visual, between subject and object, breaks down in a "pictorial vitalism,"<sup>68</sup> in a sensation of the painting that is a way of being (in) the painting, a way of becoming with it. The abstract line constructs a haptic sensation, and creates an eye freed from any optical function conditioned by a transcendental common sense. As a result, Deleuze and Guattari take Fried's definition of Pollock's abstract line and understand it in entirely different

ontological terms: the ontological terms of the abstract machine. Here the abstract line is the matter-function of the Pollock machine, on the one side conjugating matters-forces into new traits of content (the "drip"), and on the other releasing the traits of expression of a new type of abstraction, an "abstract expressionism" of the vitality of its inorganic life. The paint is alive. This new painting machine deterritorialises the subjective and objective poles of vision absolutely, creating a smooth space in which we are always (in) the middle. It would only be in this sense that we could understand Fried's observation: "There is no inside or outside to Pollock's line or to the space through which it moves."<sup>69</sup> Pollock's paintings have a depth that is not spatial but intense; their smooth space does not contradict their visual flatness, but connects this surface to an immanent, infinite, and genetic processuality appearing in a molecularised matter, as particles-signs of sensation. Not a divine faciality, but an atheistic and mystical interface. Deleuze and Guattari are explicit on this point: "That is why it is so wrong to define sensation in modern painting by the assumption of a pure visual flatness: the error is due perhaps to the fact that thickness does not need to be pronounced or deep" (WP, 194/183). The materialism of Pollock's paintings is not, in this sense, simply defined by their materiality, but by their material vitalism, by the expression of the abstract and inorganic forces from which they are constructed. It is this vital element that turns the celebrated thickness of Pollock's paintings haptic, a transformation that has as its condition our implication in the paintings' abstract machine, our part in its ongoing process. Pollock's paintings express this merge at the same time as they construct it, through a sinuous, ropy line "that is constantly changing direction, a mutant line which is without outside or inside, form or background, beginning or end and that is as alive as a constant variation—such a line is truly an abstract line, and describes a smooth space" (ATP, 498/621).

Willem de Kooning said, "Every so often, a painter has to destroy painting. Cézanne did it. Picasso did it with Cubism. Then Pollock did it. He busted our idea of a picture all to hell. Then there could be *new* paintings again."<sup>70</sup> It was Pollock's break with those definitions of painting which had acted as its criteria, most importantly those of verticality, figuration, representation, and a striated depth, which make his work so important in the history of modernism. But this history, as it is written by Greenberg and Fried, and as Deleuze and Guattari write it, is not the same, and in their respective accounts, Pollock is not the same painter. Greenberg and Fried figure Pollock as a radical deterritorialisation of painting, but one that makes him simply one of "the key staging posts" of "the modernist-formalist genealogies of *visual abstraction*."<sup>71</sup> Pollock is consequently reterritorialised as the modernist representative of an optical idealism.

Deleuze and Guattari on the other hand, see Pollock's paintings as particles-signs composed by schizoanalytic abstract lines. Pollock's "abstract expressionism" is defined by the inorganic and material traits of expression it discovers, and the new abstract machine of matter-function it constructs with them (ATP, 499/623). In Pollock's paintings then, we see, Deleuze and Guattari write: "Traits of expression describing a smooth space and connecting with a matter-flow" (ATP, 498/622). This creates, in a beautiful description of a Pollock painting, a "stationary whirlwind" (ATP, 499/623), both expressive and abstract. Pollock seems to have sensed the vital-materialism of his paintings, of course. "The painting has a life of its own," he said, 'I try to let it come through. It is only when I lose contact with the painting that the result is a mess. Otherwise there is pure harmony, an easy give and take, and the painting comes out well.' Pollock the mechanic; an artisan of immanence. When he is in contact with the painting, when he does not take a step back from it, when he participates in it, then he is one with the life that creates the painting, which is the inorganic life expressed in constructing the painting. "When I am *in* my painting," he says, "I don't know what I am doing. It is only after a sort of get acquainted period that I see what I have been about. I have no fears about making changes, destroying the image, etc., because the painting has a life of its own."<sup>72</sup>

## Chapter Five

# Songs of Molecules: The Chaosmosis of Sensation

I hear the violincello or man's heart complaint,  
And hear the keyed cornet or else the echo of sunset.  
I hear the chorus. . . . it is a grand opera. . . . this indeed is music!  
A tenor large and fresh as the creation fills me,  
The orbic flex of his mouth is pouring and filling me full.  
I hear the trained soprano. . . . she convulses me like the climax of my  
love-grip;  
The orchestra whirls me wider than Uranus flies,  
It wrenches unnameable ardors from my breast,  
It throbs me to gulps of the farthest down horror,  
It sails me. . . . I dab with bare feet. . . . they are licked by the indolent  
waves,  
I am exposed. . . . cut by bitter and poisoned hail,  
Steeped amid honeyed morphine. . . . my windpipe squeezed in the fakes  
of death,  
Let up again to feel the puzzle of puzzles,  
And that we call Being.

—Walt Whitman, "Song of Myself"<sup>73</sup>

## INTRODUCTION

In *What Is Philosophy?* Deleuze and Guattari give a concise definition of art: "Art wants to create the finite that restores the infinite" (WP, 197/186). We saw in the previous chapter how the absolutely deterritorialised particle-sign emerges in painting as the expression and construction of a plane of consistency having simultaneously finite and infinite dimensions. This chapter will continue to explore art's (in)finitude, this time beginning from the "chaosmosis" of Guattari's "aesthetic paradigm," and following its production of the affect, the refrain and

sensation. Where the previous chapter was primarily concerned with art's material and technical aspects, this one will focus on what can provisionally be called art's "subjective" processes. How in other words, is the onto-aesthetic dimension active in the experience of the work of art? We have already encountered an important element of our answer; art experiences are real, and are determined by their real and immanent conditions. But how are these experiences produced, how do they work, and what makes them aesthetic? After replying to these questions we shall look at Guattari's "detachment" of the readymade from Marcel Duchamp as a case study of a revalued aesthetic experience. Then we will have to show how, despite surface similarities—not least in the quote from *What is Philosophy?* with which we began the chapter—Deleuze and Guattari reject Romanticism as an aesthetic model, and propose in its place their own concept of "modernism," a modernism that is on the one hand inseparable from actual practices (creating the finite), and on the other from ontological processes both cosmic and chaotic (restoring the infinite). "Modernism" as Deleuze and Guattari describe it will therefore require distinction from its usual understanding in the realm of art, as this was suggested by Clement Greenberg. This finally will involve an understanding of sensation, especially as Deleuze and Guattari give it in their last book.

## AFFECT

We begin from the perception in which any work of art first appears. Guattari claims it is the combination of a "sensory affect," the simple empirical perception (the views I have from the window as I work at my desk), and a "problematic affect," the network of associations and feelings evoked by this particular sensory event (the sunset as a planetary event, planes landing make me miss absent friends, my mind drifts towards the distant hills. . . . etc.). In the problematic affect connections are made beyond my immediate sensual experience, introducing all sorts of temporal and emotional flows. These deterritorialising affects, Guattari suggests, make experience the nexus of series of affectual connections, "a multi-headed enunciative lay-out [*agencement*]," as he puts it, of which "I" am merely the "fluctuating intersection" (REA, 160/255). Perception is, Guattari argues, this fluid process of "individualised subjectivising" (REA, 160/255) taking place in and through an in-principle (and in-effect) infinite network of affects. This means that not only do I pass from sensory to problematic affect continuously and without noticing, but that the art work, as affect, "sticks just as well to the subjectivity of the one who is its utterer as it does to the one who is its addressee" (REA, 158/251). The affect is in this sense a "pre-personal category" (REA, 158/251) without discursive limits, and lives beyond

these limits. Together the sensory and problematic aspects of the affect constitute what Guattari calls a "polyphonic and heterogenetic comprehension of subjectivity" (Chaos, 6/17). This process is "*subjectivation*,"<sup>2</sup> the continual emergence of new affectual individuations that are not produced by an "I" as their subjective reference point, but produce it as part of a wider ontological process of creation constituting what Guattari calls the ethico-aesthetic paradigm. This new paradigm is ethical as well as aesthetic because it implies, as Guattari puts it, "a crucial ethical choice: either we objectify, we reify, we 'scientify' subjectivity, or else we attempt to seize it in its dimension of processual creativity."<sup>3</sup>

In this ethico-aesthetic dimension, subjectivation is the ongoing emergence of new affective connections opening onto the outside of a subjective "I." In its aleatory affectual events subjectivation is always coming-into-being, assembling itself, or, to use a term which is by now familiar, becoming. To understand the art work in terms of this becoming means transvaluing the subject and object co-ordinates given by traditional aesthetics into "vectors of partial subjectivity," and deterritorialising the fixed subject onto the plane of subjectivation (Chaos, 22/39). This plane, Guattari argues, does not issue "from ready-made [*déjà là*] dimensions of subjectivity crystallised into structural complexes, but from a creation which itself indicates a kind of aesthetic paradigm" (Chaos, 7/19). This aesthetic paradigm constitutes the fundamental ontological condition of art, as it does for any creation, and at this level, Guattari writes: "One creates new modalities of subjectivity in the same way that an artist creates new forms from the palette" (Chaos, 7/19). Subjectivation is a creative process of self-organisation (the self organisation of the affect beyond the "self") composing a continuous variation of affects, and is the fundamental aesthetic process constituting (the experience of) a work of art.

The shift to the aesthetic paradigm, Guattari argues, deterritorialises the assumptions of science (intended in its widest sense—the human sciences—and so including aesthetic philosophy), because within it affects precede subjects, and problematic affects precede sensory ones. This means that aesthetics for Guattari, as it is with Deleuze, is more than a phenomenology (we will see precisely why next chapter). It is in the associative and creative power of affect rather than in subjects or objects, or their perceptual relation, that we shall discover the process through which subjectivation attains an existential consistency. An asubjective consistency for, as Guattari puts it: "Affect is a process of existential appropriation through the continual creation of heterogeneous durations of being" (REA, 159/252). In the aesthetic paradigm affects are only nominally unified under a subject, and once freed from their subjective over-coding find a self-organising consistency as a refrain [*ritournelle*]. We will

come back to this refrain and consider it fully a little later, but for now it is our first glimpse of art as a finite creation (a subjectivation), whose processuality *restores* the infinite (its affectual aesthetic dimension). When we understand affects as non-subjective but nevertheless consistent and communicating networks, Guattari writes, “the complex ceases to be propped upon the elementary (as in the conception that prevails in scientific paradigms) and organises, at the whim of its own economy, synchronic distributions and diachronic becomings” (REA, 161/255). Subjectivation, in other words, is an autonomous self-organising process that gives consistency to a multiplicity of different virtual elements and expresses their cohesion in a process of becoming. In this sense, subjectivation is, and once more this is a term we shall return to, the creation of ‘*an existential territory*.<sup>4</sup>

### EVERYTHING IS A MACHINE

The problematising affect operates, Guattari writes, as a “virtual fractalisation,” (REA, 161/255) of the subject, through which an infinite connectivity emerges as the intense and virtual dimension expressed in actual experience (sensory affects).<sup>5</sup> This infinite virtual dimension does not exist outside of its actualisation in the processes of subjectivation, meaning the virtual cannot be experienced in itself, or, perhaps better, its “in-itself” only exists as experienced. Consequently, we cannot talk about a virtuality separate from its actual emergence, making any question as to the virtual’s existence entirely fractal.<sup>6</sup> Such a question always involves a multiplicity of others, as Brian Massumi has suggested: “Which virtual? Under which mode of accompaniment? How appearing? How fully does the virtual range of variations actualize in any given appearing? How fully does the virtual range of variations actualize in any given object or substance?”<sup>7</sup> The careful critique required to answer these questions introduces on the one hand a movement of deterritorialisation that frees the virtual from its subjective and semiotic determinations, and on the other affirms the virtual in its proper place, as the active ontological element expressed in the actual. This critical mode of production emerges without an intentional subject as an “autopoiesis,” and is, Deleuze and Guattari argue, “self-positing.” “What depends on a free creative activity,” they write, ‘is also that which, independently and necessarily, posits itself in itself: the most subjective will be the most objective” (WP, 11/16). Affectual autopoiesis is the “free creative activity” proper to the aesthetic paradigm, neither subjective nor objective, but, as Guattari puts it, “machinic.”<sup>8</sup>

Autopoiesis is the machinic *infolding* of the affects’ virtual dimensions in the *unfolding* of its new actualities. Subjectivation is such an autopoietic and machinic process, creating new “existential universes” rather than simply reproducing a “self.”<sup>9</sup> This process emerges from the fundamental ontological

state of the aesthetic paradigm—*chaosmosis*. Chaosmosis is, according to Guattari, a “chaotic see-sawing” (Chaos, 96/133) between chaos and complexity, a coming-into-being which (re)creates the affect’s finite existence “to finally give back some infinity to a world which threatened to smother it” (Chaos, 96/134). Chaosmosis is the virtual and infinite genetic plane on and through which the actual world appears and becomes. In this sense, chaosmosis is not chaos itself, but the autopoiesis of chaos into an expressive matter, what Deleuze and Guattari call the raw aesthetic “moment” (ATP, 322–3/395–6). Chaosmosis is, then, the ontological ground zero of the aesthetic paradigm. Chaosmosis, once more, is not chaos, but is the energetic and material plane in its ontogenetic process of subjectivation. Chaosmosis is the emergence of the “directional components” of chaos, as chaos’s own “ecstasies” (ATP, 313/384).<sup>10</sup> In this sense: “Art is not chaos,” Deleuze and Guattari argue, “but a composition of chaos that yields the vision or sensation, so that it constitutes, as Joyce says, a chaosmos, a composed chaos—neither foreseen nor foretold” (WP, 204/192).<sup>11</sup> On this chaotic plane of composition a new world emerges (the world is continually *emergent*), a world of autopoietic living machines. Chaosmosis is living composition, but it is an inorganic life, as present in machines as it is in man, for in terms of its creative powers, as Samuel Butler wrote: “The difference between the life of a man and that of a machine is one rather of degree than of kind.”<sup>12</sup> Life is machinic (i.e. inorganic) because it is the chaotic composition of a plane of virtual and actual—*infinite and finite*—consistency into living abstract machines “which,” Guattari argues, “never cease producing new, artistic as well as scientific and technical possibilities.”<sup>13</sup>

To understand art in terms of this new aesthetic paradigm will mean changing terminology, methodology, and most importantly, and as I have already repeatedly argued, ontology. The embodiment of chaosmosis in an art work, as the immanence of virtual and actual, of infinite and finite dimensions, implies new questions: not “what is it?” but “what does it do?” or “what does it become?” not “what thing or idea does it represent?” but “what virtual universe does it embody or express?” We can understand this change in interrogatory mode by considering Deleuze and Guattari’s brief analysis of artists who paint machines. Artists like Leger and Picabia did not represent machines, but introduced machinic processes into art that allowed their work to explore new modes of subjectivation. This is what makes these “machinic paintings” interesting, Deleuze and Guattari argue, they “show how humans are a component part of the machine, or combine with something else to constitute a machine.”<sup>14</sup> These art works do not represent machines, but *are* machines operating at the interface of the actual and the virtual. “Leger,” Deleuze

and Guattari write, "demonstrated convincingly that the machine did not represent anything, itself least of all, because it was itself the production of organised intensive states."<sup>15</sup> Understanding art in the aesthetic paradigm is no longer a matter of asking about painters as subjects, or paintings as objects, but of understanding, as Deleuze puts it: "The painting machine of an artist-mechanic."<sup>16</sup>

Art machines operate in the aesthetic paradigm under "molecular conditions." Here matter is not formed by a hylomorphic code, as if from the "outside," but is autopoietic and expressive. "Hylomorphic" is a term composed of *hyle* meaning matter, and *morphic* meaning form, and describes the operation of a pre-existing mould imposing form on matter. Deleuze and Guattari reject this Aristotelian distinction of matter and form because, as the figure of the mould suggests, "form will never inspire anything but conformities" (DR, 134/166). Deleuze's rejection of hylomorphism rests on the "profoundly original theory" of Georges Simondon.<sup>17</sup> Simondon argues that matter can no longer be thought of as a simple or homogeneous substance receiving its form from an exterior model. Matter, he argues, is made up of immanent intensive and energetic traits or forces ("singularities") whose differential relations both determine form, and maintain the inherent dynamism of form, through an immanent process of "modulation." Modulation, Deleuze says, is "moulding in a continuous and variable manner. A modulator is a mould which constantly changes the measuring grid that it imposes, with the result that there is a continuous variation of matter across equilibrium states."<sup>18</sup> Matter is chaotic, and finds consistency (expressive equilibrium states) in refrains that both resolve the "problem" posed by pre-individual being, and keep this problem active in a continual modulation producing the living emergence of individuation.<sup>19</sup> The individuation of matter, no longer understood hylomorphically, but as autopoietic, changes ontological registers. This ontology of individuation is in fact one we are already familiar with, as Simondon's vocabulary tells us: "Individuation must be grasped as the becoming of the being and not as a model of the being which would exhaust its signification."<sup>20</sup> The finite individual is therefore only the most limited aspect of the process of individuation, and can only be properly understood according to the immanent "pre-individual" (intense and differential) singularities it expresses. This is the understanding Deleuze and Guattari develop in relation to art as a "refrain."

## COMPOSITIONAL REFRAINS

In art it is modulation that composes the affectual assemblages constituting a subjectivation, and it is in the process of subjectivation that a machinic and autopoietic art practice becomes indiscernible from the art-work it produces.

Deleuze and Guattari call this compositional process a "refrain," which begins, Guattari writes, with "the detachment of an existential "motif" (or leit-motiv) which installs itself like an "attractor" within a sensible and significational chaos. The different components conserve their heterogeneity, but are nevertheless captured by a refrain which couples them to the existential Territory of my self" (Chaos, 17/33). To detach a motif is already to create, or to change, a world. We are always in the middle of this process of de- and reterritorialisation, because any "motif" is detached from another refrain that composes it. Nevertheless the creative process of the refrain begins with deterritorialisation, and therefore requires, Guattari argues, "a blind trust in the movement of deterritorialization at work."<sup>21</sup> The artist detaches some material, frees the motif so that it can attract and compose new sensations and senses—new affects—according to a new refrain. Art is composed through this continual process of deterritorialisation.

The same refrain emerges in *A Thousand Plateaus* in an account of common experience. In the face of a threatening and dangerous chaos we attempt to shelter in a moment of calmness and stability. It's only natural. Not however, in a calm centre we recognise and which pre-exists us, but a calm we create with the comforting rhythms of a song, a motif that enacts a processual conversion of chaos into a spatio-temporal territory in which we can exist. The refrain constructs an existential territory or "home" out of "landmarks and marks of all kinds" (ATP, 311/382), through rhythmical processes of selection, elimination and extraction. This home protects and extends the germinal forces of the territory, acting as a filter or sieve through which it extracts what it needs to transform and resist chaos. All we want is a little consistency. Finally the home opens, a window or door leads us not into chaos, "but [to] another region, one created by the circle itself" (ATP, 311/383). As if, Deleuze and Guattari suggest, the circle "tended on its own to open onto a future, as a function of the working forces it shelters" (ATP, 311/383). Through doors and windows opening onto the future the territory extends lines of improvisation or experiment (a "prospection" of virtual universes as Guattari puts it), further deterritorialisations creating the becomings of our world. Creation here means inorganic life, a multiplicity of sonorous, gestural and motor forces which bud into "lines of drift" producing new complexities in the initial refrain. This ethico-aesthetic paradigm is therefore a new ontology of art, one which will radically change our understanding of art's experience through its "immense complexification of subjectivity" and its production "of new and unprecedented existential harmonies, polyphonies, rhythms and orchestrations."<sup>22</sup>

Despite the refrain being a musical term, as an autopoietic machine operating in the aesthetic paradigm it is applicable to all art forms, including the

visual arts. "The image," Deleuze writes, "is a little ritornello" (ECC, 159).<sup>23</sup> An image is composed of, it composes, lines, volumes and colours—its "landmarks or marks"—into a "rough sketch" (ATP, 311/382). This sketch is elaborated in various affectual rhythms that both express and compose a refrains virtual infinity, a singular assemblage of affects that is in continual variation. It lives. "The image is not an object," Deleuze writes, "but a 'process'" (ECC, 159).<sup>24</sup> This means that producing an art-work—as refrain—is not the exclusive realm of the human artist, because the "artist" is simply the inhuman and asubjective process of subjectivation. Similarly, the refrain is not contained by an objectively defined "art work" existing apart from this process in which it is continually recreated. In the aesthetic paradigm "we are not," Guattari writes, "in the presence of a passively representative image, but of a vector of subjectivation" (Chaos, 25/44).

The refrain then, is the machinic "interface," or "umbilical point" (Chaos, 80/113) between virtual and actual dimensions, and is the compositional principle of a work of art. The refrain assumes a chaotic cosmos, "a deterministic chaos" (Chaos, 59/86) from which it emerges as a "chaotic folding" (Chaos, 111/154) or "nucleus of chaosmosis" (Chaos, 80/113). As such, the refrain has a double function. On the one hand it acts as a "vacuole of decompression" (Chaos, 80/113), destratifying subject-object distinctions and the schemas of space and time they assume, molecularising them, and reopening contact with their virtual infinity. On the other hand this process produces an autopoietic node or "motif" through which virtual universes compose themselves, gaining consistency to the point of expression in a subjectivation. The refrain is this two-fold and simultaneous operation of "unclasping" [*décrochages*] (ATP, 326/402) or "unframing" [*décradage*] (Chaos, 131/181) actual coordinates from their stratified systems, in order to "grasp" (compose) new virtual universes in an ongoing and actual becoming. There is a deterritorialisation of actual things into a chaotic virtuality, and a reterritorialisation of this virtual chaos into an autopoietic actuality (an "existential territory"). And both together, as Guattari explains: "Formations of sense and states of things are thus chaotised in the very movement of the bringing into existence of their complexity" (Chaos, 80–1/114). This two-step dance is the onto-aesthetic process of art, Guattari writes, where "every aesthetic decentring of points of view [...] passes through a preliminary deconstruction of the structures and codes in use and a chaotic plunge into the materials of sensation. Out of them a recomposition becomes possible: a recreation, an enrichment of the world [...] a proliferation not just of the forms but of the modalities of being" (Chaos, 90/126).

