

This is an un-copy edited draft of an article to be published in Henry Somers-Hall, Jeff Bell and James Williams (eds.), *A Thousand Plateaus and Philosophy*, Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 2016.

## **Memories of a Deleuzian: To Think is Always to Follow the Witches Flight**

Simon O'Sullivan, Goldsmiths College

I want to organize my reading of the Becoming plateau, the longest of *A Thousand Plateaus*, around three different takes on philosophy, or, at least, three takes on the plateau's relationship to philosophy: 1. Philosophy and Non-Philosophy; 2. Philosophy as a Way of Life; and 3. Philosophy as Fictioning. I also want to use some of the remarks Deleuze and Guattari make in their final collaboration, *What is Philosophy?*, as a way in to thinking about these themes.

### **1. Philosophy and Non-Philosophy (or Relations with an Outside)**

In terms of its explicit philosophical resources the Becoming plateau, as evidenced in some of the subtitles of its different sections, draws especially on Bergson (not least in the titling of the sections as 'Memories') and Spinoza – and, invariably, on Deleuze's own previous writings on these two. So, in 'Memories of a Bergsonian' we have the explicit linking of the concept of becoming with the Bergsonian idea of 'a coexistence of very different "durations", superior or inferior to "ours", all of them in communication' (ATP 238). We also find the idea of a creative evolution – or involution – that in some senses follows from this: 'to involve is to form a block that runs its own line "between" the terms in play and beneath assignable relations' (ATP 239). It is in this sense that becoming has a reality that is specific to it outside of any fixed terms (subjects or objects) that it passes between. The idea of becoming as a communication, at least of a sort, between different durations is returned to in the final section of the plateau (on music) with Messiaen and his 'multiple chromatic durations' that involve 'relations between the infinitely long durations of the stars and the infinitely short ones of the insects and atoms' (ATP 309). It is in this sense of being able to express different durations that becoming-music is the privileged form of becoming (at least, within art per se).

In 'Memories of a Spinozist I' we find the well-known Deleuze-Spinoza thesis about the elements of life being 'distinguished solely by movement and rest, slowness and speed' (ATP 254), with a definition of the plane of Nature as Abstract Machine or 'single abstract animal' that constitutes a unity of this multiplicity (this being Deleuze's Univocity) (ATP 255). 'Memories of a Spinozist II' concerns itself with Spinoza's equally infamous ethical question – 'What can a body do?' – and with the definition of this body as a particular degree of power itself defined by its capacity to affect and be affected. In many ways these two Spinozist principles – that a body is

constituted by relations of slowness and speed that themselves define its capacity to affect and be affected – are the key philosophical themes of the plateau, but only if they are thought outside of a strictly ‘human’ ethics (tied as this can be to a ‘molar’ form) and in terms of the possibilities for more in-human transformations (hence, as we shall see, the interest in sorcery, but also drugs).

So far so good. But clearly Deleuze already lays out much of the Bergsonian and Spinozist material elsewhere, not least, again, in his monographs on them. What then characterises the particular use of these philosophical resources in the Becoming plateau (and, indeed, in *A Thousand Plateaus* more generally)? On the one hand it is simply that they are brought together. *A Thousand Plateaus*, if nothing else, is a grand work of philosophical synthesis (Nietzsche being the third key philosophical element). But, again, this is also the case with a book like *Difference and Repetition*, to say nothing of the first volume of *Capitalism and Schizophrenia* which also involves a complex synthesis of Freud and Marx, but also, Spinoza and Nietzsche.

In fact, even a cursory glance at the three sections I have already mentioned shows that it is the heavy use of examples – from literature in particular, but also other ‘non-philosophical’ perspectives – that constitutes perhaps the major difference between *A Thousand Plateaus* and other works signed Deleuze, and, indeed, Deleuze and Guattari (these non-philosophical resources are also evident in the book’s extensive footnotes). So, in the short Bergson section there are references to Levi-Strauss and vampires, Jung and the C-virus. And in the first section on Spinoza we find references to Cuvier, Geoffrey, Von Uexküll, but also to the fact that ‘Children are Spinozists’ (ATP 256).