Art begins with this refrain: "different questions." Questions leading us beyond the answers we know, and beyond the artworks and artists we love. But

only to return them again, differently, no longer as artists or artworks, but as the work of art, as refrains of chaosmosis, as the lines of our own becoming. "Viewed from the angle of this existential function," Guattari writes, "—namely, in rupture with signification and denotation—ordinary aesthetic categorisations lose a large part of their relevance. Reference to 'free figuration,' 'abstraction,' or 'conceptualism' hardly matters! What is important is to know if a work leads effectively to a mutant production of enunciation. The focus of artistic activity always remains a surplus-value of subjectivity" (Chaos, 131/181). In the aesthetic paradigm questions about an art-work's "meaning" must be rethought in the light of their "intolerable nucleus of ontological creationism" (Chaos, 83/117). Here, Guattari argues, meaning no longer emerges according to the pre-existing poles of artist and viewer, but through the expressive and autopoietic functions (refrains) of their chaotic material-affects. In art properly so-called, and as all of our examples have repeatedly shown, "the expressive material becomes formally creative" (Chaos, 14/29). Guattari however, gives an example of his own, one very different from that of painting.

### THE BOTTLE RACK CHANGES DIRECTION . . .

Guattari's example is Marcel Duchamp's *Bottle Rack* ["*Egouttoi*," or "*Le porte-bouteilles*"], one of the first readymades from 1913. This work, Guattari writes "functions as the trigger for a constellation of referential universes engaging both intimate reminiscences (the cellar of the house, a certain winter, the rays of light upon spider webs, adolescent solitude) and connotations of a cultural and economic order—the time when bottles were still washed with the aid of a bottle brush . . ." (REA, 164/259–60). As we saw with Warhol's paintings, Duchamp's bottle-rack seems to answer to Deleuze's imperative to insert art into life (DR, 293/375). The readymade's affectual heterogeneity means its individuating instance can no longer be identified with an object or a subject, but only as their mutual becoming. How is this reading different from more traditional understandings of the readymades? The readymade has often been interpreted as producing an infinite range of affects, as an in-principle open field of associative possibilities. But it is another claim to argue that this multiplicity of affect individuates in a way undefined by, and counter to, subjective and objective discursive forms. To make this claim one must radicalise the readymade, and argue that it removes these forms, or at least makes them subsequent to the chaotic emergence they embody. This is precisely what Guattari does, first by claiming that the affect is in itself "pre-personal," but further by arguing that the readymade in particular exemplifies the aesthetic process of the refrain's "ontological creationism." As such, the readymade is an example of an art work in which

artists “not only create [affects] in their work, they give them to us and make us become with them, they draw us into the compound” (WP, 175/166). Elsewhere Guattari has coupled Duchamp with Bakhtin to make the argument that this process of subjectivisation is a “transfer” between the creator and “on-looker” of a work of art.<sup>25</sup> The readymade restores infinity to the creative process, and installs it in the art work’s actuality, as the continual affectual variation the work in fact is. This is what would make Duchamp the archetypal artist, and the readymade the fundamental work of art. As Guattari suggests: “With art the finitude of the sensible material becomes a support for the production of affects and percepts which tend to become more and more eccentric with respect to preformed structures and coordinates. Marcel Duchamp declared: ‘art is the road which leads towards regions which are not governed by time and space’” (Chaos, 100–1/140–1). These regions are those of existential emergence, continually re-opening new temporalisations and smooth spaces. In this sense we could say Guattari uses Duchamp in much the same way as he argues the readymade as subjectivation works itself. It is an extraction or detachment of an object from its discursive field in order to open it up to new mutations, new virtual universes. Although I will go on to argue that in many ways this is a problematic use of Duchamp, it is, to be fair, no less than what Guattari calls on others to do with him: “[W]e invite our readers,” he generously writes, ‘to freely take and leave the concepts we advance. The important thing is not the final result but the fact that the cartographic method co-exists with the process of subjectivation and that a reappropriation, an autopoiesis of the means of production of subjectivity are made possible.’<sup>26</sup>

Guattari’s detachment of Duchamp’s *Bottle Rack* would follow Duchamp’s own statement, that “it’s a bottle rack that has changed direction.” This “change in direction” would be the crucial definition of an aesthetic practice of creative subjectivation, one that Deleuze affirms in his philosophical, but no less Duchampian terms. “One imagines a philosophically bearded Hegel,” he writes in the preface to *Difference and Repetition*, “a philosophically clean-shaven Marx, in the same way as a moustached Mona-Lisa” (DR, xxi/4). But one can also imagine that shaving Marx would be considerably more work than changing the bottle rack’s direction. By this I mean that the success of Deleuze’s “ventriloquism” of his philosophical interlocutors, the way it produces a new Nietzsche or Spinoza, to take two of our examples, depends on their “change in direction” being articulated by the philosophers themselves, revealing a creative life immanent to their own concepts and systems. The problem with Guattari’s reading of Duchamp is that in changing the direction of the *Bottle Rack* he seems to ignore Duchamp’s own direction, and thus determines its meaning according to his own, very different rules. This would

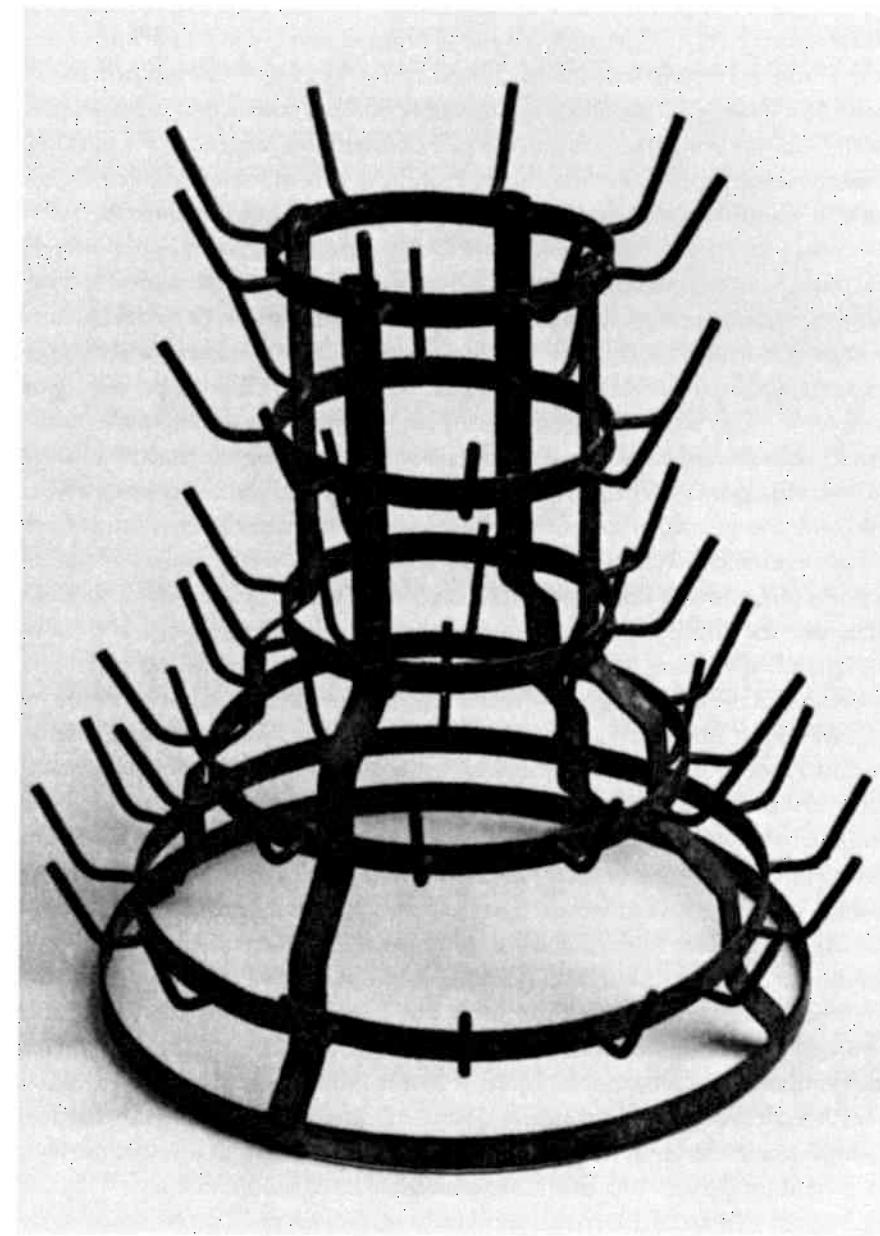


Figure 6 Marcel Duchamp, *Bottle Rack*, 1913, Philadelphia Museum of Art. © 2004 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / ADAGP, Paris / Succession Marcel Duchamp

be an over-coding rather than a trans-coding, an act of transcendence rather than transversality. We remember one of Deleuze and Guattari's definitions of the schizo as being able to make what they are escaping from escape from itself (AO, 69/81–2), and this is the dynamic of the aesthetic paradigm we have seen Guattari developing. But in the case of Guattari's references to Duchamp and the readymade this is not the case, and the best that could be said of it is that it is a provocative, and perhaps playful, quotation out of context.

In fact, the work of Guattari and Duchamp seem to move in opposite directions. Guattari wishes to escape the overdetermination of the subject in a signifying system through a material expression of chaosmosis (a subjectivation) inseparable from an actual creation. Duchamp on the other hand, wishes to escape materiality by embracing a symbolic system in which art appears only on condition of its semiotic nomination. This would be the direction the readymade takes towards conceptual art, a trajectory developing the practice of art as a "language game." Where Guattari seeks a democratisation of art by removing its condition of human subjectivity, Duchamp seeks a democratisation through a nomination depending entirely on an inherently subjective power of signification. The readymade in Duchamp's sense is not primarily a proliferation of affect, but the shifting of art's definition onto a purely conceptual act.<sup>27</sup> The readymade is nothing but the question "is this art?" and the insistence that art's condition is the discursive act—"this is art." Deleuze and Guattari explicitly reject this direction for art, arguing that with it art "depends on the simple 'opinion' of a spectator who determines whether or not to 'materialize' the sensation, that is to say, decides whether or not it is art. This is a lot of effort to find ordinary perceptions and affections in the infinite and to reduce the concept to a *doxa* of the social body or great American metropolis" (WP, 198/187). In other words, the readymade does not operate as the machinic composition of problematic affects into refrains and subjectivations, because it establishes its own condition in a nomination that depends on the subjective act of signification.

Guattari attempts to consolidate his appropriation of the readymade through Duchamp's famous affirmation of the artist's indifference towards any aesthetic qualities in the object. It is this indifference, Duchamp argues, which is the readymade's condition of possibility.<sup>28</sup> Guattari claims that this "indifference" detaches the work from the discursive field of art, and opens it to a "mutant desire," one that "consummates" its "disinterestedness."<sup>29</sup> But it is precisely this moment of consummation that seems most problematic in relation to Duchamp, that artist of onanism and "celibate machines." For clearly Duchamp did not see the rejection of art achieved in the readymade as expressing the "mutant desire" of a genetic material plane of composition. Rather, the readymade abstracts art from vital processes by reducing it to an

infinite chain of signifiers, to the celebration of "language games." Éric Alliez has gone the farthest in this critique of Duchamp, arguing that his reduction of art to the infinite play of signifiers enacts the Lacanian cut between the Symbolic and the Real.<sup>30</sup> The readymade in this sense would be the denial of an asubjective aesthetic paradigm of expressive materiality, in favour of an immaterial process of linguistic construction, one that could do nothing but represent subjects for other signifiers. In this sense, Alliez argues, Duchamp's readymade is "de-ontological," and must be placed in opposition to Deleuze and Guattari's ontology of the aesthetic paradigm.

Deleuze and Guattari's use of the term "readymade" in *A Thousand Plateaus* and *What is Philosophy?* is therefore non-Duchampian, not only in its ontological commitments, but also in describing an animal process of art constructing a territory. This process, they argue, is already art because it is the construction of an affectual assemblage in which matter becomes expressive. "Territorial marks are readymades. [Les marques territoriales sont des ready-made]" Deleuze and Guattari write, "[they are . . .] merely this constitution, this freeing of matters of expression in the movement of territoriality: the base or ground of art" (ATP, 316/389). For Deleuze and Guattari then, and this is a point we shall return to, art escapes human subjectivity to become-animal, and animal constructions of a territory through the "unclasping" of pre-existing material, as in the behaviour of the stage-maker bird, is "nearly the birth of art." "Take everything and make it a matter of expression." Deleuze and Guattari tell us: "The stagemaker bird practices *art brut*. Artists are stagemakers" (ATP, 316/389). The artist-animal uses readymade colors, lines and sound to construct an existential territory—a subjectivisation—as an expression of the vital forces of an inorganic life. (Art is a natural expression, but Nature has been "denatured," an important point we will come back to in our discussion of Kant and Romanticism.) Indeed, Deleuze and Guattari claim "art begins with the animal, at least with the animal that carves out a territory" (WP, 183/174). We can immediately see that this definition of art is travelling in a very different direction to Duchamp's. A conclusion confirmed by Duchamp himself in the 1955 interview he made with James Johnson Sweeney, and from which Guattari quoted. "I believe," Duchamp said, "that art is the only kind of activity in which man, as man, shows himself to be a true individual capable of going beyond the animal phase. Art is an opening toward regions which are not ruled by space and time."<sup>31</sup> Art, in other words, opens onto the realm of the signifier, a realm that transcends the animal and guarantees art's immaterial reality by grounding it within human thought.

Finally then, Guattari's use of the *Bottle Rack* as an example of subjectivation is not convincing. It does not succeed—in Guattari's own terms—in

co-implicating the detachment of art from its discursive structures with a "chaosmic plunge into the materials of sensation" (Chaos, 90/126). Rather than simply disqualifying Guattari's argument, however, his attempt at appropriating Duchamp's readymade casts in greater relief both the difficulty and the radicality of what he is proposing. Similarly, it also serves to emphasise from a methodological point of view that a 'blind trust' in deterritorialisation must nevertheless, and in its Nietzschean modality, be a critical practice of selection and affirmation, a careful construction capable of expressing chaosmic forces. Guattari's privileging of art and artists in this process remains crucial, not least for the way it points beyond Duchamp's conceptualism and towards art's renewed political engagement. As Guattari suggests: "Perhaps artists today constitute the final lines along which primordial existential questions are folded. How are the new fields of the possible going to be fitted out? How are sounds and forms going to be arranged so that the subjectivity adjacent to them remains in movement, and really alive?" (Chaos, 133/184). These questions take us beyond Duchamp to an interrogation of the aesthetic paradigm in terms of its "ethico-political implications" (Chaos, 107/149), implications that shall now be examined.

### THE POLITICS OF CHAOS

The subjectivation emerging in the refrain is an ontological force of resistance—a permanent revolution—acting against systematic controls of creative becoming.<sup>32</sup> The ontology of the aesthetic paradigm is therefore inherently political, because through it we escape our stratified image of thought—and its representational politics—to restore an infinite freedom to the finite world. The ready-made, once more understood by Deleuze and Guattari in a completely different way to Duchamp, creates a subjectivation always in excess of any limited identity (of a political subject as much as an artistic one). This excess operates, in a Nietzschean sense, as the eternal return of the ready-made, as its inorganic life as a repetition of creative differences.<sup>33</sup> This keeps the ready-made in a constant process of "unclasping," in excess of all representational systems and any metaphysical determinations. This "unclasping" is accompanied by the refrains positive political moment, its self-organisation in an aesthetic composition of the chaosmic plane; the readymade as an anarchist politics; the readymade as an ontological revaluation/revolution of everyday life. "But most importantly," as Deleuze said in 1968, "all this corresponds to something happening in the contemporary world. [...] You see, the forces of repression always need a Self that can be assigned, they need determinate individuals on which to exercise their power. When we become the

least bit fluid, when we slip away from the assignable Self, when there is no longer a person on whom God can exercise his power or by whom He can be replaced, the police lose it."<sup>34</sup>

Freed from its Duchampian definition, the readymade embodies the politics of the aesthetic paradigm as an autopoietic subjectivation expressing its inorganic Life. In this sense then, the aesthetic paradigm of the readymade is not the impossibility of defining art, (Duchamp called the readymade "a form of denying the possibility of defining art"<sup>35</sup>) but its redefinition as a living, creative expression/construction in permanent revolution with any preconceptions. As a result, to understand this creative expression/construction requires our own 'unclasping,' our own redefinition as subjectivation, our own embrace of a political aesthetics capable of creating a people yet to come. At this point the problems of politics are aesthetic, and in fact Guattari uses almost identical terms to describe them. Communism today, he writes with Antonio Negri, "allows an 'ungluing' of the dominant realities and significations by creating conditions which permit people to 'make their territory,' to conquer their individual and collective destiny within the most deterritorialized flows."<sup>36</sup> A communist politics is therefore inseparable from aesthetic processes of creation, and extends "political art" to include any act that is truly creative. Political art—it means an onto-aesthetics. "When I 'consume' a work," Guattari argues, "—a term which ought to be changed because it can just as easily be absence of work—I carry out a complex ontological crystallisation, an alterification of beings-there. I summon being to exist differently and I extort new intensities from it" (Chaos, 96/134). In other words, this onto-political definition of art collapses old distinctions between creation and consumption onto a single plane of production. A plane completely unrestricted to art, and traversing all sorts of fields not usually considered "artistic." Guattari uses the same paradigm when discussing the innovative practices at La Borde clinic, for example (Chaos, 69–71/99–102). This extension of art into the everyday is precisely the mark of its political power and necessity. Indeed, Guattari argues that "aesthetic machines" are "the most advanced models" for effective resistance to capitalistic subjectivity, because they directly confront capital's "deafness to true alterity" (Chaos, 91/127). Art-political practice works in both dimensions of the aesthetic paradigm, on the one hand it resists actual political forms of oppression, creating alternative subjectivities (relative deterritorialisations), but in so doing it also brings us to a new chaosmic paradigm of being, in which we are freed to express our inhuman material becomings. The politics of birds. As a result, art, according to Guattari, "has become the paradigm for every possible liberation" (Chaos, 91/127).

But beyond being simply another name for a vitalist ontology, art also has a privileged connection to the aesthetic paradigm as a realm of experimentation

in which new ways of understanding and living in the world are constantly appearing. "Patently," Guattari writes, "art does not have a monopoly on creation, but it takes its capacity to invent mutant coordinates to extremes: it engenders unprecedented, unforeseen and unthinkable qualities of being" (Chaos, 106/147). Consequently, Guattari sees art's production of affects as being an especially important process of political resistance. "The aesthetic power of feeling," he writes, "although equal in principle with the other powers of thinking philosophically, knowing scientifically, acting politically, seems on the verge of occupying a privileged position within the collective Assemblages of our era" (Chaos, 101/141). No doubt this privilege would have to be analysed in detail to understand art's political possibilities. No doubt contemporary art has been generally unable to do this, not least because of its insistent retreat into a post-modern "conceptualism." But nevertheless, because "aesthetic machines" already operate as refrains, they "offer us the most advanced models—relatively speaking—for these blocks of sensation capable of extracting full meaning from all the empty signal systems that invest us from every side" (Chaos, 90/126). This is not to claim artists are the new revolutionary heroes—God forbid—but to affirm art's (precisely, art *against* the all too human artist) revolutionary power.

"Revolutionary art" is hardly a slogan to conjure with. But for Deleuze and Guattari it takes a new meaning, that art and politics share the same ontological and ethical imperative: to create! The same imperative to face the same problem. "We lack creation," Deleuze and Guattari claim, "*We lack resistance to the present*" (WP, 108/104). Aesthetic resistance breaks with our received understandings and perceptions—our "opinions"—the clichéd feelings and expressions which define our present. Opinions are the correspondence of perceived qualities and subjective affections, such that these correspondences constitute an orthodoxy operating in the realm of the lived. In this way, Deleuze and Guattari write, "all opinion is already political" (WP, 145/138). When I express an opinion I not only express the orthodoxy I believe in, or which I wish to impose, but also express all the constitutive and stratified opinions which make such expressions possible; that I am a subject, that I think, what thought is. . . . etc. As a result, for Deleuze and Guattari "the misfortune of the people comes from opinion" (WP, 206/194). This task of resisting the opinions of the present gives the first co-ordinate of art's indiscernibility from politics: materialism. As Deleuze and Guattari put it: "By means of the material, the aim of art is to wrest the percept from perceptions of objects and the states of a perceiving subject, to wrest the affect from affections as the transition from one state to another: to extract a bloc of sensations, a pure being of sensations" (WP, 167/158). Art, like politics, begins

from this absolute, or perhaps we could say ontological, deterritorialisation of the object and the subject as sensation's conditions of possibility. What is required is, as the poet Pessoa put it: "An apprenticeship in unlearning."<sup>37</sup> The aesthetic process of subjectivation is just such an apprenticeship for in it the artist "has forgotten the world," as Nietzsche said, not to mention him- or herself, not in order to leave the world, but in order to re-enter it, to re-create it, in its at once aesthetic and political dimension.<sup>38</sup>

It is not simply a matter of picking sides, us the artists against them. As if such group identifications were enough to produce an effective politics. Just the opposite. Aesthetic singularity and its creative lines of flight always await to be produced, and must be, for only a permanent revolution can resist the incessant reappropriation of art in the spectacle of commodified "poses" and fashionable accessories. But art has one advantage, the aesthetic paradigm animates a material realm it shares with opinion, but which it retains a prior relationship with. The question is not which is "right," but what is the right war machine? It is always a question of means and not ends. What then, must be done? The political artist's first task is to clear his or her material of all the clichés by which opinion predetermines its possibilities. This is the destruction which must precede any true creation, and which frees the material to express its chaotic machinery in constructing sensations. "Because the picture starts out covered with clichés," Deleuze and Guattari write, "the painter must confront the chaos and hasten the destructions so as to produce a sensation that defies every opinion and cliché (how many times?)" (WP, 204/192). How many times? Every time the finite is created which restores the infinite. Each time, again.

The first liberation will be from ourselves—the first cliché—even, or especially, from ourselves as artists. No longer subjective, aesthetic creation implies an ongoing and autopoietic subjectivisation that composes affects into mystical expressions. The "pre-personal voices" of the refrain, Guattari writes, induce "an aesthetic ecstasy, a mystical effusion" (REA, 165/262). The politics of such a mysticism imply an atheist heresy that refuses a subjectivity conforming to God's image, and itself aspires to God's vision. "I am God" is a mystical and atheist statement we have already seen Guattari make, and is indiscernible from saying "I am a political artist." The political art work on this account leads a double life, at once finite, and as infinite becoming: "Fabricated in the *socius*," Guattari writes, "art is only sustained by itself. This is because each work produced possesses a double finality: to insert itself into a social network which will either appropriate or reject it, and to celebrate, once again, the Universe of art as such, precisely because it is always in danger of collapsing" (Chaos, 130/180). But art's double life confronts it with a double danger, on the one hand, of being appropriated "after the fact" by the fine-arts system, spectacularised according

to all the clichés which make it “art,” and, on the other, of collapsing into a chaos which cannot be actualised in a composition, a deterritorialisation ending in a black hole annihilating its own expression. This is the double danger, Deleuze and Guattari write, “either leading us back to the opinion from which we wanted to escape or precipitating us into the chaos that we wanted to confront” (WP, 199/188). These dangers are really the same one, for both re-inscribe art into a system in which it exists either as inside or out, as finite or infinite. Art must fight these dangers with its own dual action, as resistance to the controlling forces of the inside (relative deterritorialisation), and as expressive refrains unleashing the forces of chaosmosis (absolute deterritorialisation).

This double life of art is, of course, one life, and this articulation is crucial for our understanding of art’s political power and function. As Deleuze and Guattari put it: “There is always a way in which absolute deterritorialisation takes over from a relative deterritorialisation in a given field” (WP, 88/85).<sup>39</sup> This would justify, one presumes, Guattari’s “blind trust” in deterritorialisation. As we saw last chapter, an absolutely deterritorialised chaotic matter is prior to, and has priority over, all metaphysical attempts at its reterritorialisation. This priority means that the relative deterritorialisations of an experimental art always materialise (subjectivise) this ontological dimension, even if it is immediately reterritorialised. The political question therefore, is not to simply strive for the absolute deterritorialisation of the refrain in the cosmos (as we shall see, too romantic), but rather to realise this movement as precisely what gives the (our) subjectivation its consistency, what makes the actual autopoeitic. How, in other words, can art—here and now—speak the voice of chaosmosis, and do we have the strength to believe it? Our problem of course, our problem as artists, is not simply to “hear” this voice—too easy, too metaphysical—but to sing with this voice, to embody our own refrains, and “rejoin the songs of the Molecules” (ATP, 327/403). With this last quotation we have, perhaps, begun to hear a certain romantic tone to Deleuze and Guattari’s aesthetics, a tone already echoing in the various ecstasies and mystic moments we have attributed to art. Now has come the time to interrogate this possible Romanticism, an interrogation Deleuze and Guattari undertake themselves in relation to their most musical concept, the “refrain.”

## ROMANTICISM

Deleuze and Guattari distinguish three “ages” of art, Classicism, Romanticism and Modernism. All three arise within certain historical conditions, but are not determined by them, each referring instead to the diagrammatic features of different abstract machines, found today as much as at other times (ATP,

346/428). The classical artist confronts chaos as a raw untamed matter upon which he or she imposes form. This process proceeds with a “one-two,” the binary differentiation of form, and the articulation of these forms in series. This is the classical form of form, as it were, acting as the precondition to any creation. To recall our discussions of last chapter, the classical artist represents the formed substances of this world through a hylomorphic line, an act of creation reproducing an organic milieu that is the same both inside and outside the frame. Art functions to subject a chaotic and unclean matter to the pure beauty of an ideal form.

Deleuze and Guattari are obviously not classicists. Their relation to Romanticism however, is not so clear, and as we have seen their formulations regarding art often have a romantic ring to them. The immanence of an infinite Nature to its expression in life is one example that we will return to, but another is the intolerable, unbearable aspect of this creative and cosmic infinity (chaosmosis), as it assaults and overpowers our perception. Indeed, Deleuze points out this affinity with Romanticism in *Cinema 2*. The purely optical and sound image of modern cinema, we recall, “outstrips our sensory-motor capacities.” Deleuze gives the example of Rossellini’s *Stromboli* (1950), where Ingrid Bergman’s Karin is finally overwhelmed by the beauty and power of the volcano and seeks divine consolation. Modern cinema, Deleuze argues, finds something too strong for the human sensory-motor, something that shatters it, and is revealed in a “vision.” “Romanticism,” Deleuze writes, “had already set out this aim for itself: grasping the intolerable or the unbearable, the empire of poverty, and thereby becoming visionary, to produce a means of knowledge and action out of pure vision” (C2, 18/29). Although this connection to Romanticism remains purely gestural in *Cinema 2*, Deleuze seems to be claiming for modern cinema a new aesthetics of the sublime. What this might be and how Deleuze and Guattari ‘unclasp’ it from Kant’s famous use of the term can be understood through their discussion of Romanticism in *A Thousand Plateaus*. There they clearly reject Romanticism as a diagram for artistic practice, and posit instead a new definition of “modernism.”<sup>40</sup>

The romantic artist, Deleuze and Guattari argue, abandons the classical project of imposing universal forms on the chaos of matter, and instead creates territorial assemblages which express the Earth as their intense and infinite essence. The Earth as “Nature” contains all the forces of the universe, and constitutes the deepest level of reality. But this depth transcends our ability to comprehend it, and is projected outside any attempt to express it. Nature, for the romantic, is a subterranean, intense, groundlessness operating as a lost or hidden foundation which the artist-hero sets out to find. This search for the imminent forces of Nature as our true reality will lead the romantic artist back to the

transcendental. This path is laid out in the "profoundly romantic" (ECC, 33/47) philosophy of Kant, a path Deleuze will partially follow, before making it change direction entirely. Experience, for Kant, is determined by various transcendental and *a priori* forms and processes. Perception emerges from the faculty of the imagination, through the syntheses of apprehension and reproduction on a sensible manifold (given by intuition) and within the *a priori* forms of space and time. The perceptual syntheses produced by apprehension and reproduction nevertheless remain to be recognized as an object, and this is only possible Kant argues, because perception presupposes an object form (object=x) as the necessary correlate of the *cogito* ("I think"). In assigning predicates to perceptions according to the *a priori* categories of the understanding, the final synthesis of recognition produces a concept of the object or what Kant calls a synthetic judgment.<sup>41</sup> The synthetic judgement producing a concept of an object is 'metrical' because it applies categories to our perceptions that are in all cases the same, making it Deleuze and Guattari say, "dogmatic" (ATP, 313/385). We have already seen how Deleuze wants to be done with judgment, and Deleuze will read Kant (a Kant, we could say, without his sock garters) as wanting the same thing. To do so Deleuze develops Kant's exploration of "aesthetic comprehension" in the *Critique of Judgement*. There Kant discovers that the syntheses of imagination in perception presuppose a unit of measure. This unit is not given *a priori*, but is subjectively determined on a case by case basis and is, as a result, in constant variation. Aesthetic comprehension, Deleuze argues, produces a refrain that expresses our comprehension of a chaotic Nature in a rhythm. A rhythm is undetermined by a concept, and is in this sense contrasted to metrical dogmatism. But rhythm is constantly changing and as a result Deleuze says, ventriloquising Kant: "The rhythm is something which comes out of chaos, and the rhythm is indeed something which can indeed perhaps return to chaos."<sup>42</sup> Rhythms are composed from chaos by aesthetic comprehension, before being used as variable units of measure in judgments. But, and here Deleuze is still following Kant, rhythm dissolves into chaos when something exceeds our subjective ability of comprehension. This, Kant argues, happens in front of certain "sublime" natural phenomena whose "intuition convey the idea of their infinity."<sup>43</sup> At this moment the rhythms of aesthetic comprehension that form the basis for perceptions and judgments are "drowned in chaos." "My whole structure of perception," Deleuze says, "is in the process of exploding."<sup>44</sup> This explosion is caused by either an extensive infinity (the mathematical sublime), or an intensive infinity (the dynamic sublime). The latter is a material force filling time and space ("Nature"), but that cannot be comprehended and coded by the faculties. The dynamic sublime is therefore "pure" Nature, both the ground of our experience, but also its groundlessness. As such,

the sublime is the limit of our possible perception and understanding of Nature, and the appearance of an excess, an "outside" to the human organism and its dogmatic judgements. It is this sublime excess that modern cinema discovers in the breakdown of the sensory-motor, and Deleuze and Guattari will extend this positive function of the sublime (although without using this term) to art in general in *What Is Philosophy?* Nevertheless, and despite its sublime appearance, we can understand this breakthrough proper to art only by indicating the ways it deviates from Kant's account, even if these begin from it.

Three points need to be made here.

First, in the Third Critique Kant will discover another faculty "saving" us from chaos, and this is the faculty of Ideas, or Reason. Kant claims that the experience of the sublime actually propels us out of our senses, as it were, to comprehend the transcendental realm of Ideas, the truth of the supersensible as understood by our "pure intellectual judgment," or "reason."<sup>45</sup> "The sublime in nature is only negative," Kant writes, "it is a feeling of imagination by its own act depriving itself of its freedom by receiving a final determination in accordance with a law other than that of its empirical enjoyment."<sup>46</sup> The sublime "awakens" the faculty of reason, which is able to comprehend the supersensible "substratum" of infinity, and return the sublime to the imagination as the presentation of the unrepresentable.<sup>47</sup> This "emancipation of dissonance" (ECC, 35/49) as Deleuze puts it, creates "a new type of accord" (DR, 321/187) between the faculties, a "discordant accord" (ECC, 35/49). Thus the sublime, in overpowering imagination opens onto reason; "the faculty concerned with the independence of the absolute totality."<sup>48</sup> As Kant writes:

the feeling of the unattainability of the idea by means of the imagination [i.e. by the sublime], is itself a presentation of the subjective finality of the imagination in the interests of the mind's supersensible province, and compels us subjectively to think nature itself in its totality as a presentation of something supersensible, without our being able to effectuate this presentation objectively.<sup>49</sup>

The breakdown induced by the sublime allows the breakthrough to the transcendental, or as Deleuze wryly notes: "When something doesn't work [for Kant], he invents something which doesn't exist."<sup>50</sup> Here then is the point at which Deleuze and Guattari *change directions*, where, as Deleuze puts it: "Kant held fast to the point of view of conditioning without attaining that of genesis" (DR, 170/221), Deleuze and Guattari will seek in Nature not the transcendental conditions of life, but its genesis.

Second, for Deleuze and Guattari the Ideas are in fact the forces expressed by a chaotic Nature, those abstract rhythms which emerge from chaos

as its genetic movements, its chaosmosis. These forces are precisely what cannot be thought or sensed by our all too human common sense and rational representations, but which nevertheless are the genetic movements of our thoughts and sensations. These "sublime" forces, Deleuze will argue, will require a "superior empiricism" (DR, 143/186) adequate to their intolerable and inhuman experience, adequate, as we shall see, to the percepts and affects making up a sensation. As a result, chaotic nature is not, as it was for Kant and the romantics, what both overpowers us and restores us to the divine, but is a destruction that transforms the human, mutating our metrical concepts into the rhythms of an immanent and infinite inorganic life. If, for Kant and for Deleuze and Guattari, Nature is chaos or chaosmosis, they understand its affects in completely different ways. For Kant chaos marks the limits of our humanity, but the beginning of our transcendental essence, for Deleuze and Guattari chaotic Nature is the genetic impulse of Life (chaosmosis), from which rhythmical refrains emerge to construct existential spatio-temporal territories—subjectivations—that express the living dynamism from which they were born. This means that although Deleuze and Guattari, like Kant, posit 'Nature' as life's immanent field of forces, these are not reified into a transcendental plane determining our subjectivity, but form instead and in a Spinozian manner, our plane of composition—our becoming—our inhuman life. Thus, for Deleuze and Guattari "the plane of Nature" is not "a product of the imagination" (ATP, 258/375).

Third, there is for Deleuze and Guattari, as for Kant, "something intolerable and unbearable" in life, but unlike Kant this is not a source of terror,<sup>51</sup> and does not reveal our transcendental Ideas, but projects us beyond them. So although Deleuze and Guattari take Kant's concept of "aesthetic comprehension" as the rhythmical expression of Nature, and his idea that it introduces a sublime and intolerable element into sensibility, they are no romantics because they do not seek life's redemption in the sublime's "supersensible destination" of a "transcendental origin."<sup>52</sup> For Deleuze and Guattari the intolerable is precisely what is already expressed in the natural rhythms of life, as what composes those rhythms, or refrains. Of course reconnecting with these forces is not easy, and requires the inventions of great art—inhuman percepts and affects (mutant subjectivations) emerging from the difficult task of overcoming the human. The artist must venture into this catastrophe-chaos in order to bring something out of it, to construct something of it, a process that will involve pain, not least, as Nietzsche said, that of childbirth. Finally then this is what distinguishes Deleuze and Guattari from Kant, they regard chaos as the genetic and immanent plane of life (Nature), present, but not as the unrepresentable, in the refrains of an artistic life. Nature's expressivity is, therefore, that of the stagemaker bird, a pure

constructivism. This means that if art creates the finite that restores the infinite, it doesn't do so in the romantic sense of the sublime. Art doesn't function to overwhelm our finitude in the infinity of Nature, nor does it seek to restore the infinite to us as supersensible and transcendental Ideas. Rather art seeks to create the finite sensation through which the infinite is restored, not as a "beyond," but as the finite's immanent and genetic infinity, not "Nature" but *this* Nature, as it is being expressed and constructed right here and right now. Art in this sense is no longer romantic for Deleuze and Guattari, but modern.

For Deleuze, Kant is the "hinge" between Classicism and Romanticism, because the *Critique of Judgment* is "the great book which all the Romantics will refer to. They had all read it, it will be determining for the whole of German Romanticism."<sup>53</sup> Indeed, when he writes of the sublime, Kant could be describing not only the iconography, but the clichéd affects of generic Romantic scenes:

Bold, overhanging, and, as it were, threatening rock, thunderclouds piled up to the vault of heaven, born along with flashes and peals, volcanoes in all their violence of destruction, hurricanes leaving desolation in their track, the boundless ocean rising with rebellious force, the high waterfall of some mighty river. [...] The astonishment amounting almost to terror, the awe and thrill of devout feeling that takes hold of one when gazing upon the prospect of mountains ascending to heaven, deep ravines and torrents raging there, deep shadowed solitudes that invite to brooding melancholy.<sup>54</sup>

This Kantian iconography of Romanticism is inseparable from its affects of subjective desolation and dislocation. Romantic art, like Kant, finds in the sublime the expression of a personal longing [*Sehnsucht*] for what is forever beyond the artist, the infinity of nature and its dynamic chaos that he or she can never comprehend except as disjunction.<sup>55</sup> The best a romantic artist can achieve through this disjunction is a transcendence by which we can contemplate Nature from above, as it were, as in Casper David Friedrich's *Der Wanderer über dem Nebelmeer* (c.1815, Hamburger Kunsthalle, Hamburg), or a dissolution, a death by which we may enter the mysteries of the spirit of the world.

The Romantics took this dissonance as their thematic, meditating endlessly on "the pull of the ground," on the sublime formlessness paradoxically founding our accordance with Nature. This makes the romantic refrain dissonant and despairing, a mournful cry expressing a subjectivity of exile, the trajectory of the wayfarer, an always deterritorialised soul (ATP, 340/418–9). This was, Deleuze argues, the distinctive feature of the romantic *Lied*, "to set out

from the territory at the call or wind of the earth" (ECC, 104/132), knowing that: "The signpost now only indicates the road of no return" (ATP, 340/419). As the sad voice in Mahler's *Ruckert Lieder* sings,

I have lost touch with the world  
where I once wasted too much of my time.  
Nothing has been heard of me for so long  
that they may well think me dead.  
Neither can I deny it,  
for I am truly dead to the world  
and repose in tranquil realms.  
I live alone in my heaven,  
in my devotion, in my song.<sup>56</sup>

The territory is swept away in the chaos of Nature, and the artist sings with longing of its impossible presence and sublime glory. From these melancholic depths, Deleuze argues, Romanticism reveals its dialectical logic, seeking "a reconciliation of Nature and Spirit, of Spirit as it is alienated in Nature, and of Spirit as it reconquers itself in itself. This conception was implied as the dialectical development of a totality which was still organic" (C1, 54/80). This attempt to reconcile an infinite Nature with man's infinite spirit in a dialectical negation of human finitude, *through art*, is the Hegelian destiny of Romantic art, and is entirely different from Deleuze and Guattari's proposal for restoring infinity through art: "Modernism."

## MODERNISM

Modernism, Deleuze and Guattari announce, is the age of the cosmic. Modernism will overcome the romantic groundless/ground dialectic, and assume a chaosmos in which molecularised matter directly "harnesses" and expresses cosmic forces in a "continuum" [consistant], in an immanent plane of composition (ATP, 343/423). Once more this is a two-stage process: first, the molecularisation of matter, and then the harnessing of cosmic forces. This immediately removes us from a sublime and romantic Nature, and places us in the modernist machine. The machinery of modernist art produces a molecularised material and captures and renders sensible its chaotic forces, like Jackson Pollock. This implies a move beyond Romanticism as a pure expressionism, to an art capable of constructing the universe, and a transformation of "Nature" into a "mechanosphere" (ATP, 343/423). "The forces to be captured," Deleuze and Guattari write, "are no longer those of the earth, which still constitutes a great expressive Form, but the forces of an immanent, nonformal, and energetic

Cosmos" (ATP, 342–3/422–3). Modernism, Deleuze and Guattari argue, is an art—an abstract Machine—whose matter-function no longer obeys a romantic or classical form, but constructs a material expression adequate to the c(h)emonic forces it has released—no longer expression through disjunction, but expression through construction.

This modernist machine needs to be distinguished from the canonical, and still Kantian, definition of modernism given by Clement Greenberg. Greenberg argued that modernism is the "intensification" of western civilisation's "self-critical tendency."<sup>57</sup> Modernism is art's self-critical impulse, it is what renders an art "pure," and in its "purity" finds the guarantee of its standards of quality as well as of its independence.<sup>58</sup> In painting, this "self-purification"<sup>59</sup> initially served to free it from the theatrical representations of literature, which painting had been trying to imitate since the seventeenth century, and subsequently from the equally pernicious state of kitsch, into which, Greenberg thought, painting was sinking. Greenberg conceived of Kant "as the first real Modernist"<sup>60</sup> inasmuch as Modernism is an elaboration in the realm of art of Kant's critical philosophy, and finds in the specificity of each art's medium the *a priori* conditions of an objective and absolute aesthetic judgement. Modernist painting finds its "essence" by abandoning representation for abstraction (Greenberg's famous "flatness"). Modernist abstraction was thus, for Greenberg, materialist, and he set it directly against "the dogmatism and intransigence of the 'non-objective' or 'abstract' purists of painting today who support their positions with metaphysical pretensions."<sup>61</sup> Abstract painting therefore explored in a self-critical way its *a priori* material conditions; on the one hand the painting's flatness and color, and on the other the expression of "sensations, the irreducible elements of experience."<sup>62</sup> Modernist abstract painting revealed its *a priori* essence in the production of matter-sensations. This, and here the echo with Deleuze and Guattari is uncanny, revealed the eye "as a machine unaided by the mind," and capable of what Greenberg called, following Kant, "disinterested contemplation."<sup>63</sup> This disembodied and disinterested machine-eye was capable of making a universal aesthetic judgment, it was capable, Greenberg thought, of identifying "good" art as that which exceeded its historical and representational tradition in giving a sensation of its *a priori* truth or essence.

Paintings self-critical "unclasping" from its literary and kitsch traditions is imagined by Greenberg as an immanent and dialectical process that finds its teleological accomplishment (its "absolute opticality") in "American-type" abstraction.<sup>64</sup> The teleological trajectory of Greenbergian Modernism in life (Pollock crowned) was in fact a reflection of its teleological transcendence of life in discovering its own transcendent truth. In this way, and despite his "modern"

vocabulary, Greenberg remains Romantic, not simply as a Kantian, but also as a Hegelian dialectician on the path to “Absolute Sensation.” Deleuze and Guattari’s conception of Modernism is therefore clearly opposed to Greenberg’s. For Deleuze and Guattari Modernism is neither chrono- nor teleo- logically determined, nor is its *a priori* essence revealed in a disinterested judgement. Indeed, the two aspects of Greenberg’s account that would seem at first glance to intersect with Deleuze and Guattari’s account, his empiricism and his materialism, evaporate into a prior—and indeed *a priori*—optical-ideality. Deleuze and Guattari’s Modernism is both more materialist and more empirical than Greenberg’s. Deleuze and Guattari assume a molecular and chaotic matter, whose forces emerge and are expressed through the refrain that composes and expresses them. The modernist problem is therefore, “how to consolidate the material, make it consistent, so that it can [...] capture the mute and unthinkable forces of the Cosmos” (ATP, 343/423).<sup>65</sup> This process doesn’t begin with the purification of art, but with the molecularisation of matter (its absolute deterritorialisation) allowing the immanent forces of the *chaosmos* to be “harnessed” in consistent and autopoietic blocs of sensation. The modernist aesthetic paradigm assumes a Nature of “*material-forces*” (ATP, 342/422) and begins from the romantic problem of the sublime: their expression. But Modernism avoids the romantic reconstitution of a transcendental expressionism (as the imagination’s break down and redemption in a sublime beyond), by composing finite sensations (refrains or subjectivations) that express (that express *by constructing*) matter-forces on a cosmic plane of *chaosmosis*. In a sensation molecular matter is constructed by, and so expresses—“renders visible” (as the painter Paul Klee put it)—the immanent forces of inorganic life. Modernism therefore, is not a representation of the unrepresentable, but the creation of a sensation inseparable from its infinite plane of composition. The sensation is the modernist condition of art because art is created, as Deleuze and Guattari write, when “the plane of the material ascends irresistibly and invades the plane of composition of the sensations themselves to the point of being part of them or indiscernible from them. [...] All the material becomes expressive. [...] Indeed] it is difficult to say where in fact the material ends and sensation begins” (WP, 166,167/157).<sup>66</sup> It is only by means immanent to a molecularised (i.e. a chaotic) material that it is possible to create a block of sensations, a pure being/becoming of sensations (WP, 167/157). The crucial term here is “create,” because it indicates how the relation of finite art works to the infinity of *chaos(mosis)* (Nature) is not premised on a destruction of subjective experience that restores a transcendental truth. Rather, the catastrophe rendered by confronting chaos (absolute deterritorialisation) is the necessary condition of any true creation, of any sensation. Art is, then, a “*passage*” from finite to infinite

(WP, 180/171) and back again. But it is a return through which everything changes direction, not least life itself, and puts on the artist—the subjective artist—“the quiet mark of death” (WP, 172/163). The death of man will be the necessary condition for the emergence of a sensation.<sup>67</sup> This “mark of death” is nothing but the condition for the artist reaching the “sacred source” (WP, 172/163), life in its capitalized form, the inorganic Life of *chaosmosis*.