In the second Spinoza section ticks, horses and dogs – a whole bestiary that is characteristic of *A Thousand Plateaus* as a whole – accompany the human figures. Indeed, the animal is very much the manifest subject matter of this plateau, which begins with a critique of the classificatory impulse of the sciences (including the human sciences), and especially their obsession with series (involving an analogy of proportion) and structure (involving an analogy of proportionality), before developing the key idea of becoming-animal. As Deleuze and Guattari remark in this earlier section – ‘Memories of a Naturalist’ – their meditation on the animal is not, however, simply a zoology in so far as: ‘the relationships between animals are bound up with the relations between man and animal, man and woman, man and child, man and the elements, man and the physical and microphysical universe’ (ATP 235). Indeed, becoming-animal is part of a processual series that, in fact, begins with becoming-woman but leads, as we shall see, into something altogether more alien.

Certainly then these various examples ‘flesh out’ the philosophical architecture. They animate the concepts. But, I think, something else is also at stake here: namely, the gesturing to an outside of philosophy per se. Indeed, *A Thousand Plateaus*, although clearly a work of philosophy (and a great work at that) cannot be reduced to this (or,

at least, it cannot be reduced to philosophy as it is typically understood). It mobilises other resources (and, again, offers perspectives from outside of philosophy), and in so doing has a traction on reality that is different to philosophy's own more restricted terrain of operation. In part this no doubt explains some of its attraction to non-philosophers, not least artists: it operates as both tool-box and construction site, but also as case study of a creative work in and of itself.

In *What is Philosophy?*, a book that is as much a reflection on their own philosophy as it is of others, Deleuze and Guattari draw attention to the importance of a non-philosophical outside for philosophy, an outside from which philosophy finds its inspiration and, indeed, its very 'ground'. In the chapter on 'The Plane of Immanence' they write:

Precisely because the plane of immanence is prephilosophical and does not immediately take effect with concepts, it implies a sort of groping experimentation and its layout resorts to measures that are not very respectable, rational or reasonable. These measures belong to the order of dreams, of pathological processes, esoteric experiences, drunkenness and excess. (Deleuze and Guattari 1994: 41)

There is some ambiguity here as the laying out of a plane of immanence is also identified as one of the three moments of philosophy (alongside the invention of conceptual personae and the construction of concepts). Indeed, the plane of immanence is what Deleuze, in *Difference and Repetition*, names the 'image of thought': not so much a concept as the very image of what thinking is (or might be). This is then not philosophy as typically understood – as solely rational (or discursive) programme, but something more intuitive and, as Deleuze and Guattari remark, diagrammatic (I will return to this below). Could we make the claim that there is something inhuman about this 'groping experimentation', something that itself involves a kind of becoming-animal (when this is understood, as we shall see, as a deterritorialisation from more fixed and molar forms).

Indeed, although clearly containing more than a few examples of concept creation, *A Thousand Plateaus*, it seems to me, is concerned – especially at certain points in the Becoming plateau – with inventing a new image of thought, and, as such, with a certain kind of prephilosophical practice. The processes it describes, and itself initiates, do not proceed solely by reason, nor is the book itself about the human in what we might say its habitual form. *A Thousand Plateaus* is not for us as we are typically constituted in this sense, but for something we might become (or for the molecular collectivity – the becomings – that we are 'behind' this molar self).

In a Spinozist sense, *A Thousand Plateaus* is also itself composed of different speeds, which gives it, for this reader at least, a certain affective charge (and, as far as this goes, the question of how we encounter this book is crucial – in Spinozist terms,

whether it fundamentally ‘agrees’ with our own affective make-up). We might even say that its form (the plateaus) – including the style in which it is written (the very syntax it uses) – performs its content (and it is this, I think, that partly makes it so compelling). All of this has been remarked on before, but it bears restating here: in reading one enters into a kind of becoming with *A Thousand Plateaus* (providing one is ‘open’ to that possibility).