Materialism and empiricism are the two conditions of modern art’s construction in and expression of this “molecular pantheistic Cosmos” (ATP, 327/403). The modernist artist cannot harness the cosmic forces of *chaosmosis* without both molecularising the matter he or she works with, (a catastrophic materialism extending to their own humanity) and becoming a “visionary” capable of giving a sensation of this process (their “superior empiricism”). Artist and art-work become indiscernible in this cosmic matter-vision, as an inhuman subjectivation of the vital matter of the universe. Matter captures, in the hands of the modern artist, the forces of an energetic cosmos, and as Guattari, the mystical modern artist claims: “No more than to the cosmos do I recognise any limit to myself” (REA, 168/265).

Modern art therefore creates the finite which restores the infinite, by creating a finite refrain which is forever restoring the processual infinity of its own becoming. As such the refrain creates itself as it unfolds, it is an actual expression of the constant construction of its virtual and chaotic plane of composition. Art creates a finite work, of course, but only as the actual expression of chaotic emergence, a cosmic locality. As Deleuze and Guattari put it: ‘From depopulation, make a cosmic people; from deterritorialisation, a cosmic earth—that is the wish of the artisan-artist, here, there, locally’ (ATP, 346/427).<sup>68</sup> From relative deterritorialisations, attain the absolute! This means the romantic clichés of the child, the lunatic, “still less the artist” (ATP, 345/426), must be overcome, and in their place we must become the truly modern figure of “the cosmic artisan: a homemade atom bomb” (ATP, 345/426). The “cosmic-artisan”—it begs Deleuze and Guattari’s question: “why so enormous a word, Cosmos, to discuss an operation that must be precise?” (ATP, 337/416). Once more, in answering, we are back to the beginning of the chapter, and Guattari’s definition of the affect. I look out my window, a banal act, perhaps, but in it a problematic universe of virtual affects opens in which “I” am dissolved on lines of flight, becomings the artisan makes visible, becomings the artist puts into affects. “How can we convey how easy it is, and the extent to which we do it every day?” (ATP, 159–60/198). The artisan begins simply, by looking around him or herself, “but does so,” Deleuze and Guattari write, following Klee once more, “in order to grasp the trace of creation in the created,” in order to grasp the movements of *chaosmosis*, the most microscopic and the

most cosmic. And why? Simply to make a work (ATP, 337/416). To create the finite that restores the infinite. In this sense modernism is a mysticism, and the modernist artist is an atheist-mystic creating a local-absolute. Modernist art restores a mystical Absolute, a cosmic infinity, by constructing a finite local work, the expression of the former being inseparable from the construction of the latter, because the Absolute of chaosmosis is never given, and always remains to be created. How? As we have seen in our discussion of Guattari, modern art begins as an art of destratification, by which artists go beyond the perceptual and affective states of the lived in order to see, “the mutual embrace of life with something that threatens it” (WP, 171/161). The sublime, chaos, something unbearable. But the artist does not discover the transcendental truth of life through this threat (like Kant), but embraces the danger as the necessity of transforming life into something that is truly living, the life of a people yet to come. Perhaps no more than a few strokes of the pen are required; the lightest touch can contain a new world of infinite movement. “One is then like grass, one has made the world, everybody/everything, into a becoming” (ATP, 280/343). Artists and their works are “Leaves of Grass,” like Walt Whitman, that “caresser of life wherever moving,” “Walt Whitman, one of the roughs, a kosmos.” Walt Whitman, nothing but the question, “Who need be afraid of the merge.”<sup>69</sup>

## SENSATION

How can we understand this mystical modernism in relation to actual art works, and to the way art actually works? In *What Is Philosophy?* Deleuze and Guattari give a variety of answers that all circle around the sensation, their explanation of this concept building on what we have already developed, inasmuch as the refrain is a sensation (WP, 184/175). The sensation is the specific realm of arts appearance: “Whether through words, colors, sounds, or stone, art is the language of sensations” (WP, 176/166). Sensations, as we shall see, are the being and the becoming, the “percept” and “affect” of a modern art.

An art work, Deleuze and Guattari state, is “a bloc of sensations, that is to say, a compound of percepts and affects” (WP, 164/154). Percepts and affects are first of all the absolute deterritorialisation of our human perceptions and affections, the “unclasping” of vision and experience from our human sensibility. Once more, Deleuze and Guattari’s discussion of art begins from a revalued physiology of art. Perception is a subjective state induced by an object, and affections are the subjective increases or decreases of power (“feelings”) a perception induces. Perceptions and affections are therefore subjective responses to objects, and represent a stratified state of affairs. “No

art and no sensation,” Deleuze and Guattari write, “have ever been representational” (WP, 193/182). Percepts are not perceptions of an object, because they do not exist in reference to another thing, and an affect is not an affection because it is not the state of a perceiving subject.<sup>70</sup> Percepts and affects are not found “in” an artist or a viewer, nor are they art works or the meanings these works may contain. A sensation emerges in the deterritorialisation of the perceptual co-ordinates of the subject-object through a catastrophe, the confrontation with chaos every artist must pass through in order to compose something from the matter molecularised in this passage. Each artist does it in their own way, and we shall see next chapter how one, the painter Francis Bacon, uses precise techniques to achieve it. This is why an artwork must “stand up for itself”—because it must find a way to get to its feet once it has abandoned the support of the subject or object. Sensations, Deleuze and Guattari write, “are beings whose validity lies in themselves and exceeds any lived. They could be said to exist in the absence of man because man, as he is caught in stone, on the canvas, or by words, is himself a compound of percepts and affects. The work of art is a being of sensation and nothing else: it exists in itself” (WP, 164/155).

In having a sensation we pass outside the subject and object, and become inhuman. For Deleuze and Guattari: “Affects are precisely these nonhuman becomings of man, just as percepts [ . . . ] are nonhuman landscapes of nature” (WP, 169/160).<sup>71</sup> An affect is a rise or fall of power within a machinic assemblage. As such, the affect is the becoming-other of the assemblage, a corporeal (re)composition expressing the cosmic plane of Nature in a Spinozian sense. The affect, Deleuze and Guattari write, is a sensory becoming, and “sensory becoming is otherness caught in a matter of expression. The monument [the art work] does not actualize the virtual event but incorporates or embodies it: it gives it a body, a life, a universe” (WP, 177/168). Becoming is the affect of passage between, or as Deleuze and Guattari also like to say, of a zone of indiscernibility immediately preceding, a “natural” differentiation of places or things. The affect is nonhuman then, because it exceeds the bounds of the “living” in being a sensation of the creative movement of inorganic life.

This is why the affect is inseparable from a percept, because its becoming is only the expression of its real conditions, of the percept or “nonhuman landscape” in which it emerges. The affect we could say, is a material change, the percept the empirical experience implied by this becoming. The percept is what Deleuze called in relation to cinema a “hallucination” or “vision,” and in *What Is Philosophy?* Deleuze and Guattari call it a “creative fabulation” (WP, 171/161). The conditions of vision therefore, are not given (contra Kant) and it is vision—a percept—that constructs the non-human landscapes of nature.

Once more, these visions will be expressed in the art-work, but in themselves are cosmicizations of force, a rendering visible of “the imperceptible forces that populate the world, that affect us, make us become” (WP, 182/172). “Visions” are percepts of the mobile, heaving, and “cubist” (WP, 171/162)<sup>72</sup> landscape where “becomings unfold.”<sup>73</sup> A percept is in this sense a perspective, “a kind of superior *viewpoint*,” as Deleuze writes in his book on Proust, “an irreducible viewpoint which signifies at once the birth of the world and the original character of a world, but also forms a specific world absolutely different from the others, and envelops a landscape or immaterial site quite distinct from the site where we have grasped it.”<sup>74</sup> This viewpoint or percept is not subjective, and rather than originating in an individual, it is itself a “principle of individuation.”<sup>75</sup> The “superior viewpoint” of the percept creates a world, but this creation is inseparable from its expression in affects, or becomings. The percept is a perspective that constructs a world, and we become with this world—as the world giving birth to itself. “We are not in the world,” Deleuze and Guattari write in a mystical formulation, “we become with the world; we become by contemplating it. Everything is vision, becoming. We become universes” (WP, 169/160).

The affect and percept can be seen as consistent with our previous discussions of art. The affect emerges from a molecularisation of matter in a non-human becoming, a release of new traits of content for arts modern machine. The percept is a cosmicization of forces releasing new traits of expression, new artistic visions. But of course they must be brought together, or rather, to understand the sensation we must understand how they necessarily appear together. We have seen the abstract machine fulfil this function, but here Deleuze and Guattari coin a new term, “aesthetic composition,” as the machinic process specific to art. Guattari gives a good explanation; “a block of percept and affect, by way of *aesthetic composition*, agglomerates in the same transversal flash the subject and the object, the self and other, the material and incorporeal, the before and after . . .” (Chaos, 93/130 italics added).

The percept and affect form the two “pincers” of aesthetic composition: “The clinch of forces as percepts and becomings as affects.” As such, percept and affect are “completely complementary” (WP, 182/173). The percept constructs the virtual, chaotic plane of forces, “expanded to infinity” (WP, 188/179), as the real conditions of the affect, the actual becoming expressing this plane. The percept gives the plane of consistency in which forces compose matter, while the affect simultaneously actualises this plane in a subjectivation, a material becoming. In sensation everything happens at once, “the principle of composition itself must be perceived, cannot but be perceived at the same time as that which it composes or renders” (ATP, 281/345).

Composition is the real condition of sensation then, not as an abstract and transcendental condition of all sensation, but as the condition of *this* sensation. The plane of composition, Deleuze and Guattari write, “is not abstractly preconceived but *constructed* as the work progresses” (WP, 188/178 italics added). Composition is the action of the percept and affect, it is the construction of a sensation in which the infinity of the Chaosmos (percept) is immanent to the finite material which expresses it (affect). As Deleuze and Guattari write, “composition is the sole definition of art. Composition is aesthetic, and what is not composed is not a work of art” (WP, 191/181). But through this aesthetic composition we are returned to an ontological plane inseparable from art. If with Nietzsche the high point of the meditation is that being is becoming, then here, art takes on its modern Spinozian modality, where “everything in Nature is just composition” (EPS, 237/216).

How then do we create a sensation, how do we become artists and compose art works? Deleuze and Guattari take advice from Virginia Woolf: “Saturate every atom,” she advises, eliminate all waste, deadness, and superfluity, in order to “put everything into it” (WP, 172/163 and also ATP, 280/343). It’s a process of critique, an affirmation, a selection that involves necessary destruction. Eliminate everything of our current and lived perceptions in order to have a vision, a vision of the infinity we are: “Present at the dawn of the world” (ATP, 280/343). Only such an absolute deterritorialisation will enable us to walk into everything, to create a world, everyone/everything, as a becoming which expresses the immanent chaosmos as our infinite plane of composition.<sup>76</sup> This is Mrs Dalloway’s reality, who

felt herself everywhere; not “here, here, here”; and she tapped the back of the seat; but everywhere. She waved her hand, going up Shaftesbury Avenue. She was all that. So that to know her, or any one, one must seek out the people who completed them; even the places. Odd affinities she had with people she had never spoken to, some woman in the street, some man behind a counter—even trees, or barns.<sup>77</sup>

Art composes sensations as the expressive movements of all that is, while never ceasing to be singular and precise actual individuated expressions. As Mrs. Dalloway suggests, life and art become coextensive in the aesthetic paradigm, and arts creative fabulation, its “odd affinities” are life’s absolute deterritorialisation in art, as art creates the world. Living, that is inorganic life, is this process of creation, and art embodies it in sensations. “Life alone creates such zones where living beings whirl around, and only art,” Deleuze and Guattari write, “can reach and penetrate them in its enterprise of co-creation” (WP, 173/169). As if, when art creates a sensation it is nothing less

than life, inorganic life, a subjectivation. Such a creation, such a work of art has no formal or material preconditions to its modernity; nothing is given, except what is created. "The artist," Deleuze and Guattari write, "must create the syntactical or plastic methods and materials necessary for such a great undertaking, which re-creates everywhere the primitive swamps of life" (WP, 173–4/169).

Art's ontological status as creation, its ontological creationism, is precisely what makes it appear and exist only as a *particular* sensation. Art is always *this* sensation. *This* sensation makes it impossible for us to be lost in the romantic and mystical mist of an ecstatic transcendence. Art cannot exist apart from its actual singularity, its now-here, which is precisely what restores its infinite and cosmic plane of composition, its no where. Erewhon, as Samuel Butler discovered it, is the land of such great reversals. But Virginia Woolf has her own version, of course, Mrs. Dalloway-Shafesbury Avenue—Everybody/everything, all together in an immanent mysticism. Each particular and artistic creation, each work of art, or sensation, is therefore the creation of creation as such (how many times? just One, One eternally returning). In creating a finite that restores the infinite art embodies an ongoing and infinite creationism. Sensation is, as Guattari puts it, "a permanent 'work in progress'" (REA, 167/264).

This final, mystical evaporation of a distinction between art and its creative chaotic Life, reinscribes art as a political force. Art first of all acts against art as it is traditionally understood, to open a realm of aesthetic freedom, a realm where we regain the real, to gain the freedom to live. Art, in the sense of "fine arts," Deleuze and Guattari bluntly state, "is a false concept, a solely nominal concept" (ATP, 300–1/369). Fine art isolated from life avoids and obscures the vital processes of its aesthetic paradigm, and this is its repressive politics. Deleuze refuses such an art, writing in relation to Beckett: "We will not invent an entity that would be Art, capable of making the [representative] image endure" (ECC, 161).<sup>78</sup> The absolute deterritorialisation of art as a nominal concept is inherently political, because it refuses the given; all the opinions, perceptions and affections which tell us who we are and that prevent us from creating—from truly living. In this sense, Deleuze argues, "there is a fundamental affinity between the work of art and the act of resistance."<sup>79</sup> This "resistance" begins by rejecting nominal concepts of art, and proceeds through the radicalisation of certain movements of deterritorialisation in expressing their absolute ontological conditions (as we saw with Venetian painting and Pollock in the last chapter). The absolute deterritorialisation achieved by art in the sensation is finally a process of permanent revolution in the name of the future, in the name of life, in the name of all things yet to come. When

art is creative its ontology is political, because "promoting a new aesthetic paradigm," Guattari writes, "involves overthrowing current forms of art as much as those of social life. I hold out my hand to the future" (Chaos, 134/185).

This future unfolds in a Cosmic genetic experiment, the becoming-animal of the world. Art is a bio-aesthetics: "Not only does art not wait for human beings to begin," Deleuze and Guattari write, "but we may ask if art ever appears among human beings, except under artificial and belated conditions" (ATP, 320/394). Art is the becoming-animal of the world, it creates new forms of life outside our stratifications, our comfortable organicism, and opinionated thoughts. Art seethes in the "primitive swamps of life" currently confined to the edges of our biological maps, but appearing in sensations that overflow human perceptions and affections to take us somewhere else. According to Deleuze and Guattari's map:

It is within our civilisation's temperate surroundings that equatorial or glacial zones, which avoid the differentiation of genus, sex, orders, and kingdoms, currently function and prosper. It is a question only of ourselves, here and now; but what is animal, vegetable, mineral, or human in us is now indistinct—even though we ourselves will especially acquire distinction. The maximum of determination comes from this bloc of neighbourhood like a flash (WP, 174/164–5).<sup>80</sup>

This flash of individuation appears as a sign, a sign of things to come, our becoming-animal, our sensations of a promiscuous and humid heterogenesis in which art and life are indiscernible. The readymade returns—against Duchamp—in the song of a bird. Art is "haunted" by the animal, and art works are "ritual monuments of an animal mass that celebrates qualities before extracting new causalities and finalities from them. This emergence of pure sensory qualities is already art" (WP, 184/174). Art works emerge as the intemperate politics of a life which cannot be lived, but which lives in art and its mutational molecular matter of subjectivating sensation. Art and politics as an animal line of flight; mount the witches broom for the tropics!

## Chapter Six

# The Agitations of a Convulsive Life: Painting the Flesh

And I join my slime, my excrement, my madness, my ecstasy to the great circuit which flows through the subterranean vaults of the flesh. All this unbidden, unwanted, drunken vomit will flow on endlessly through the minds of those to come in the inexhaustible vessel that contains the history of the race. Side by side with the human race there runs another race of beings, the inhuman ones, the race of artists who, goaded by unknown impulses, take the lifeless mass of humanity and by the fever and ferment with which they imbue it turn this soggy dough into bread and the bread into wine and the wine into song. Out of the dead compost and inert slag they breed a song that contaminates.

—Henry Miller, *Tropic of Cancer*.

## INTRODUCTION

Deleuze develops a “logic of sensation” through his encounter with the work of Francis Bacon, a logic that is both explicitly Bacon’s, and stands as Deleuze’s most developed statement of his thinking about painting. Deleuze’s logic therefore, is on the one hand a critical practice, the elaboration of an ont-aesthetic methodology via a detailed discussion of Bacon and his oeuvre, and on the other a broader discussion of the history and function of painting in relation to its crucial term, sensation. Of course, this double register of Deleuze’s work on art, its at once “micro” and “macro” operation is the very process we have been following throughout this book, the process of “Art as abstract machine.” This machine is explored here through what Deleuze calls Bacon’s “diagram,” the way he, and by extension any painter, composes chaotic forces and expresses them in sensations.<sup>1</sup> Examining this process will therefore involve us directly in Bacon’s work, as well as allowing a final and full statement of art’s ontological implications.

To immediately give an example, one which will be occupying us at length here, Deleuze advances the term “flesh” [*chair*] as both an entirely appropriate

description of Bacon's figures, flayed open or otherwise disarranged like so much meat, and a philosophical concept for a new corporeality of experience achieved by painting a sensation. Furthermore, the figure of the "flesh" is important for phenomenology, and we will spend some time clarifying Deleuze's relationship to this other notable philosophical engagement with painting. Bacon's diagram will also intersect with many of the themes we have already discussed, including a new configuration of an "Egyptian" line and the "colourism" of Cézanne and the post-impressionists. Also important are Deleuze's explorations of the wider philosophical connotations of Bacon's diagram in terms of Alois Riegl's concept of "haptic" space, and Goethe's theory of color. Through these various investigations we will see how the "logic of sensation" operates on an indiscernibly ontological and aesthetic surface, the surface of flesh, which once again will open onto an immanent, mystical and "spiritual dimension."

The immanence of aesthetics and ontology in Deleuze, as we have repeatedly seen, is the necessary result of the ontological ground of his philosophical system being becoming, the continual construction of new actual forms expressing their immanent and productive chaotic dimension of matter-force. But the cosmic genesis of art is no reason to abandon its careful analysis in favour of abstract metaphysical speculations. Just the opposite in fact, because it will only be through a detailed analysis of Bacon's paintings and statements that Deleuze will arrive at the chaotic forces that animate them. The "logic of sensation" Deleuze finds in Bacon's work is therefore systematic in both an abstract and particular sense, but it is first of all articulated by the artist and his paintings. Consequently, in understanding it we will have to overcome a common problem: "We do not listen enough to what painters have to say" (FB, 99/93). "We" are no doubt philosophers, who have of course, only rarely listened to artists, let alone seriously considered their work. In his book on Bacon Deleuze seeks to rectify this problem by giving Bacon's paintings as much philosophical weight as that given to any of the individual philosophers he has written about. Bacon's "logic of sensation" is for Deleuze, entirely philosophical, and Bacon's paintings function as, and give rise to, thought. That a "logic of sensation" could be a form of thought is an assertion that rests on their shared genesis in an encounter of forces. "All begins with sensibility" (DR, 144/188) Deleuze writes, because a sensation of ontogenetic force can give rise to a painting or a concept, and on this level both share the same "logic."<sup>2</sup> We will come back to this point repeatedly, as it is crucial to my argument that a "logic of sensation" not only describes a thinking painting, but is also a mode of thought.

Deleuze addresses the ontological, art historical and painterly aspects of Bacon's "logic of sensation" through the concept of the "diagram," the abstract

machine that composes matter and force into a painting. With the diagram we are immediately within the Deleuzian double dimension of aesthetics, for the diagram creates a finite work that simultaneously restores to it an infinite ontological dimension. This restoration will begin with a destruction, one in which, as Deleuze dramatically puts it, "it is as if the two halves of the head were split open by an ocean" (FB, 100/94).

## THE DIAGRAM

We begin our discussion of Bacon's paintings, appropriately, with a fundamental violence; a splitting of the head through which we see "the emergence of another world" (FB, 100/94). This other world can be oceanic as well as a "Sahara," (*Jet of Water*, 1979, private collection, *Sand dune*, 1981, Foundation Beyeler, Basel) having the ambiguous geography of art's plane of consistency, the infinite emergence of its matters-forces. Bacon's diagram begins with a catastrophe by which chaos appears on the canvas, and proceeds by composing this chaos into a sensation. As Deleuze puts it: "The diagram is indeed a chaos, a catastrophe, but it is also a germ of order or rhythm" (FB, 102/95). Bacon's diagram is therefore "modern" in the sense we developed last chapter, it molecularises matter and cosmicizes forces through a catastrophe, and then composes these matters-forces into sensations. Nevertheless, Bacon's diagram is his own, and like all great artists he finds his own way to embrace chaos and assemble a pictorial order from it.

This suggests a "diagrammatic" art history in which we can trace differences and similarities between diagrams, rather than rehearse the biographies of the artists who provide their names. Deleuze is not interested in writing a *Lives of the Artists*, although his diagrammatic art history is just as precise as any other. "Not only can we differentiate among diagrams," Deleuze writes, "but we can also date the diagram of the painter" (FB, 102/95).<sup>3</sup> Dating the diagram gives it a historical specificity that is potentially misleading. The diagram is neither a transcendental determination of a historical event, nor is it simply reducible to a historical event. Rather the diagram operates a fold between chaos and history by which the actual gains a new power of expression coextensive with the new virtual plane of composition the diagram draws. Each diagram therefore confronts chaos, dives into it, but only in order to create "a new type of reality." As a result, Deleuze and Guattari write, "it does not stand outside history but is instead always "prior to" history" (ATP, 142/177). This "priority" is ontological rather than temporal, and like the priority of sensation to thought, the diagram acts as history's immanent condition, but does not exist apart from the history that actualises it. That's why it can be

dated. Perhaps we could say that the diagram begins and ends in history, but somewhere in the middle it leaves it. "History today," Deleuze and Guattari write, "still designates only the set of conditions, however recent they may be, from which one turns away in order to become, that is to say, in order to create something new" (WP, 96/92).

The diagram is a way to understand art history as the emergence of new artistic realities according to "prior," but nevertheless immanent ontological conditions. This is a significant reconfiguration of our understanding of art history, focussing on the ontological work of painting, its mechanisms of self-creation. In doing so, Deleuze transforms subjective questions of artistic intention or influence, and formal questions of technique or iconography, into questions about painting's ontological machine. Obviously Deleuze is not the first to do this, and he draws freely on Alois Riegl's concept of a "will to art" [*Kunstwollen*] here, both theoretically and in its quite specific "historical" formulations (FB, 122/115).<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, painting diagrams—as abstract machines—create sensations that put us "flush with the real," drawing us into their process to both experience and participate in the ongoing chaosmosis immanent to a painting's actual historical appearance. As we have repeatedly seen, this is going to require a new form of vision, what Deleuze will here call a "haptic eye." The artistic diagram is therefore both "visionary" in constructing an artwork from chaos, and is expressed in a "vision" (the haptic vision of the art work) that renders it visible.

An abstract machine's date, Guattari writes, is "not synchronic but heterochronic" (*Chaos*, 40/62).<sup>5</sup> In other words, a new diagram is not simply the simultaneous appearance of various other art styles according to a new combination, and as part of an art historical reality that pre-exists and determines this emergence. The diagram creates a new reality out of heterogeneous realities, not just for the time to come, but also for the time that has been, for the history which has supposedly led up to it. It is in this sense that Bacon's diagram recapitulates the history of painting in his own way. Bacon's diagram creates a new reality for painting, and in doing so recapitulates (perhaps we could say revitalizes) art history by constructing a new genealogy, one beginning with the Egyptians and encompassing a rather dizzying trajectory through Byzantine, Venetian, Gothic and abstract art. This "creative" art history obviously shares a method with Deleuze's history of philosophy, which similarly "discovers" (a discovery inseparable from an invention) a materialist-vitalist tradition opposed to the representational and organ-isaitional image of thought. The point is that both Deleuze and Bacon undertake an ontological "reinvention" of history, rather than a historical revisionism, and both move through a series of "stopping places" that they compose into a new diagram,

and the new reality it creates. This is finally the meaning of the "heterochronic" diagram, that while it composes its own tradition, this tradition is itself composed of creative breaks that both constitute it and have created it anew each time. This heterochronic tradition is therefore fractal rather than historical, each one of its breaks reanimating the others, and making them creative once more.<sup>6</sup> Indeed, Deleuze's reading of Bacon's "recapitulation" of art history is itself a recapitulation, given that Deleuze barely mentions Picasso and Velázquez, two very important figures for Bacon, and does not mention another—Ingres—at all.<sup>7</sup> This should not be taken as a weakness of Deleuze's reading however, but as a symptom of its creative energy: "There is no act of creation," Deleuze and Guattari write, "that is not transhistorical and does not come up from behind or proceed by way of a liberated line" (ATP, 296/363). We will see this line in action more precisely when we turn to Bacon's use of the Egyptian contour.

Deleuze places great importance on art's materiality, both its actual matter and the material processes that form it. Each art form is determined by these material conditions, and Deleuze mentions line and color for painting, sound for music, and moving light for the cinema.<sup>8</sup> Although line and color give the conditions shared by all paintings as such, just as obviously painting employs very different compositional practices, very different diagrams, in relation to them. These diagrams are not simply "artistic" however, but are also ontological. On the one hand, each diagram determines a different set of material and formal relations, and thereby creates a new reality, and on the other, each diagram embodies a different "will to art." Deleuze does not give an exhaustive account of these "wills" here, but we saw three possibilities emerge in the last chapter with the Classical, the Romantic and the Modern. Deleuze is more interested in Bacon's precise process of painting, and focuses on those diagrams Bacon recapitulates in constructing his own. It is to these abstract ontological and particular aesthetic processes of Bacon's diagram that we shall now turn.

To begin, all diagrams share certain features, and the first is found in Nietzsche's famous pronouncement that there is no creation without destruction. The "preparatory work that belongs to painting fully" (FB, 99/93), Deleuze argues, is introducing a catastrophe onto the canvas that destroys the representational qualities of figuration. This is necessary because, as Deleuze and Guattari put it in *What Is Philosophy?*: "The painter does not paint on an empty canvas, [because the] canvas is already so covered with preexisting, preestablished clichés that it is first necessary to erase, to clean, to flatten, even to shred, so as to let in a breath of air from the chaos . . ." (WP, 204/192). The "catastrophe" cleans the painting of cliché in the obvious sense of removing



Figure 7 Francis Bacon, *Portrait of Isabel Rawthorne*, 1965, Tate Gallery, London. © 2004 Estate of Francis Bacon / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / DACS, London

predictable and received meanings, but in a more dramatic sense it breaks with its representational function. All this will be necessary in order for a sensation to render the diagram's plane of composition visible. Let's return to the splitting of the head with which we began our account of the diagram to see how this works. Split heads are ubiquitous in Bacon's work, dissecting the face vertically (*Study for a self-portrait*, 1982, private collection, New York), horizontally (*Painting*, 1946, MOMA, New York), or more commonly, as a "mashing" of the face occurring without an axis (*Three studies for the portrait of Isabel Rawthorne*, 1965, University of East Anglia, Norwich). This split is a catastrophe that deterritorialises the representational aspects of the face, in order for other forces to appear. Bacon achieves this catastrophe by making random marks (Deleuze calls these lines-trait), and wiping the canvas to produce "clearings" on it (Deleuze calls these color-patches). These traits and patches are destratified lines and colors acting as both the destruction of representational form and their clichés, and as the pictorial diagram, the basic "sieve" through which chaos can be composed. As a result, the diagram "has no form of its own" (ATP, 141/176), because it is instead a catastrophe in which "form collapses" (FB, 135/127).

Bacon's "insubordinate color-patches and traits" (FB, 156/146) are purely manual (marks and wipes), and introduce the catastrophe into the eye and its optical space, beginning, as we shall go on to see, our own dissolution. These traits and patches produce, Deleuze writes, "a frenetic zone in which the hand is no longer guided by the eye and is forced upon sight like another will, which appears as chance, accident, automatism, or the involuntary" (FB, 137/129). These "accidental" movements of the hand introduce chaos into the process of creation; they are Bacon's hand throwing the dice Deleuze writes, using another Nietzschean figure, a throw that eternally returns in the act of painting. It is worth listening to Bacon's own account to get a sense of his method:

You know in my case all painting [ . . . ] is accident. So I foresee it in my mind, I foresee it, and yet I hardly ever carry it out as I foresee it. It transforms itself by the actual paint. I use very large brushes, and in the way I work I don't in fact know very often what the paint will do, and it does many things which are very much better than I could make it do. Is that an accident? Perhaps one could say it's not an accident, because it becomes a selective process which part of this accident one chooses to preserve. One is attempting, of course, to keep the vitality of the accident, and yet preserve a continuity.<sup>9</sup>

This is a wonderful description of the catastrophic aspect of Bacon's diagram, which employs material and manual rather than mental or optical compositional

process. The “accidental” traits and patches of paint are pure matter-force dislocated from both a represented object and an expressive subjectivity (Bacon is simply the manual component of his diagram). Paint is molecularised in the accident, Deleuze suggests, giving a world of infinite smallness and infinite largeness, “as if the units of measure were changed, and micrometric, or even cosmic, units were substituted for the figurative unit. A Sahara, a rhinoceros skin: such is the suddenly out-stretched diagram” (FB, 100/94). The canvas has become a space undecidably microscopic or cosmic, breathing the air of chaos and infolding its infinite distances.

But despite this chaotic landscape, or rather because of it, something is going to happen: “The essential thing about the diagram is that it is made in order for something to emerge from it, and if nothing emerges from it, it fails” (FB, 159/149). This means the diagram “must remain operative and controlled” (FB, 110/103), in order for the emergence of what Deleuze, quoting Bacon, calls “possibilities of fact” (FB, 101/95). These “possibilities of fact” are the other side of Bacon’s catastrophic marks and wipes, they are the liberation of “lines for the armature and colours for modulation” (FB, 121/113), (we will examine both a little later) and are the beginning of a compositional process which will culminate in the “fact” of a sensation. The diagram therefore has a dual operation, it “is a violent chaos in relation to the figurative givens, but it is a germ of rhythm in relation to the new order of the painting” (FB, 102/95–6). Creation emerges from destruction—Chaosmosis. We have repeatedly encountered this formula because on the ontological level all aesthetic expressions share the same problem, composing the forces of chaos into a sensation, according to the same proviso, “no art is figurative” (FB, 56/57).<sup>10</sup> Bacon’s diagram escapes figuration in order to compose the rhythms of chaos into new sensations, the sensations of Figures.

## THE FIGURE

We have already encountered Deleuze’s argument that in the “entire” history of Western art the destruction of classical organic representation has taken one of either two paths, that towards “*a purely optical space*,” or towards “*a violent manual space*” (FB, 127/119–20). In the first, the contour described by a line (figuration) is submerged by a “purely optical play of light and shadows” in which the tactile elements are “annulled” and which produces the form “through an inner relationship that is specifically optical” (FB, 128/120). The optical pole utilises manual techniques to create the appearance of depth, contour, relief, etc., but the purely optical effects it creates subordinate the hand. At the other pole there is a free-action of the hand creating a “manual” space

that subordinates the eye. Here there is movement without rest, a “pure activity” and “*nonorganic vitality*” (FB, 129/121) within which the eye cannot distinguish forms. These two poles find their modern expression in geometrical abstraction and abstract expressionism.<sup>11</sup> Even a perfunctory view of Bacon’s paintings shows that he does not conform to either approach, although elements of both appear in the flat colored grounds and random gestural marks which are the constant features of his work. Bacon, Deleuze argues, explores a “third way” which avoids both these poles.

This “third way” breaks with the figuration of organic representation to produce a “Figure,” a production whose condition of possibility is the heterochronic assemblage of Bacon’s diagram, his own recapitulation of the history of painting. But Deleuze will not trace the development of Bacon’s diagram in terms of historical influence, because a diagram is always composed of active re-inventions. Instead Deleuze isolates the basic “assemblages” that act as Bacon’s “stopping points and passages” (FB, 135/127). Bacon’s reinvention of the “Egyptian assemblage” exemplifies this “passage” and as such it is the first stopping point of his diagram. Deleuze follows Riegl in defining Egyptian art according to the space of bas-relief, in which form and ground appear on the same plane, both separated and united by a contour operating as their common limit. The contour thereby creates a shallow space in which neither optical nor manual functions dominate, but unite in a “haptic function” of the eye that “discovers in itself a specific function of touch that is uniquely its own, distinct from its optical function” (FB, 155/146). Deleuze and Guattari call this the eye’s “*cutaneous Vision*” (ATP, 151/187), a vision that emerges between the optical and manual poles of painting, and which undergoes in Bacon’s “Egyptian” contour an ongoing series of “logical reversals and [ . . . ] substitutions” (FB, 154/145).

Bacon’s contour characteristically marks an armature demarcating a shallow space from a flat colored ground, within which the Figure appears. In the Egyptian assemblage however, the contour was used to isolate an essential form, so while the haptic space it produces deterritorialises an organic representational schema, it simultaneously reterritorialises the images onto a “formal and linear presence that dominates the flux of existence and representation.” In this way form and ground are re-solidified and their reversal controlled (FB, 123/115).<sup>12</sup> Bacon’s selective recapitulation of the Egyptian assemblage is “scrambled” (FB, 124/116) because only partial. He takes the haptic space of bas-relief, but deterritorialises the Egyptian line’s figurative, essentializing and unitary functions, so that “a new Egypt rises up” (FB, 134/126). How? Bacon’s contour draws a “place” in which exchanges occur between the “material field” of color and what appears in the armature.

These exchanges occur according to two formulas of what Deleuze calls a "derisory athletics" of the Figure (FB, 12/21). In the first: "The material structure curls around the contour in order to imprison the Figure" (FB, 14/22). This produces a "violent comedy" (FB, 15/23) of confinement in which the contour becomes an apparatus for the Figure's gymnastic leaps into the field of color (*Triptych*, 1970, National Gallery of Australia, Canberra). The second formula, operating in the other direction, begins with a spasm internal to the body "in which," Deleuze writes, "the body attempts to escape from itself through one of its organs in order to rejoin the field or material structure" (FB, 16/24) (*Figure standing at a washbasin*, 1976, Museo de Arte Contemporaneo, Caracas). In the first formula the field confines the body, which in attempting to escape is projected into a Figure, while in the second the body's escape passes through itself, producing a Figure in attempting to dissipate into the field. In this way the contour establishes a series of necessary reversals between the field and the body (in this it is "Egyptian") which "makes deformation a destiny" (FB, 18/25). Nevertheless, Bacon's Figures are not deformed in the same way as those of Egyptian art, and here he breaks with the Egyptian diagram to introduce new forces, those of contraction-dilation, which are combined with other matters-forces to create a new Figure and a new sensation.<sup>13</sup>

The contour deforms the human organism, but only in order for something to emerge. This "something" can be seen in Bacon's paintings of the face. Bacon's diagram of random marks and wiped zones wrecks the face, breaks with faciality, and what crawls from the wreckage are "completely anti-illustrational" (FB, 176/31) *animal traits*, as the "common fact" emerging between man and animal (FB, 21/28).<sup>14</sup> This common fact is what Deleuze calls their "flesh or meat" (*chair ou viande*, FB, 22/28), a common molecular matter traversed by intense forces producing in the Figure an animal athleticism, convulsive contractions and dilations into the field. The becoming-animal of the Figure is not a represented transformation, but an embodied deformation; it is an expression of the meat's escape from organic form into the "cutaneous Vision" of the painting's flesh.

Bacon's diagram operates another deformation, which is implied by the first. The creation of a haptic space deforms the eye which sees it, liberating the eye from its role in the organism as the apex of optical space. Haptic space implies a new vision and a new visibility, "a haptic vision of the eye" (FB, 161/151), coextensive with the sensation. The deformation of the Figure only becomes a sensation through a deformation of the eye, a deformation necessary for the eye to become capable of this "vision." This is the remarkable consequence of Bacon's diagram, its deformations and reinventions cannot be

limited to the painting, but also encompass the act of vision. The "flesh" of Bacon's paintings emerges from this double-deformation, flowing between the poles of subject and object, the flesh of the Figure includes the seer and the seen. This vocabulary of the "flesh" as both seer and the seen immediately suggests the phenomenological project of Maurice Merleau-Ponty. But Deleuze is not a phenomenologist, and we must now disentangle Deleuze's account from its phenomenological formulations, in order to flesh it out more precisely.

## DELEUZE AND PHENOMENOLOGY

Phenomenology is a remarkable instance of philosophy taking painting seriously.<sup>15</sup> As such it is an important forerunner to Deleuze's work on Bacon, one Deleuze directly acknowledges and engages with.<sup>16</sup> As Deleuze points out, phenomenology regards Cézanne as the painter *par excellence* (FB, 178/39) because he makes visible a pre-rational world of sensations in which subject and object are not clearly differentiated. This is, for the phenomenologists, the ontological insight of Cézanne, nothing less than a vision of the world as a sensation of "being-in-the-world." Deleuze seems happy to adopt this phenomenological vocabulary, writing,

sensation has one face turned towards the subject (the nervous system, the vital movement, "instinct," "temperament"—a whole vocabulary common to both Naturalism and Cézanne), and one face turned toward the object (the "fact," the place, the event). Or rather, it has no face at all, it is both things indissolubly, it is Being-in-the-World, as the phenomenologists say: at one and the same time I *become* in the sensation and something *happens* through the sensation, one through the other, one in the other. And at the limit, it is the same body which being both subject and object, gives and receives the sensation. As a spectator, I experience the sensation only by entering the painting, by teaching the unity of the sensing and the sensed." (FB, 34-5/39-40)

On the face of it then, Deleuze seems to share not only the phenomenologists' vocabulary, but also their understanding of Cézanne's sensations. But in fact Deleuze understands sensation, and in particular the "unity" of sensing and sensed it implies, very differently, and his use of this vocabulary will take on a very different sense.

To understand this break we must understand a little of Merleau-Ponty's philosophy of painting. Merleau-Ponty sees in Cézanne's landscapes nothing less than the ontogenesis of the visible. Cézanne's paintings are a perception

of the invisible genetic world in the visible and actual one, a vision, Merleau-Ponty argues, which involves perception in the genetic emergence of the visible. "The painter," he writes, "recaptures and converts into visible objects [ . . . ] the vibration of appearances which is the cradle of things."<sup>17</sup> Painting then, expresses the phenomenological reality of the world, it expresses the "texture of the real" as Merleau-Ponty calls it, which "is in my body as a *diagram* of the life of the actual" (EM, 126 *italics added*). Once again Deleuze and Merleau-Ponty's projects seem to converge on the body, which in both accounts expresses an immanent, living, and genetic diagram. But it is in their concepts of this bodily "diagram," and its relation to the "flesh," that Deleuze and Merleau-Ponty's differences become fully visible.

The "flesh," for Merleau-Ponty, incarnates a "reversibility," an "intertwining" or "chiasm" between the visible and invisible world, between vision and its invisible ontogenesis. Merleau-Ponty, in the famous fourth chapter of *The Visible and the Invisible* describes this intertwining or chiasm in terms of the color red. Red, he argues, emerges from virtual and differential relations between red things, implying a certain "redness" which is in itself invisible but which is the condition for the appearance of red things. In our sensation of a color, invisible and visible being are intertwined, meaning red, as Merleau-Ponty writes, is "less a color or a thing, therefore, than a difference between things and colors, a momentary crystallization of colored being or of visibility. Between the alleged colors and visibles, we would find anew the tissue that lines them, sustains them, nourishes them and which for its part is not a thing, but a possibility, a latency, and a *flesh* of things" (VI, 132–3). The flesh is therefore the condition of possibility of the visible, it is the medium in which things become visible, in which a virtual "redness" becomes a "red" thing in the "carnal formula" of the "lived body" (EM, 126). The flesh is the condition of both seer and seen and as such is "the formative medium of the object and the subject" (VI, 147). As Merleau-Ponty puts it, "the thickness of flesh between the seer and the thing is constitutive for the thing of its visibility as for the seer of his corporeity; it is not an obstacle between them, it is their means of communication" (VI, 135). The "lived body" Merleau-Ponty argues, encompasses subject and object in its vision of flesh, and is the "element," the "incarnate principle," of "an anonymous visibility," or "vision in general" (VI, 142).<sup>18</sup> The flesh is therefore incarnated in a lived body, but it depends on an abstract but nevertheless immanent principle that Merleau-Ponty calls the "Sensible in general."

The "Sensible in general" enables, Merleau-Ponty argues, "the return of the visible upon itself" (VI, 142). This is a crucial formulation, for it implies that vision involves a process of reflection by which it is able to "see"

its constituent element, the flesh of the world. The flesh of things therefore appears in a "carnal adherence of the sentient to the sensed and of the sensed to the sentient" (VI, 142). In other words, the flesh appears in the vision of a "lived body," but this appearance requires both a sensibility which "sees" and a sentience which recognises it. In this way the flesh is the "overlapping and fission, identity and difference" (VI, 142) of a Sentience and a Sensible in general. Nevertheless, Sentience in general comes "before" (VI, 142) the Sensible in general, and "brings to birth a ray of natural light which illuminates all flesh and not just my own" (VI, 142). The flesh is therefore illuminated by a "Sentience" which renders it sensible, in and as a lived body. What then is "Sentience"? Despite its priority it cannot be clearly separated from sensibility, and together they form what Merleau-Ponty calls, once more anticipating Deleuze's vocabulary while producing a very different meaning, a "fold" (VI, 146). The flesh, he argues, is "folded" around a "central cavity" (VI, 146), which is "not an ontological void, a non-being" (VI, 148), but is the inseparability of sentience and sensibility around which the flesh is folded and the body and the world "adhere to one another" (VI, 148).

A sensation emerges from this fold as an ungraspable moment of reversibility between sentience and sensibility. This moment of "hiatus" (VI, 148), as Merleau-Ponty calls it, is illustrated by his famous example of a hand touching a hand which touches. The point is that I cannot touch touch itself, and it is this impossibility which reveals the inevitable chiasm between sensibility and its sentience. "My left hand is always on the verge of touching my right hand touching the things," Merleau-Ponty writes, "but I never reach coincidence; the coincidence eclipses at the moment of realization, and one of two things always occurs: either my right hand really passes over to the rank of touched, but then its hold on the world is interrupted; or it retains its hold on the world, but then I do not really touch *it*—my right hand touching" (VI, 147–8). Sentience and sensibility never come together, except as a chiasmic reversibility which coheres in and folds the flesh, but is never fully present itself. The reversibility of seer and seen in the flesh therefore revolves around this central ungraspable cavity forever "making itself the outside of its inside, and the inside of its outside" (VI, 144). It is this interminable pulse of identity and difference which constitutes the flesh and its "paradox of expression" (VI, 144).

These formulations carry all the Heideggerian implications of Merleau-Ponty's flesh, and serve to distinguish it from Deleuze's. For Merleau-Ponty the flesh is folded around an "interior armature which it conceals and reveals" (VI, 149), an armature of "lines of force and dimensions" (VI, 148) casting an ideal light into the flesh as the invisible condition of its visibility. As

Merleau-Ponty writes, "the experiences of the visible world are [ . . . ] the exploration of an invisible and the disclosure of a world of ideas" (VI, 149). Flesh acts as a "screen" (VI, 150) which simultaneously reveals and conceals these invisible ideas, which, as the example of the touching hands showed, "retreat in the measure we approach" (VI, 150). The ideas are what the sentient-sensible flesh forever circles, they are the invisibility the flesh embodies, and finally they are "the Being of this being" (VI, 151). Merleau-Ponty's flesh therefore incarnates a metaphysical ideal, a Being that casts its light on the flesh in which I am one with what I sense, but this being-in-the-world is a presence-absence, a chiasmic intertwining, a veiling/unveiling of an invisible Being in vision. As a result, "Seeing," for Merleau-Ponty, "is not a certain mode of thought or presence to self, it is the means given me for being absent from myself, for being present from within at the fission of Being only at the end of which do I close up into myself" (EM, 146). Painting expresses this "fission" inasmuch as it reveals the "coming-to-itself of the visible" (EM, 141). A visibility of "a certain absence, a negativity that is not nothing, [ . . . ] the invisible of this world, that which inhabits this world, and renders it visible" (VI, 151).