At the very end of *What is Philosophy?* there is a further discussion of thought’s relation to a negative that concerns and comprehends it, where each of the planes (of thought) – philosophy, art, science – confront a chaos that always and everywhere shadows them (in fact, in *What is Philosophy?*, thought itself is characterised as a chaoid, or chaos given a certain consistency). Although this final collaborative work is often identified as solely Deleuze’s (signed with both names as an act of friendship), it is really Guattari, in his solo work, who really develops this idea of thought as a relationship between chaos and consistency (or, in Guattari’s terms, chaos and complexity) itself determined by different speeds (hence, the very idea of *Chaosmosis*).<sup>1</sup> Indeed, philosophically speaking, Guattari flattens Deleuze’s actual-virtual topology – the Bergsonian cone of memory that plays such an important role in Deleuze’s work before *Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (the virtual remains in Guattari’s work, but it is less Bergsonian). The becoming plateau, I think, especially, evidences this move to a radical horizontality.

It is also in these last pages of *What is Philosophy?* that we find a tantalizing reference to Francois Laruelle and the idea that philosophy might need a non-philosophy that comprehends it (just as art might require a non-art and science a non-science).<sup>2</sup> Certainly elsewhere Deleuze has remarked on how philosophy itself can elicit both a philosophical reading and a non-philosophical one (see Deleuze 2012). Clearly one of the functions of this edited collection is to focus attention on the philosophical reading (to take *A Thousand Plateaus* seriously as a work of philosophy and position it within the history of that discipline), but, for this reader, the non-philosophical aspect is crucial and if we neglect this we miss something absolutely essential about the book. Perhaps then we might say that *A Thousand Plateaus* demands a certain stereoscopic vision and approach, a reading that is both

---

<sup>1</sup> See especially pp. 110-13 of ‘The New Aesthetic Paradigm’ (Guattari 1995: 98-135).

<sup>2</sup> In fact, although sympathetic, the issue of other ‘non’ forms of thought is a point of difference with Laruelle. As Deleuze and Guattari remark in the footnote: ‘Francois Laruelle proposes a comprehension of nonphilosophy as “the real (of) science”, beyond the object of knowledge ... But we do not see why this real of science is not nonscience as well’ (Deleuze and Guattari 1994: 234, foot 16). Deleuze and Guattari also footnote Laruelle in ‘The Plane of Immanence’ chapter when suggesting that ‘the nonphilosophical is perhaps closer to the heart of philosophy than philosophy itself, and this means that philosophy cannot be content to be understood only philosophically or conceptually, but is addressed essentially to nonphilosophers as well’ (Deleuze and Guattari 1994: 41).

philosophical and non-philosophical and that it is precisely this that marks it out as a great work.

*What is Philosophy?* also closes with some cryptic remarks about how the brain's submersion in to chaos allows the extraction of a 'people to come', forms of subjectivity (or even, perhaps, non-subjectivity?) that are wilder, untethered from the cogito. Indeed, in this place the three forms of thought become indiscernible (just as concepts, sensations and functions become undecideable) (ATP 218). I will return to this question of interference below, but we might note here that it is also these different kinds of interference between different kinds of thought that characterise *A Thousand Plateaus* (and it is in this sense that it is the very last pages of *What is Philosophy?* that most adequately account for the kind of 'philosophy' a book like *A Thousand Plateaus* deploys).

Indeed, returning to the first part of the Becoming plateau, the philosophical memories as well as being accompanied by those of moviegoers (the first section that introduces the concept of becoming via a becoming-rat contra familial conjugality), naturalists (that lays out the more typical categorization of natural history via series and structure: nature as mimesis) and theologians (who are pitched against the transportations of demonology and transformations of alchemy), also contain memories of those figures (could we call them conceptual personae?) that operate on and as the cusp between our human and more non-human worlds and which, strictly speaking, are not philosophers at all: sorcerers.