Painting then, is being-in-the-world, because it gives a sensation of the flesh's "duplicity of feeling" (EM, 126). This "duplicity of feeling" occurs in flesh according to its "strict ideality" (VI, 152), and creates a pathic space in which flesh "feels" its paradoxical foundation/fission as the visibility of an invisible Being. In Merleau-Ponty the eye becomes a hand, but in its pathic rather than haptic space it can only actualise a virtual idea it cannot touch or see. The eye is in the flesh, but remains determined by the transcendental ontological dimension it enfolds but never reaches, the invisible diagram of ideas. Immanence is only ever expressed in an incarnation of its genetic absence.<sup>19</sup> To return to color, colored being is the actualisation of an idea ("redness") in flesh, and this virtual color "imposes my vision upon me as a continuation of its own sovereign existence" (VI, 131 *italics added*). The diagram, for Merleau-Ponty, constitutes the immanent conditions of "natural perception" in the "lived body," but it remains in itself sovereign, as a pure ideality that can never be actualised. As Deleuze points out, phenomenology, in giving this "natural light" to vision, returns us to a classical philosophy where the light of spirit illuminates the darkness of matter (C1, 60/89).

Merleau-Ponty posits the ideas as immanent to the flesh, but this doesn't get us very far because, as Deleuze and Guattari put it: "They are not successive contents of the flow of immanence but acts of transcendence that traverse it." Ideas are "trajectories of truth," and as such constitute an "Urdoxa" of "original opinions as propositions" (WP, 142/135). As a result,

Merleau-Ponty remains determined by Husserl's famous phenomenological formula, "all consciousness is consciousness of something," and the "flesh" remains a subjective category.<sup>20</sup> The natural perception of the lived body assumes the common sense of a sentience-sensible in general, constituting a "consciousness" which is transcendentally determined, and operates a passive synthesis. Sentience, Deleuze and Guattari argue, re-introduces a "proto-consciousness" to the "lived-body" which is determined by the "a priori materials" which transcend the lived (WP, 178/168) and remain its "meaning of meanings" (WP, 210/197). As a result, the "lived body" can only ever express its conditions of possible experience, and fails to experience its real genetic conditions, which remain invisible. This dooms phenomenology's account of the flesh to a countless retelling of what Deleuze and Guattari call "the mystery of the incarnation" (WP, 178/169). This produces a poetic "mixture of sensuality and religion," but is nevertheless too "pious" (WP, 178/169). Deleuze clearly marks his break with phenomenology here: "The phenomenological hypothesis," he writes, "is perhaps insufficient because it merely invokes the lived body. But the lived body is still a paltry thing in comparison with a more profound and almost unlivable Power" (FB, 44/47). This unlivable power of life, Deleuze argues, is not an idea incarnated in the flesh of the lived body, but is the vital force emerging from chaos to be experienced in a sensation. It is sensation then, which animates the "flesh" of Bacon's Figures. For Deleuze the genetic conditions of flesh exist according to a "logic of sensation" different to that of the phenomenologists, a logic by which the diagram both constructs these conditions while remaining entirely immanent in the sensation. The diagram creates the finite that restores the infinite. This is why phenomenological "flesh" is finally "too tender," its diagram transcends it and it is merely a "thermometer" (WP, 179/169) or "developer" of this diagram (WP, 183/173). Phenomenology remains Romantic then, in being a pure expressionism, whereas Deleuze posits the complete immanence of the diagram and flesh, an immanence which enables painting to construct its genetic conditions (the eternal return of the catastrophe), each time they are expressed in sensations.

Deleuze and Guattari argue that for this to be possible the flesh requires a "second element," a "house" or "framework" in which the flesh can "blossom" (WP, 179/169). This takes us back to Bacon's diagram and its "Egyptian" contour, which constructs an armature, a "house" in which the flesh of his Figures is convulsed. But this convulsion expresses forces that come from the field, or more exactly *become* through the relation of field and Figure as they are articulated in and by the contour. The house, in other words, is a diagrammatic opening onto an intense chaosmos, through which

forces are composed into a “compound” of sensation, on one side the sections of color making up the house (percepts), and on the other the non-human becomings embodied in the intense movements of the Figures (affects). “Art begins,” Deleuze and Guattari write, “not with flesh but with the house” (WP, 186/177). Meaning that art begins with a diagram, in Bacon’s case the contour, which builds a house from the chaos it unleashes, composes chaos, and expresses its forces in the convulsed flesh of the Figures which inhabit it. Bacon’s paintings are “agitations of a convulsive life” (LS, 82/101). It is the diagram which constructs the cosmos-chaos into a house, and through which its forces are expressed in flesh. The phenomenological flesh is “too tender” for such a construction and in order for the sensation to stand up on its own it needs the armature of a diagram.<sup>21</sup> A diagram that neither transcends the chaos it constructs nor the flesh in which it is expressed, but marks the immanence of their planes in the painting. “The difficult part,” Deleuze and Guattari wryly comment, “is not to join hands but to join planes” (WP, 179/170).

Although momentarily on the edges of our discussion, color nevertheless remains central to this debate. For “it is through and in color,” Deleuze and Guattari write, “that the architecture will be found” (WP, 192/182). Color will be the material of sensation for Deleuze, and the modulation of color will construct the architecture of its expression. Deleuze develops this architectural colorism in relation to the painter Cézanne, and this both emphasises his difference from phenomenology, and introduces another important “stopping place” for Bacon’s diagram.<sup>22</sup> Cézanne constructs form through the modulation of color, producing a landscape or an apple that, in one of Cézanne’s formulations often repeated by Deleuze, gives the world before man but completely in man, because it gives the genetic conditions of the world *as this world*, as forces composed into sensation. Cézanne’s paintings do not simply make visible an invisible cavity which determines and transcends them, but construct a house through which the flesh of the world becomes a world, restoring the infinite to sensation. As Éric Alliez has put it, painting forces is no longer a matter of expressing the flesh in color, but of constructing the universe by color.<sup>23</sup>

## THE HAPTIC EYE AND THE MODULATION OF COLOR

The two signs of genius in great painters, Deleuze and Guattari say, are their use of color, and the care with which they use it to join up planes to create the pictures depth (WP, 179/170). Cézanne’s diagram employs just this kind of colorism: “Planes in color, planes!” Deleuze and Guattari quote Cézanne, for

the painting exists at “The colored place where the heart of the planes is fused” (WP, 179–80/170). Cézanne’s diagram composes chaos through constructing colored planes, and by connecting them expresses these chaotic forces of the world on the canvas. Cézanne’s colorism (and Deleuze suggests this is the formula for any colorism, FB, 139/130) involves replacing contrasts of value with contrasts of tone, creating and joining planes through the modulation of color rather than through a modelling achieved by adding black and white. Constructing value through the addition of black and white is, as we have seen, a “digital” overcoding of a color’s tone, and assumes a light that transcends it.<sup>24</sup> Against this long tradition of painting Cézanne recapitulates an “analog” colorism, and constructs form by modulating the differential relations between “cold” and “hot” planes. Deleuze finds the conditions for this modulation of color in Goethe, who argued that there were two fundamental colors, yellow and blue (hot and cold), whose differential relations produce all the others.<sup>25</sup> This implies, for Deleuze, a colorism that not only modulates the relations between colors, but assumes that color itself is nothing but a variable differential relation “on which everything else depends” (FB, 139/130).<sup>26</sup>

The differential composition of color can be understood in terms of Deleuze’s description of the sensible in *Difference and Repetition*. There he argues: “Every phenomena refers to an inequality by which it is conditioned” (DR, 222/286). This inequality or difference is the colors “intensity,” its differential equation, “in so far as this is the reason of the sensible” (DR, 222/287). Every color appears as the differential equation of two colors which are themselves differentials, each color being constituted by a heterogeneous series of differences, an “infinitely doubled difference which resonates to infinity” (DR, 222/287). This is a Goethean theory of color in which we see “the aspiration of each color to totality by appealing to its complimentary color” (FB, 139/130). This mystical colorism encompasses the viewer as much as the painter, for as Goethe puts it, “when the eye sees a colour it is immediately excited, and it is its nature, spontaneously and of necessity, at once to produce another which with the original colour comprehends the whole chromatic scale. A single colour excites, by a specific sensation, the tendency to universality.”<sup>27</sup> The eye does not see color, it constructs the universe by color, because a color is nothing but a vision of all the differential relations which make up a cosmos. As Deleuze writes, “if you push color to its pure internal relations (hot-cold, expansion-contraction), then you have everything” (FB, 139/130). The modulation of pure color is the “properly haptic function” (FB, 133/124) of painting, because it replaces an optical space defined by a perceiving eye/I and produced through the representational code of light and dark values, with a tonal surface agitated by differential color-forces (hot-cold, attraction-repulsion, action-negation etc.).

requiring our involvement in a “close-vision” (FB, 133/124). This close-vision marks our indiscernibility from the painting *in* sensation, and implies a “haptic function of the eye” (FB, 133/125). Objects no longer appear in optical space, but are “in” the eye, constructed from colors that exist “within sight itself” (FB, 133/125). Colorism then, is the visionary part of painting, and, Deleuze writes, “merely claims to give this haptic sense back to sight” (FB, 140/131). Color creates a haptic space where color is within the eye, and vision is coextensive with the construction of Nature by color-forces, as this is expressed in a sensation.

“Differential calculus,” Deleuze claims, “is the psychic mechanism of perception, the automatism that at once and inseparably plunges into obscurity and determines clarity” (TE, 90/119). Vision is automatic because it is not outside what it “sees,” it neither “reflects” a pre-existing object, nor its transcendental conditions of possibility, but is instead the necessary immanence of sensation and the differential relations it embodies. Cézanne’s modulated colors do not represent Nature, they are the necessary and analogical sensations which render visible the infinite and obscure (and not “invisible” in the phenomenological sense) forces of Nature’s becoming. For Cézanne, both painting and Nature emerge in the same way, they pass through a catastrophe in order for their “geologic lines” to appear as a “stubborn geometry” or “frame.” This “frame” passes through the catastrophe to give rise to color-light, and in this way, as Deleuze quotes Cézanne, “the earth to rise towards the sun” (FB, 111/105).<sup>28</sup> This poetic image of ascension is the process by which the stubborn geometry of the frame as the “possibility of facts” become sensations, become “facts.” Cézanne’s diagram is analogical in this sense, through the same process as that of Nature itself, it connects natural forces and planes of color, constructing sensations of *Montagne Saint-Victoire*, of some apples, or of the landscape of Provence (ATP, 343/423). Cézanne doesn’t represent Nature, he constructs with color sensations, as Nature and in Nature; a pictorial naturalism. The autonomism of vision is determined by the differential calculus of Nature, independent of the organism, but nevertheless within a haptic eye, operating as an analogical synthesiser forever creating a vision, vision as being-in the world.<sup>29</sup> Rather than representing Nature then, Cézanne’s diagram constructs a sensation of Nature (*Natura naturata*) as Nature expressing itself (*Natura naturans*).<sup>30</sup> As Cézanne said, “art is a harmony parallel to nature.”<sup>31</sup>

“Painting,” Deleuze argues, “is the analogical art par excellence. It is even the form through which analogy becomes a language, or finds its own language: by passing through a diagram” (FB, 117/110). We might say that the painting diagram then, is a way “the real materially writes” (ATP, 141/177). Painting writes with the analogical language of a differential colorism, and in

this sense Bacon is entirely Cézannean.<sup>32</sup> But Bacon also departs from Cézanne. Cézanne constructs a “strong depth” (FB, 119/112) where his planes join, whereas Bacon’s paintings form a shallow space. As a result they produce a different deformation by unleashing different forces; Cézanne deforms the landscape and the still life to deterritorialise perspective, whereas Bacon’s forces will deform the body. Similarly, Cézanne’s colorism modulates color following the order of the spectrum. This, Deleuze argues, runs the risk of “reconstituting a code” (FB, 140/132), as does the fixed size of Cézanne’s “patches,” which tends to homogenize the forms they create. The solutions to these problems are found in Van Gogh and Gauguin. First, they erect flat fields of color that provide an armature within which specific forms can appear. Second, they introduce a further set of differentials to painting’s diagram, the “very fine differences of saturation” in the bright tones of the field, as well as the differential mixtures of complementary colors in the “broken tones” that define the figures (FB, 141/132-3). Finally, there is the difference between the differentials constituting the flat fields and the broken tones, through which the whole painting is put into circulation. Bacon’s diagram therefore changes direction from that of Cézanne to arrive at this new post-impressionist “stopping point,” where the modulation of colors “takes on a completely new meaning and function, distinct from Cézannean modulation” (FB, 141/132). With Van Gogh and Gauguin’s modulation of the differentials of the flat fields and the broken tones of the Figure, Bacon finds the solution to the two problems Cézanne’s diagram posed; “how, on the one hand, to preserve the homogeneity, or unity of ground as though it were a perpendicular armature for chromatic progression, while on the other to also preserve the specificity or singularity of a form in perpetual variation” (FB, xii-xiii).<sup>33</sup> Clearly however, Bacon’s paintings also differ from the post-impressionists, even if he specifically addresses Van Gogh during his “malerisch” phase (*Study for Portrait of Van Gogh IV*, 1957, Arts Council collection, London). Indeed, Bacon will depart from Van Gogh’s homogeneous surface of brushstrokes in the articulation of his three basic elements of armature, contour and Figure. Similarly, Bacon’s colors differ from Gauguin’s inasmuch as his catastrophe frees them from the outline, and “we find ourselves before flows of color” (FB, 149/141). Bacon’s diagram will therefore set off from Gauguin’s and Van Gogh’s solutions, and recapitulate them in his own way.

The unique solution Bacon’s diagram offers for the Cézannean problem emerges, Deleuze writes, when its three distinct elements, the armature, Figure and contour, “converge on color, in color” (FB, 144-5/137). This convergence means that modulation composes the unity of the painting, both the distribution of each element and the way these act on each other. As we have

seen, the field of color approaches a differential infinity not through differences of value, but in its “very fine differences of saturation” (FB, 142/133). This constructs a “color contour” that articulates the Figure’s relation to the field, and acts as “a colored pressure that ensures the Figure’s balance, and makes one regime of color pass into another” (FB, 152/143). The contour, in other words, emerges from the fields of color, and in doing so gives the “place” for the Figure to arise in its “broken tones,” and to express a perpetual variation of contraction/dilation in relation to the field. This perpetual variation is expressed through three differential relations, broken-complete tone, broken-flat field, and poly-mono chrome. Bacon’s diagram is therefore composed of its three “basic” elements working in reciprocal presupposition, but nevertheless according to their own distinct differential economies, all of which converge in the modulation of color. This produces the “flow” of color in Bacon’s paintings, and sets them apart from Cézanne and the post-impressionists. It is in this color-flow that “color-structure gives way to color-force,” and Bacon’s diagram creates a new colorism, where color renders visible the exercise of a force on a zone of the body or head (FB, 150/141–2). This making visible of desfiguration will be the “primary function” [*la fonction primordiale*] of the Figure, and is, Deleuze writes, “one of the most marvellous responses in the history of painting to the question, How can one make invisible forces visible?” (FB, 58/58). We will turn to this question, and Bacon’s answer, a little later.

### COSMIC RECAPITULATION

Despite these differences between Cézanne’s, Van Gogh’s, Gauguin’s and Bacon’s diagrams (and, we could add, between these and the Venetian’s and Pollock’s), all express the inorganic life of the world by composing it into analogical sensations, and all create new diagrams for doing so through their respective use of color. By switching our attention at this point from their differences to their shared “ontological creationism” we can understand in more detail how creation is always the function of colorism in painting.<sup>34</sup> Deleuze writes: “Universal variation, universal interaction (*modulation*) is what Cézanne had already called the world before man, ‘dawn of ourselves,’ ‘iridescent chaos,’ ‘virginity of the world.’ It is not surprising that we have to construct it since it is given only to the eye we do not have” (C1, 81/117). In other words, we must construct this ontogenetic world in color, but we will do so only by constructing an eye capable of seeing it. This will be where seen and seen come together for Deleuze, in the “pure vision” of a non-human eye, a haptic-eye whose visions construct matter at the same time as perceiving it.

At this point, Deleuze writes: “One might say that painters paint with their eyes, but only insofar as they touch with their eyes” (FB, 155/146). Vision is not “pure” in any optical or ideal sense, but purely material and entirely in things. It is “pure” in the sense of having no outside, existing as the simultaneous construction of the world by the eye, and of the eye by the world. The painter’s “haptic vision” is of and in color, constructing its differential relations into analogical expressions. Together these are visions as “colouring sensations.” “Colorism,” Deleuze writes, “seems to us to be irreducibly haptic” (FB, 192/125). Coloring sensations are therefore the “summit” of a logic of sensation (FB, ix), because in them the immanent and ontogenetic universe is rendered visible, through the visions of an eye we do not have, the haptic eye whose sensations both construct and express the inorganic vitality of the world.

The painter’s haptic eye and its modulation of color in sensation are abstract in the sense we have already seen. Modulation, Deleuze writes, has “nothing to do with resemblance” (C2, 27/41–2), neither the resemblance of an image to its object (e.g. Bacon’s portraits), nor the self identical subject (the painter) such a resemblance implies (modulation works through the diagram). Aesthetics is never a question of representation, but of invention, a question of how to escape formula and cliché, how to create something new. And this problem is not confined to the artist or to his or her work, it is the ontological problem of how to re-create the world. Nevertheless, painting has an immediate access to this new world through its ability to construct a sensation. The modulation of color constructs a coloring sensation in which the eye both has and is this sensation, and this haptic vision means that the eye is not just in the world, but that the sensation it constructs the world. The birth of the world before man . . . “We are not in the world,” Deleuze and Guattari write, once more distinguishing themselves from phenomenology, “we become with the world; we become by contemplating it. Everything is vision, becoming. We become universes” (WP, 169/160). We can understand these ecstatic lines better by returning to my suggestion at the beginning of the chapter that sensation was painting’s way of thinking. Sensation, we could say, is a haptic thought.<sup>35</sup> This rather odd statement can be explained in terms of Deleuze and Guattari’s account of the brain. The brain, they argue, is where the sensation emerges, each sensation, as we have seen with the example of color, expressing its infinite differential conditions only by constructing them anew in its haptic vision. In the brain each sensation involves, Deleuze and Guattari argue, “trajectories constituted within a field of forces” this “vision” operating as “a survey of the entire field” (WP, 209/197). The brain is on one side “an absolute consistent form that surveys

itself independently of any supplementary dimensions," a "self" extending to the Cosmos inasmuch as it is inhabited by an infinity of differential relations as "so many inseparable variations" (WP, 210/198). On the other side it is an actual sensation, the contraction of all these vibrating variations (differentials) into an expression or "contemplation" (WP, 213/201) of color. This "contemplation" is the irreducibly sensual movement of thought, which in being inseparable from the construction of the universe it expresses, returns the plane to itself as something new, as the becoming of being. The coloring sensation of one of Bacon's paintings is just such a contemplation, an expression of its immanent differential universe achieved in the percepts (visions) and affects (becomings) it constructs. Contemplation therefore, does not take place in a dimension apart from a chaotic matter-force, because the brain as a nervous system is immersed in matter, and a color is a direct action upon it. (FB, 52/53) The aesthetics of painting is in this sense both a materialism and an empiricism, as Deleuze and Guattari put it: "Sensation itself vibrates because it contracts vibrations" (WP, 211/199). The coloring sensation is a haptic thought in which our brain's nervous system (the body-brain, or BwO) constructs a new differential universe (a "vision" or percept) in a "contemplation" that is expressed in an affect. The coloring sensation is this at once cosmic and quite particular becoming, and as such, as Cézanne said: "*Color is the place where our brain and the universe join up.*"<sup>36</sup> This is a Deleuzian "eye-brain" as opposed to a phenomenological "Eye and Mind."<sup>37</sup> The "contemplation" of the eye-brain is a close and cutaneous vision folding the flesh, an affectual flesh enfolding the seer and the seen, sensing and sensation, the eye and the world. "Colouring sensations" are therefore the analogical expressions of the continuous variation of matter-force "within sight itself" (FB, 133/125). Once more, sensibility is contemplation, the movement of a nervous thought constructing the universe, and expressing it in a sensation. A sensation therefore, is irreducibly haptic: "It is color," Deleuze writes, "and the relations between colors that form this haptic world and haptic sense" (FB, 138/129). There is no inside and outside, no Being and being, only the mutual infolding and unfolding of an eye-brain in matter. Coloring sensation is the ongoing birth of the world, the world as *spatiuum*, as Deleuze puts it, "neither an inside nor an outside, but only a continuous creation of space, the spatializing energy of color" (FB, 134/126).<sup>38</sup>

Bacon's "Figures" now expand to embody a vital flesh (a body-brain) in which seer and seen and painting and viewer become indiscernible. How? Bacon's paintings, as we have seen, employ a colorism inseparable from sensation. Sensation however, implies a new sensibility, a new physiology in Nietzsche's terms, constructed in the contemplative visions and compulsive

affects of the eye-brain. It is sensation therefore, that articulates an expression of matter-forces with the construction of a haptic eye necessary for its real experience. This haptic eye, as a visual sense of touch, must be in the painting, one with its flesh, not so much to sense the forces the painting expresses (it is not a thermometer), but as the condition of possibility of it being a sensation at all. As Deleuze writes, and the importance of this passage justifies its repetition, "at the limit, it is the same body which, being both subject and object, gives and receives the sensation. As a spectator, I experience the sensation only by entering the painting, by reaching the unity of the sensing and the sensed" (FB, 35/39–40). What emerges in Bacon's paintings then, is not narration, nor representation, but a set of "completely different relations" (FB, 157/147), differential relations whose cosmic and particular vibrations compose the absolute locality of *this Figure*, of this becoming. The passage to the haptic eye, therefore, "is the great moment of the act of painting," (FB, 160/150) because it is the culmination of the logic of sensation in the expression/construction of "the fact itself" (FB, 160/150). The "fact" is sensation as being-in-the-world, as the "single continuous flow," as Deleuze writes of Michelangelo, which gathers together all the elements of the painting (including us) in an image that "no longer represents anything but its own movements" (FB, 160/150). This, finally, will be painting's great moment, its continuous movement, its vibration of vibrations.

We have, up to this point, examined the visions of the body-brain and its haptic eye, its coloring sensations, and now we must enter their flesh to better experience its physical becomings, its convulsions. This takes us beyond the too "tender" phenomenological flesh, and into that of the Body without Organs, whose flesh is strong enough to express its immanent becoming, its eternal and infinite movements of construction.

### PAINTINGS HYSTERICAL FLESH, THE BODY WITHOUT ORGANS

Antonin Artaud has been a frequently visited "stopping place" for our recapitulation of Deleuze, and he appears once more in Deleuze's discussion of Bacon's flesh. For Artaud the organs are organised into an organism by God's judgement, and as such are the structure of our servitude and of our suffering. The body is a result, to appropriate Milton's wonderful phrase, of "the tyranny of heaven."<sup>39</sup> This oppressed organism is the reason for Artaud's ferocious attack on God, for as Artaud famously pronounces, "there is nothing more useless than an organ. / When you will have made him a body without organs, / then you will have delivered him from all his automatic reactions

and restored him to his true freedom.”<sup>40</sup> The body without organs, Artaud argues, emerges from the “pressing urgency of a need” to abolish the “idea” of God and replace it with the “explosive necessity,” or “assertion” of the body.<sup>41</sup> This is the body as a “physical system,” a “nervous matter,” before or beyond God. The body “escapes judgement,” Deleuze writes, “all the more inasmuch as it is not an “organism,” and is deprived of this organisation of the organs through which one judges and is judged” (ECC, 130–1/164). To be done with judgment then, means dismantling the organic body, and the BwO, “is what remains when you take everything away” (ATP, 151/188). What remains is living matter, its chaotic vibrations and the sensations which express it. It is the living matter of the BwO which is constructed by Bacon’s diagram, first by taking everything away in the catastrophe, and second by producing the “colouring sensations” in the flesh of his Figures, now expanding (or contracting) beyond the painting’s surface and as far as the cosmos in a truly mystical “fact.”

Artaud’s organs are a battle ground, the site of a cosmic combat over the body’s construction rights—over its “spiritual” dimension as Deleuze calls it—between the immanent ontogenetic forces of “a powerful and nonorganic life” (FB, 46/48) and God’s transcendental judgement. This is also the fight waged by Bacon’s diagram, a corporeal crusade which, Deleuze writes, “attests to a high *spirituality*, since what leads it to seek the elementary forces beyond the organic is a spiritual will. But this spirituality is a spirituality of the body; the spirit is the body itself, the body without organs. . . .” (FB, 46–7/49). We have seen how Bacon’s diagram constructs Figures convulsed by forces. These convulsions, the ecstasies of chaos itself, are the “facts” which emerge in and as a haptic sensation/eye, and free a new kind of mystical perception. A baroque vision where, Deleuze writes: “The task of perception entails pulverising the world, but also one of spiritualizing its dust” (TF, 87/116). Bacon’s diagram opens the body to forces that deform it, which produce breaks and disjunctions in its normal organic functioning. In this way Bacon reveals the immanent spiritual dimension of the BwO, the atheistic divinity created by the paintings’ catastrophic disjunction, their breakthrough into the living immanence—the construction/expression—of the flesh. Deleuze and Guattari write: “The body without organs is not God, quite the contrary. But the energy that sweeps through it is divine, when it attracts to itself the entire process of production and serves as its miraculate, enchanted surface, inscribing it in each and every one of its disjunctions” (AO, 13/19).

The BwO is, as Deleuze stresses, “opposed less to the organs than to the organization of the organs we call the organism” (FB, 44/47). The BwO is a dis-organisation that takes us to “the limit of the lived body” (FB, 44/47).

Indeed, the BwO is more a trajectory than a thing, because “you can’t reach it,” Deleuze and Guattari say, “you are forever attaining it” (ATP, 150/186). The BwO is the limit of the lived inasmuch as it is the point of emergence of the lived, it is the point at which the rhythmical ontological conditions of chaosmosis are expressed as they construct sensations. Unsurprisingly then, the BwO is the destruction of organic representation: “Nothing here is representative,” Deleuze and Guattari write, “rather, it is all life and lived experience” (AO, 19/26). The BwO, they write, “is the body without an image” (AO, 8/14).

The flesh of the living BwO will be inseparable from its perception, or better its “contemplation.” “There is a mind in the flesh,” Artaud writes, and the sensations which arise when forces meet the flesh are, as Artaud puts it, “neuro-physiological vibrations.”<sup>42</sup> For Artaud then, “whoever says flesh also says sensibility,”<sup>43</sup> and, as Deleuze adds in his discussion of cinema, whoever says sensation also says thought, because on the BwO both are analogical vibrations emerging from the direct action of forces.<sup>44</sup> Thought, whether in painting or elsewhere, exists in a flesh that embodies life’s confrontation with the unthought, with as Artaud puts it: “These unformulated forces which besiege me.” And in thinking this unthought force, or in having a sensation, we truly live, because we have created something new, something previously unthought or unsensed. “This is what I mean by Flesh,” Artaud writes, “I do not separate my thought from my life.”<sup>45</sup> The life of flesh, the convulsions of a living BwO, express these unthinkable forces in sensations. To think—convulsed with life—does not mean for Artaud “I am,” but that the BwO becomes.

Sensation expresses the action of a force on a BwO. This gives rise to a strange double dimension in Bacon’s paintings, on the one hand forces convulse the Figure, and on the other it is the Figure which produces sensations within us. We can only understand this double dimension of the Figure through the BwO, which encompasses painting and viewer in its flesh. The Figure in this sense, and as Deleuze writes, is “the sensible form related to sensation; it acts immediately upon the nervous system, which is of the flesh” (FB, 34/39). The Figure is a BwO, and the BwO both gives and receives the sensation (FB, 35/39–40). A force traverses the painted Figure, but this becomes a sensation only in the flesh that encompasses it, in the haptic eye capable of such a vision. What is painted is a body, a living BwO that emerges in a haptic eye, and which is “experienced as sustaining this sensation” (FB, 41/45). This sensation is a contemplation, and as such “surveys” its spiritual dimension in its act of appearance, constructing an infinite virtual body as the immanent condition of its particularity. This sensation is therefore a spasm or

vibration of the flesh at once in the painting and in the spectator, a convulsion or sensation, arising from “*the action of invisible forces on the body*” (FB, 41/45). So what are these “invisible forces” expressed in the Figures “affective athleticism”? They are not *the* invisible as such, but they are not visible accept in their affects. As such, they are the “obscure” forces, convulsions “in direct contact with a vital power,” or, as Deleuze finally puts it, “Rhythm” (FB, 42/46). Rhythm, as we saw last chapter, is the ontogenetic power of life itself, and is what both constructs the BwO and is expressed in the sensation. “Paint the sensation,” Deleuze writes, “which is essentially rhythm. . . .” (FB, 72/71). In a sensation, in its rhythmical flesh the chaosmos destroys me, and constructs me anew as a BwO, and in and through it I become with the world, I become-universe, but only as the universe creating itself. (FB, 42–3/46)

The BwO embodies rhythm, that “profound and almost unlivable Power” (FB, 45/47), that is experienced as *this* sensation. This requires Bacon’s diagram, which both constructs sensations’ genetic conditions (through the catastrophe of the BwO) and allows something to emerge from them (the figure, or figural whole). How? The diagram’s dual operation of construction and expression forms the two phases of the BwO. As Deleuze and Guattari explain it: “One phase is for the fabrication of the BwO, the other to make something circulate on it or pass across it” (ATP, 152/188). The BwO is fabricated by the ontogenetic rhythm of inorganic life, of chaosmos, at that point “where rhythm itself plunges into chaos” (FB, 44/47). Bacon’s diagram is just such a plunge, but it brings something back, it expresses this unlivable power in the convulsion of the Figure. The BwO is therefore both the genetic condition for sensation (its “fabrication” or construction through the catastrophe as the “possibility of fact”), and the sensation itself (what happens, the “fact itself”).

Deleuze explains the BwO of Bacon’s diagram precisely and in detail. The BwO is drawn by a wave that “traces levels or thresholds in the body according to the variations of its amplitude” (FB, 44–5/47). This “wave” is at once the catastrophe, bursting the body’s organic co-ordinates, and what emerges from it according to the series of thresholds and levels it leaves behind as “possibilities of fact.” We have already encountered the BwO then, in Bacon’s accidents. But these accidents are inseparable from the rhythms they release, the lines and colors they liberate in sensations. The BwO is both produced and producer, because its thresholds are continually coming into contact with new forces, which provoke new vibrations, new sensations or “facts.” “Sensation is vibration” (FB, 45/47) Deleuze writes, which would be the materialist definition of Bacon’s paintings, as they synthesize the vibrations of the universe into an analogical sensation, into a becoming taking place on the level of its conditions. In this sense the BwO is the great analogical machine, for its

vibrations are not visible signs for an invisible level, because it has no other level than that on which forces become visible. The BwO is the mechanism of the Deleuzian definition of abstraction: “making the invisible forces visible *in themselves*” (WP, 182/172 italics added). When a sensation expresses a BwO it raises itself to its own conditions (FB, 57/57). By doing so, sensation gives an analogical expression of the BwOs intense movements, not represented but real (FB, 51–2/53). In the sensations of the BwO Bacon’s diagram meets Artaud’s theatre of cruelty (FB, 45/48), both are a theatre that “is in reality the *genesis* of creation.”<sup>46</sup> A theatre of life, a “théâtre of metamorphosis” (DR, 240/310), a theatre of the inorganic and vital life of chaosmosis.<sup>47</sup>

But there seems to be an immediate problem, aren’t Bacon’s paintings full of organs? Escaping their eviscerated bodies, or undergoing facial spasms perhaps, but nonetheless organs are popping out everywhere. The BwO however, does not mean the absence of organs, and is in fact defined by, Deleuze writes, “the *temporary and provisional presence* of determinate organs” (FB, 48/50). These organs appear exactly at the point where the wave flowing through the BwO crosses a threshold or changes gradient and encounters external forces (FB, 47/49, see also ATP, 153/189). This accounts not just for the appearance of organs in Bacon’s work, but also for the violent movements by which one organ seems to move into another (the eye-mouth, or nose-ear of *Four studies for a self-portrait*, 1967, Brera Museum, Milan). Organs, in this sense, and like haptic eyes, are defined by “a presence acting directly on the nervous system” (FB, 51/53). This “hysterical” presence, as Deleuze calls it, gives rise to the organ as a sensation, for each sensation has its own organ or haptic eye. The BwO is the immanent genetic condition for each of its organ-sensations, but each sensation expresses these invisible conditions by constructing a new organ adequate to its particular vision.

Hysteria enjoys a special relation with painting because, Deleuze writes: “With painting, hysteria becomes art” (FB, 52/53). Painting is hysterical because it is the attempt to release “presences” which lie beneath representation, to express them in a colored sensation, in a vision and its affect. Painting is the privileged medium for hysterical art because “color is a direct action on the nervous system” (FB, 52/53). Painting, in modulating color, vibrates with forces, makes them visible *in themselves* through its construction of provisional and temporary organs, its haptic eyes adequate to these sensations. As a result, and once more, there is a full reciprocity and simultaneity of arts double dimension, as Deleuze puts it,

the eye becomes virtually the polyvalent indeterminate organ that sees the body without organs (the Figure) as pure presence. Painting gives us

eyes all over. . . . This is the double definition of painting: subjectively, it invents the eye, which ceases to be organic in order to become a polyvalent and transitory organ; objectively, it brings before us the reality of a body, of lines and colours freed from organic representation. And each is produced by the other: the pure presence of the body becomes visible at the same time that the eye becomes the destined organ of this presence. (FB, 52/54)

In hysteria the eye as undetermined (inorganic) organ is immanent to the sensation it has and is, and by which the BwO becomes-visible.

### THE COMPLEXITY OF BACON'S DIAGRAM

Returning to the specificity of Bacon's diagram, Deleuze makes an "empirical list" of the forces Bacon "detects and captures . . . like a detective" (FB, 63/62). As we have already seen, Bacon captures forces of isolation by wrapping the field around the contour to produce the Figure. Through this force of isolation deforming forces emerge in the spasms gripping the body or head of the Figure, and forces of dissipation become visible when the Figure escapes into the field. In these simple "active" sensations rhythm appears in the Figure as a physical vibration (the vomiting and defecating Figures in *Triptych May-June 1973*, private collection, Switzerland). But other, more complex deformations and dissipations become visible when Figures undergo a coupling within the painting and rhythm is liberated into the diverse levels of different sensations. Coupling is not a merge of two Figures, but a rendering indiscernible (in this sense Deleuze calls it "passive") in which a single "fact" common to the two figures emerges, a single Figure which expresses the force of coupling itself, its "combat of energies" (FB, 68/67) (*Three Studies of Figures on Beds*, 1972, private collection, Switzerland). The coupling of energies does not depend on two figures however, and can be disembodied. It exists wherever there is a "resonance" of forces as the condition of sensation. Nevertheless, coupling does not explain the triptych, for there the Figures and couples remain separated and are connected by something other than resonance. This means the triptychs have a different "common fact," and a different type of rhythm that is able to produce it. This new rhythm is what Deleuze will call the "rhythm-attendant" [*rythme témoin*], and through it, "it is the rhythm itself that becomes sensation, it is rhythm that becomes Figures" (FB, 73/71 *italics added*). To discover how this happens Deleuze asks a simple question: "What is a Triptych?" The only possible response to this question, he argues, emerges from their very precise "empirical study" (FB, 74/73).

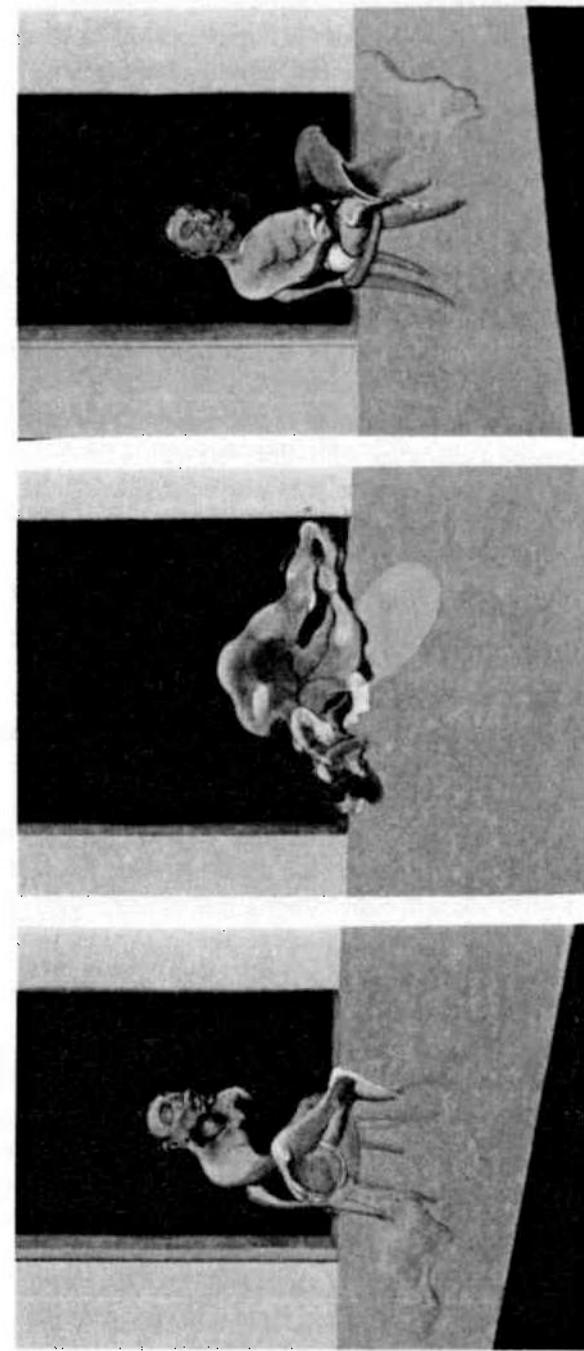


Figure 8 Francis Bacon, *Triptych, August 1972*, 1972. Tate Gallery, London. © 2004 Estate of Francis Bacon / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / DACS, London

The triptychs are composed of the three rhythms, an active and passive rhythm related to the actions and couplings of the Figures, as well as an additional rhythm given in the “attendant-function” [*fonction témoin*] that observes these couplings. These “explicit” attendants can be found throughout the triptychs, but Deleuze quickly discards them as being too “superficial,” too figurative. What he is interested in is the way these witnesses transform into a “more profound attendant,” no longer a figurative element of the painting but a “figural-attendant” [*témoin figural*] or “rhythm-attendant” [*rythme témoin*] (FB, 75/73–4). The figural-attendant is defined by “its horizontality, its almost constant level” (FB, 75/74), a kind of ground-zero, or “constant value” by which the other two rhythms can be evaluated (*Triptych, August, 1972*, Tate Gallery, London). Thus the “figural-attendant” is an “attendant-witness” [*témoin suivant*], the becoming-visible of the other rhythms, such that rhythm “has itself become a character” (FB, 76/74–5).<sup>48</sup>

The active and passive rhythms are visible in various differential distributions of force (resonances), which Deleuze lists in relation to their empirical appearances in the triptychs; descending-rising, diastolic-systolic, the naked and the clothed, and augmentation-diminution. (FB, 77–9/76–7) For our purposes what is important about these differential oppositions is not so much their precise operations, which Deleuze describes in detail, but the fact that these always appear in relation to the attendant function acting as the paintings rhythmical condition. Furthermore, a precise empirical list of the differential forces of a triptych constructs a “perspective” of (we could say it “witnesses”) the “combinatorial freedom” of the painting, a combinatorial freedom which means, “no list can ever be complete” (FB, 79–80/77). In other words, the combinatorial freedom of a Bacon painting is in principle infinite, because it is—as a BwO—continually coming into contact with new forces, with new eyes, it is constantly being recomposed in new visions or perspectives. This takes us back to the argument of chapter one regarding Deleuze’s conception of Nietzschean critique: “Everything,” Deleuze writes, “can coexist, and the opposition can vary or even be reversed depending on the viewpoint one adopts, that is, depending on the value one considers” (FB, 80/77). This means the empirical analysis of a triptych’s differential forces operates through the “witness-function” to construct a perspective, a perspective-rhythm which simultaneously gives the painting its specific empirical form, its specific sensation, and constructs the BwO this form expresses.

This perspectival reality of the triptych however, is not, according to Deleuze, sufficient to explain how its differential relations in their inherent variability appear as such. To explain this we must look to the condition of the perspective—the witness-function—and understand more precisely how it

works. Deleuze’s argument calls on Kant at this point, who defined the principle of intensity as an instantaneously apprehended magnitude appearing only in relation to  $\text{negation}=0$  (FB, 81/78). If intensity is defined in this way then the differential relations of forces appear as sensations through their relation to the witness-rhythm=0. We recall that the BwO was what appeared when everything was taken away, the “matrix of intensity,” as Deleuze and Guattari put it, “intensity = 0” (ATP, 153/189). But equally the BwO is defined by what happens on it, the differential relations our perspective embodies, which emerge only in relation to this ground zero. The BwO is, as producer and produced, the double dimension in which Bacon’s paintings exist as and through their sensations. The BwO: “*Production of the real as the intensive magnitude starting at zero*” (ATP, 153/189–90 *italics added*). This “real” emerges, according to the specific character of Bacon’s diagram, in the primacy he gives to descent. The differential forces of a sensation are experienced in Bacon’s paintings as a fall. This gives a seemingly paradoxical formula to Bacon’s diagram, in which “*The active is the fall*” (FB, 80/78). This means that when forces appear as sensations they embody a change in state that is understood in relation to the intensity=0 of the witness-function as a fall (“everything that develops is a fall” FB, 82/79). As a result, Deleuze writes: “The fall is what is most alive in the sensation, that through which the sensation is experienced as living. [...] The fall is precisely the active rhythm” (FB, 82/79), and is the rhythm which emerges as specific to each triptych, or at least to each of its perspectives.

Finally, the law of the triptychs involves all of the rhythms so far delineated, the three “rhythm figures,” active, passive and witness, the witness rhythm=0, and the active fall. This means the law of the triptych “can only be a movement of movements, or a state of complex forces” (FB, 83/80). In other words, the triptychs are composed directly by rhythm, which appears in itself, and are entirely hysterical. But the “highpoint of the meditation” seems at this point a little hollow, for doesn’t it simply reiterate what we have known from the beginning? Doesn’t it simply repeat the catastrophe of Bacon’s diagram and the resonance of forces that emerge from it to create a sensation? Despite its complexity the “law” of the triptychs seems to return us to this fundamental operation of the diagram that was in place from the beginning, and merely reiterates the ontology of sensation that we by now know by heart. Indeed, Deleuze seems to confirm this, writing: “These laws have nothing to do with a conscious formula that would simply need to be applied; they are a part of this irrational logic, or this logic of sensation, that constitutes painting” (FB, 83/79). The empirical taxonomy of the triptychs’ forces therefore leads us back to a point, even before Bacon, of the logic of ontogenetic emergence as

such, to the immanence of aesthetics and ontology which has been our topic throughout. Could it be possible that Deleuze's painstaking "empirical" analysis of the triptychs discovered nothing that wasn't, perhaps in the form of a "secret" first principle, already in place?

If this is true the logic of sensation Deleuze finds in Bacon's paintings would be on one side an elegant and precise analysis of one painter's work, and on the other already entirely explained by the most abstract formulations of Deleuze's onto-aesthetics. This is clearly seen in the work done by Deleuze's concept of the fall, which on one side is described as the specific mechanism of Bacon's triptychs, and on the other appears as a concept necessarily connected to the degree 0 of intensity, and already widely used in the conceptual definition of the BwO.<sup>49</sup> This leads to the question as to exactly what in Deleuze's account of the triptychs is specific to Bacon's diagram, and what is simply the application of a more generalised account of the BwO. This problem is critical inasmuch as Deleuze will finally claim that all Bacon's paintings operate according to the triptychs' logic, for "there are nothing but triptychs in Bacon, even the isolated paintings are, more or less visibly, composed like triptychs" (FB, 85/81). It seems as if all of Deleuze's painstaking empirical work has finally evaporated into an ontological structure which was in place from the start, and that empirical appearances are entirely determined by a higher spiritual, or at least conceptual, reality they simply express.

Deleuze and Guattari suggest a rather elegant riposte to this problem in *A Thousand Plateaus*. There they ask whether there is a BwO of all BwOs, a higher One in which all its attributes (presumably including Bacon's diagram) can be comprehended. This means, is there a single ontological entity (THE BwO) which would finally comprehend and encompass all its instances, all the BwOs constructed as its expressions? (ATP, 154/190–1). Deleuze and Guattari turn this question on its head, arguing that it is not in fact a question of the One or the multiple, the abstract or the specific, as if they were opposed terms. Our question then, was badly posed, because it is not a matter of understanding the ground zero of the BwO—chaos, difference, duration, etc.—as an ontological unity which the variety of BwOs would all in their way express. Bacon's diagram shares a certain abstract machinic consistency with other painting diagrams, a necessity by which painting begins with the construction of a BwO. This leads to other common principles, for example, Deleuze argues: "Most artists [ . . . ] seem to have encountered the same response; the difference in intensity is experienced as a fall" (FB, 81/78). But everything falls differently. Each fall is different because the fall is simply the activity of difference itself. If difference is the ontological ground of Deleuze's system, a likely enough claim, then it does not appear in relation to, or as an

expression of anything but itself. THE BwO is therefore indistinguishable from the infinity of BwOs which constitute it. As a result, the ground zero these BwOs share is not an ontological Substance prior to their activity, and which their activity expresses, but the real condition for the construction of this Substance, as a real sensation, in the inorganic life of Bacon's Figures. The ontological conditions of Bacon's paintings do not pre-exist them, as what they would simply express, but are constructed in his diagram, in their own way and according to their own laws. Bacon's diagram and all the other constructions of the BwO do not come together in a single unity, except, as Deleuze and Guattari say, as "a fusional multiplicity that effectively goes beyond any opposition between the one and the multitude" (ATP, 154/191). This means that although all the BwOs form an "ontological unity of substance" (ATP, 154/191), these BwOs construct this substance differently in their expressions, that is, in the expression of an always mobile constructive difference. The point is not what "is" the BwO, but how is it constructed by this diagram, in this perspective, and as this sensation? This is finally the fractal logic not just of Bacon's paintings, but of Deleuze and Guattari's ontological system; differentiation means infinity at every level, because becoming is the immanence of singularity and unity in life. What Deleuze writes of the laws of Bacon's triptychs could therefore equally apply to Deleuze's ontological structure as a whole, with no loss of specificity: "The constants they imply change depending on the case at hand. They govern extremely variable terms, from the viewpoint both of their nature and their relations. There are so many movements in Bacon's paintings that the law of the triptychs can only be a movement of movements, or a state of complex forces, inasmuch as movement is always derived from the forces exerted upon the body" (FB, 83/80). One more time, *this body, this painting, this sensation*.

Finally then, we can say that it is precisely at its most abstract dimension that Deleuze's account of Bacon's paintings attains its greatest specificity. The moment the BwO as ground 0 emerges in Bacon's paintings in terms no longer their own is also the moment Deleuze has produced the most empirical construction of their expressive forces. This paradoxical confluence is not by chance, as it is in fact the necessary result of Deleuze's ontological assumptions. Bacon's paintings express the affects of forces on a BwO (as ground 0) in sensations, these sensations simultaneously construct a perspective in which something happens, in which the BwO lives. The "monochromatic eternity" (FB, 85/81) of the BwO, its "spiritual dimension" exists, and can only exist in its construction, in and as the sensations of Bacon's painting. The ontological ground zero of Deleuze's system, the One-All of Substance, is a fusional multiplicity that only exists as Being-in-the-World, that is, in sensations which construct and express our living flesh.

## Conclusion

# A Break, a Becoming, and a Belief . . .

flirters, deserters, wimps and pimps, speeding like bullets, grinning like chimps, above the heads of TV watchers, lovers under the overpasses, movies at malls letting out, bright gas station oases in pure fluorescent spill, canopied beneath the palm trees, soon wrapped, down the corridors of the surface streets, in nocturnal smog, the adobe air, the smell of distant fireworks, the spilled, the broken world.

—Thomas Pynchon, *Vineland*.<sup>1</sup>

## THE BROKEN WORLD

The spilled, the broken world. Deleuze and Guattari's world as much as Pynchon's, a world of creative breaks through which chaos spills. Fireworks. And the break also composes chaos, it's a disjunctive conjunction, an eternally returning 'and . . .' Chaos spills into life—chaosmosis. But how to break and how to compose? These are the questions of art. How to break with the human, all too human, with its clichés, its self-obsessed egoism, its organic thought? How to break through these limitations on life in order to extend our compositions as far as the infinite, to succeed in a becoming-universe? It requires a mystical art capable of constructing and expressing a universe in a sensation, a world from and in *this* sensation as a sensation of *this* world. Art then, is as atheist as it is mystic, because the infinity it restores to sensation is nothing but its own living process: a life. Art is the construction of a living world of sensation; a world that never stops becoming something else, never stops breaking and composing, never stops emerging as something new. "Any work of art," Deleuze writes, "points a way through for life, finds a way through the cracks."<sup>2</sup>

Art is a guidance device, a machine that finds in the cracks a means of escape and discovery. Because "Art as abstract machine" both breaks and creates, it creates by breaking. This has been a constant refrain for us: no creation

without destruction. And it means, each time, again. This is the first condition of art, to break with the ontological and aesthetic assumptions that negate its life. In doing so art emerges as a compositional process creating new realities, constructing a work that expresses the world, and expressing in a work the unending construction of the universe. This is the definition of art as an active immanence, a creative power always operating on the principle of *to come*. In the face of this *to come*, the artistic element of the present—the contemporary itself—is in a permanent process of cracking open: “Works are developed,” Deleuze writes, “around or on the basis of a fracture they can never succeed in filling” (DR, 195/252).

We saw this in the Nietzschean artist-philosopher and his or her art of critique. Critique as affirmation breaks with man’s nihilism, and overcomes his negation of living will to power. This affirmation gives us a new physiology, a new way of feeling. First break: the Overman. This affirmation produces a new image, an image adequate to becoming, to its powers of the false, to its creative eternal return. Second break: the simulacra. This affirmation produces a new image of art and artist, as the *work* of art, the vital process by which the will to power is expressed, and in which the will to power is forever constructed anew. Third break: an art of immanence. Art as affirmation gives a real experience of its real conditions, beyond the Kantian double definition of aesthetics, beyond any pre-given conditions of possibility. Art operates as a libratory innovation, opening up a future that is unknown.

In Spinoza, the same problem: How can we break through man’s inadequate understanding of the world? It means, how can we understand what is beyond man and yet entirely within man, how can we understand the infinity of God as we construct and express it in Nature, how in other words, is essence existence? Once more, it is a question of new feelings, or as Spinoza puts it, of affects. Affects no longer understood according to the subjects that have them and the objects that cause them, but according to the common notions they create. Through understanding common notions another world appears, a world in the process of being composed, a vision of God/Nature in which I see how I am God, without God either abandoning infinity, or leaving this world as his plane of composition. Spinoza’s art of beatitude emerges as this “atheist mysticism,” a radical break with a transcendent God, in a vision of God/Nature as the continual construction of the world. Beatitude begins with the common notion, an epistemology of the *here and now* that leaves behind man’s sad imaginations to actively pursue a joy adequate to an infinitely creative God as Nature. To express this God/Nature is nothing but understanding how our joy, our love, is the very force constructing God’s pantheistic becoming, Nature’s creative difference from itself. Art is nothing without joy.

Deleuze’s cinema books are also constituted around a break, or rather a series of breaks. That which determines the movement-image, the break between the sensory-motor and a duration it gives an indirect image of, a break that at its limit appears as the sublime. And then another break, a breakdown of the sensory-motor, through which visions emerge, images as pure optical and sound situations. This is the direct image of time in “modern” post-war cinema, and it emerges through the “crack” constituting a new brain, the cine-brain of a “neuro-physiological automaton,” an automatism capable of expressing duration as it is constructed, capable of thinking the splitting of time. And the break between these breaks, the ontological break between the movement-image and the time-image, their differing durations, and the different cine-brains they imply. With cinema images begin to create time, not only producing images that express their ontological conditions, but constructing images as ontological machines. Modernity emerges here as an art form experimenting on its own immanent and real conditions, and art opens onto a “*to come*” that becomes the definition of its true contemporaneity.

Painting also appeared according to this logic. First of all the artist achieves a breakthrough, one determined by breaking down the strata of significance and subjectivation, and the preconditions on perception they impose. This is a break with representation as an image of thought in which painting acts as a signifier, and where its material movements are subordinated to a regime of “meaning” overcoding it. Venetian Renaissance painting exemplifies painting’s power of breakthrough, a critical or “schizoanalytic” process by which onto-aesthetics finds its specific co-ordinates in an abstract machine. The abstract machine frees material forces (traits of content) to compose new signs (traits of expression), particles-signs expressing a new corporeality, a corporeality of paint. This new corporeality and the powers of composition it unleashes usher in a new modernity for painting, one in which color and line break with their representational functions to become abstract. Abstraction, as an onto-aesthetic definition of art and not simply a formal one, implies a new type of perception as much as a new style, a perception capable of breaking down a subject’s distance from the canvas, and breaking through a subjective optics, to construct a smooth and haptic space of sensation. This is the abstraction of both Jackson Pollock and Francis Bacon, who push it in their own directions.

This non-optical space is where affect breaks free from its subjective co-ordinates to construct a subjectivation, an art-work as a mobile affectual assemblage that is both autopoietic and machinic. This is a break with both the artist as intentional agent of creation, and with the art work as pure expression. Once more we find a new onto-aesthetic dimension; an “aesthetic paradigm”

in which the creative processes of chaosmosis are seen at work "flush with the real." Here, the art-work finds a new life, a vitality in which its construction is a direct expression of its ontological conditions. As such, an art work is an affectual subjectivation that expresses a percept, a vision of the universe embodying the constructive powers of chaosmosis. This implies a further break, as the Aristotelian concept of a hylomorphically formed matter is replaced by a molecularised matter. A matter freed to embody the chaotic forces of the world, as they construct the world. This is also art's break with Romanticism, by which it expresses a new constructivist Nature, a modern nature or "Mechanosphere" in which the art-work is composed through the cosmic forces it embodies in an inhuman and animal sensation.

Our major example of this revalued art practice was the work of Francis Bacon, whose paintings operate a catastrophic "diagram" that breaks with the clichés occupying the canvas by introducing a chaos that wipes them away. But this chaos is itself 'artistic,' it contains the creative forces that are expressed in being composed by Bacon's diagram. Bacon composes these forces through his fractal art history, a series of engagements with historical art styles by which he takes less than their whole, but more also, as each 'recapitulation' is a reinvention. Bacon's break with an historical style is entirely affirmative, inasmuch as it takes each style's break, its creation of a new ontological space for painting, in order to utilise this power in its own way, and so break with it again. Bacon's creative breaks compose a new body, a Body without Organs, an embodiment of painting beyond its objective or subjective conditions. The BwO is a painting-body operating as an Artaudian "nerve-meter," expressing its chaotic conditions through a strict constructivism no less rigorous for being hysterical. Bacon's abstract machine is on one side entirely actual, a formal diagram of unerring precision, and on the other utterly cosmic, plunging into chaos to bring back something new. Bacon arrives in his work at the "fact" of a body becoming, not just those of Bacon's figures but our own, a merge made visible in the construction of a "haptic eye," and its visions of a transversal "flesh."

And each of these breaks is itself produced by another, that of Deleuze and Guattari's machine. Deleuze breaks with Nietzsche's eternal return of the same, to make the same that which returns difference. Deleuze breaks with Spinoza to make the attributes the mechanism by which modal existence expresses a differential essence, an essence constructed by an actuality giving joy. Through the attributes immanence becomes a univocal reality in which expression=construction, an atheistic onto-aesthetics *against* any transcendent or emanative onto-theology. Deleuze's cinema will break with Bergson, by discovering a crack in the sensory motor through which a crystal-image

emerges to express and construct duration. Just as Deleuze and Guattari will break with Peirce and Hjelmslev, moving beyond their semiotic theories in putting them to work in their own way. The list goes on. A break with Worringer to free the Gothic line, a break with the romantic sublime, a break with modernist art-theory to produce a modern painting no longer optical but haptic. A break with phenomenology to find Bacon's painting as being-in-the-world. No creation without destruction, and Deleuze and Guattari are forever setting machines in motion which break with their previous determinates in order to create something new. This is the destruction-creation of the aesthetic paradigm, and defines the conditions for any work of art, the break that allows it to create the spilled and broken world.

### THE SPILL

The spilled and broken world. Perhaps we should reverse Pynchon's phrase, because it is through the break which something will emerge, spill into being if you like, something will be created. But of course, and as we have repeatedly seen, these two things happen together, and together they define the parameters of Deleuze and Guattari's materialist-vitalist ontology: a break releasing vital matters-forces, the forces constructing a becoming-world. What is constructed is a point of view, a perspective—in other words: a life. Art does not live in the world, nor in us, it constructs a world while simultaneously expressing it, it lives as this immanent plane of composition. This plane of composition is a differential plane of forces, expressed in the construction of sensations, and constructed by sensation's living refrains of colors and abstract lines, an irreducible doubled dimension, expressed in a life, as life, in art and as art. Art is this process of creation, at once cosmic and molecular, the internal-outside of pure immanence. "We will say of pure immanence," Deleuze writes, "that it is A LIFE, and nothing else. It is not immanence to life, but the immanent that is in nothing is itself a life. A life is the immanence of immanence: it is complete power, complete bliss."<sup>3</sup>

Pure immanence is ontology as the theory and practice of a creative life, because we cannot think this ontological power "in itself"; it has no "in itself" and only exists as the becoming-new in things, in art. This makes Deleuze and Guattari's ontology inseparable from aesthetics, inasmuch as pure immanence is what appears, as what appears—what appears when essence is existence. What appears is sensation. Sensation is the being of sensation—difference—but this differential essence only exists as affects (becomings) and visions (percepts), in other words it only exists *in and as experience*: a life. Sensation must be constructed in experience, in and as art, for its infinite and ontogenetic

plane of matter-forces, its differential field, only exists as such. *Nothing is given*. Inasmuch as art creates a sensation then, art creates the finite that restores the infinite. I have suggested that this double dimension of sensation, of art, implies a Deleuzeo-Guattarian onto-aesthetics as the always doubled interrogation of art; what is it, and how does it appear? Inseparable questions. Sensation is at once *this* sensation, this work of art, and its cosmic conditions, art is an expression that constructs the world. "We are not in the world," Deleuze and Guattari write, "we become with the world; we become by contemplating it. Everything is vision, becoming. We become universes" (WP, 169). Finite and infinite; the artist, the mystical atheist, the visionary, the life.

We have seen this visionary art emerge in each of the chapters of this book. In Nietzsche Deleuze finds the ontological conditions for appearance in the will to power, but will to power is never outside of its expressions in the world, its simulacra. Artists are those strong enough to affirm will to power, and art's expression of life's genetic conditions is nothing but the re-creation of these conditions. As a result, the simulacral art work embodies the eternal return of will to power as difference, as becoming. In Spinoza Deleuze finds a univocal ontology of God/Nature, and an expressionism in the modes and through the attributes. The constant variation of the modes, God's constant becoming, expresses the affect's essence, an essence which is itself determined only by the differential relations it maintains with the infinite essences constituting God. Through a vision of affectual essence then, through an art of common notions, it is possible to know God as God knows himself: beatitude. Deleuze uses Bergson's term for a creative and univocal being in the cinema books, duration. Duration as the past, not previous to the present but coexisting with it, producing the image as it is forever splitting into past and present. Duration emerges in this absolutely contemporary moment constituting the fracture of time. Modern cinema's visionary or seers produce images of this split, images which construct time's bifurcations as an expression of its virtual infinity. Similarly, in the sensation a finite work produces an experience restoring it to its infinite and immanent plane of composition. Finally, in the abstract lines of Pollock and the complex diagram of Bacon a new vision of painting emerges, a "haptic" vision in which the eye "touches" the painting. Vision is no longer the passive reception of a separate I/eye, but a corporeal convulsion encompassing a becoming indiscernibly in the work and of the world. Painting has become the 'making visible' of sensation, a sensation which constructs and expresses the world.

If we can say, or have said, that Deleuze and Guattari offer an ontology which cannot be thought apart from its creative processes, apart that is from the production of feelings or sensations that both express and construct the

material and energetic world, then we must say, as precisely as possible, how art does this. This is to understand the other (artistic) side of Deleuze and Guattari's abstract machine.

## ART AS ABSTRACT MACHINE

The abstract machine on the one hand composes the matter and force making up a plane of consistency, and on the other expresses it in an actual assemblage. It is on the one hand a general term for the onto-aesthetics of creation, and on the other the particular event of construction, the construction of an infinite plane expressed in a work of art. Art as abstract machine therefore means autopoiesis, the autopoiesis of the *chaosmos*. The autopoietic abstract machine appears as a refrain or sensation, a composition of a virtual plane of immanence expressed in an affectual assemblage that is entirely actual. The refrain or sensation is the creation of art, art as the construction of affectual bodies or subjectivations expressing an infinite virtuality they actualise, and a counter-actualisation that constructs the virtual and infinite world anew.

Art as Abstract Machine operates specifically in sensation, which nevertheless has a double sense in relation to art. On the one side, it means a transformation of sensibility, a break with human perceptions and meanings in order for the being of sensation to appear directly as sensation. Again, this has various fields of resonance within Deleuze and Guattari's work. We have already mentioned its relevance to our discussion of Nietzsche, Spinoza, and Bergson. In the later chapters, this revalued or transformed sensibility emerged in a haptic, smooth space co-extensive with the operation of a haptic eye. Haptic space and the eye that is its productive condition appear together in an affective assemblage or subjectivation, an animal vitality or "flesh" of the BwO. The BwO embodies a new sensibility defining art's bio-aesthetic dimension, a dimension in which art is no longer simply the realm of human expression, but sings a song of molecules.

Along with the revalued sensibility involved in having a sensation, is a revalued artistic technique capable of producing it. This is the 'practical' side of the abstract machine, inasmuch as any machine involves a "practice." We looked at various examples, all of which shared a basic necessity; they broke with representation. Each art form does so according to its particular material modality. Painting's materiality involves line and color, and it is by using line and color against its representational functions that painting expresses the immanence of inorganic life directly in a sensation. This involves freeing color from its overcoding by the line so that form emerges through the modulation of color as a set of differential relations, and freeing the line from its

representational function so as to give it a non-striated movement. In both cases, what is involved is a “molecularisation” of matter, by which its materiality is able to become expressive, and able to “clasp” chaotic forces in a sensation. “Paintings eternal object is this”: Deleuze and Guattari write, “to paint forces” (WP, 182/172). For painting, this means composing a coloring sensation, and we looked closely at the way both the Venetian painters of the Renaissance, and Francis Bacon, each in their own way, do this. In both cases this process involves an absolute deterritorialisation of painting’s material elements, both its matter, and its processes of composition. These, in escaping the overcoding of a classical line in the Venetian case, and through the catastrophe with which Bacon’s diagram begins, allow for new mechanisms of construction and expression to emerge, defining a new reality of painting. Obviously, this reality is not the same for the Venetians and for Bacon, but each in their own way approach an abstraction in which color is able to render the forces of the plane of composition visible. This means that in both cases an abstract machine is in operation through which art becomes adequate to its real conditions, and art produces a sensation. Here sensation is gained through colorism, a use of color’s differential relations that opens painting onto infinity, while composing a world. In a sensation, a painting’s color-forces emerge in movement, and our perceptual participation in color’s differential quantities enables a becoming to take place both on and in front of the painting’s surface. Nevertheless, colorism emerges in painting according to specific historical conditions, and we saw how the Venetian break with the painting diagrams that preceded and accompanied it expressed both the dynamisms of new materials, and older traditions such as Byzantine art, to which this materiality was conjugated.

In certain of Jackson Pollock’s paintings it is the line that is freed from any descriptive function. Pollock achieves this breakthrough by inventing a new compositional machine, one that unleashes new abstract and vital forces in paint. Pollock’s paintings not only create a new type of abstraction, but carry abstraction to its limit, beyond any optical perception (beyond that is, the “pure opticality” of Greenberg’s modernist reading) in a haptic smooth space where the viewer-painting relation is replaced by the vital movements of abstract lines that traverse it. Finally, in cinema we saw a different materiality, that of duration, where the universe exists as moving images of light. This materiality of cinema is nevertheless what its images both construct and express and Deleuze offers an intricate and precise taxonomy of the ways cinema achieves this. With time-images cinema discovers the way to move beyond its Bergsonian conditions to directly express duration—as whole and as part, as multiple in Bergson’s terms—in a vision of and as the becoming of time.

What is common to all of these examples is the necessarily double dimension of their abstract machines. Nevertheless, and as Deleuze and Guattari often stress, the abstract machine is not a “thing,” it is a process, and its most important moment is no doubt its creation, which must be undertaken each time, anew, and *for real*. This is once more the imperative of this book’s title, because “Art as Abstract Machine” means nothing unless we do it. This returns us to the necessity of affirmation, ours first of all, because it is only by experimenting, by attempting this operation of invention, of making a leap of faith into the unknown that we will have a sensation, and that we can aspire to the title of artist (or of art as abstract machine). Affirmation is the engine of Deleuze and Guattari’s constructivism, the mechanics of their philosophical creations (even when what is constructed is not altogether convincing, as in the case of Guattari’s image of Duchamp), and must be the starting point for any approach to their system made in good faith. But what is the meaning of this seemingly banal pre-requisite of Deleuze and Guattari’s philosophy—affirmation? What is affirmed in each case—Nietzsche, Spinoza and Bergson, as well as the variety of artistic examples we have discussed—is a creative immanence, a vital materialism both expressed and constructed by the work of art. And more than just a simple declaration of faith in a divine creation, it is precisely this affirmation that is the way that immanence works, that God is Nature, or the will to power returns. Affirmation is the break necessary for something to happen: “Hence the sole thing that is divine is the nature of an energy of disjunctions, when it attracts to itself the entire process of production and serves as its miraculate, enchanted surface, inscribing it in each and every one of its disjunctions” (AO, 13/19). To believe in the break, to affirm a disjunction in which product and production are in absolute immanence, to affirm finally, a plane of abstract machines, is the very condition of art’s possibility, the very condition of its *actuality*. Affirmation would be, then, Guattari’s “blind trust in the movement of deterritorialization at work.”<sup>4</sup>

## THE LEAP OF FAITH

It seems paradoxical that Deleuze and Guattari’s philosophy, so avowedly atheist, so utterly materialist, and so ecstatically inhuman, should bring us back to that most human quality, trust or belief. Why then is belief necessary? Because belief in this world is the atheist, materialist, and inhuman condition of its sensation. Because in the end we cannot think this inhuman world, it is precisely what cannot be thought, and cannot be represented, and yet it is that which our deranged senses are forever feeling. To return to *Cinema 2*, and one of Deleuze’s most beautiful passages, he describes the spiritual automaton,