## 2. Philosophy as a Way of Life (Sorcery to Diagrammatics)

In 'Memories of a Sorcerer I' multiplicity (or the pack) and with it contagion (or 'unnatural participation') is opposed to more typical (and rational) concerns with classificatory characteristics and filiation. Affect – as a non-human animal intensity – is the means of this non-conceptual 'passage between things' that brings about transformation. Indeed, philosophy, if it can still be called as such, is here less to do with knowledge – discursive or otherwise – than with exploring what a given body might become. It is in this sense that becoming involves a kind of ethics (in Spinoza's sense). This is 'philosophy as a way of life', or even a 'spiritual exercise' as Pierre Hadot might have it (a kind of modern stoic philosophy perhaps).<sup>3</sup> In *A Thousand Plateaus* this creative and fundamentally constructive take on philosophy is given

---

<sup>3</sup> See Hadot's *Philosophy as a Way of Life* and, in particular, Chapter 3 on 'Spiritual Exercises' (Hadot 1995: 81-125). In relation to positioning Deleuze and Guattari's philosophy as 'a way of life' see Chapter 5, 'Desiring-Machines, Chaoids, Probe-heads: Towards a Speculative Subjectivity (Deleuze and Guattari)' of my *On the Production of Subjectivity* (O'Sullivan 2012: 169-202), and, specifically in relation to *A Thousand Plateaus*, the section on 'Probe-heads Against Faciality' (187-202). In relation to Hadot and Deleuze, see Todd May's 'Philosophy as Spiritual Exercise in Foucault and Deleuze' (May 2000).

different names: pragmatics, diagrammatics (as we shall see), even, simply, schizoanalysis.<sup>4</sup> Not typical philosophy then, but also not simply psychoanalysis when this relies on preset protocols and predetermined schema. Indeed, experimentation is this form of thought's chief *modus operandi* (and it is this emphasis on experimental encounter, rather than on any rational programme of work of the self, that is taken from Spinoza (put simply, and crucially, for Deleuze and Guattari one cannot tell in advance what – or with what – one might be able to become)).

*A Thousand Plateaus* is not simply 'about' the world in this sense (or this 'interpretation' is secondary), but, rather, offers something more programmatic and pragmatic. Certainly, for myself, this constituted the main interest of the book (as opposed to other philosophical works) when I first encountered it. *A Thousand Plateaus* read like a manual of sorts. Going back to it again (for this edited collection) I am struck by the way it still elicits an excitement in me – and a desire to experiment, to explore the possibilities of a mode of existence away from an overly fixed and striated sense of self. Is this kind of confessional, first person (and affective) reporting appropriate? For myself, in fact, to leave this out – to simply read *A Thousand Plateaus* without letting it impact on a life – is to surrender it to the worst kind of scholarly capture. It is in this respect that I think Foucault's comment in his Preface to *Anti-Oedipus* might be applied to the *Capitalism and Schizophrenia* project in general: the two books are, precisely, an '*Introduction to the Non-Fascist Life*' (Foucault 1984: xiii), when this refers to combatting the micro-fascisms that can stymie experimentation, but also, crucially, to the book's intended terrain of operation: life.

In this sense, it seems to me that *A Thousand Plateaus* is also concerned with what Guattari calls the 'production of subjectivity', when this is the production of something specifically different to the standardized models on offer (the atomized individual of neoliberalism), but also to the production of the human *per se* (understood as a particular historical configuration). Deleuze, in *Difference and Repetition*, writes of 'larval subjects', 'the thousands of passive syntheses of which we are organically composed' (Deleuze 1994: 74), but it is Guattari that really brings this idea of the collectivity that constitutes us – a 'social and mental ecology' – into a

---

<sup>4</sup> See in particular the discussion in '587 B.C.-A.D. 70: On Several Regimes of Signs' (ATP 111-48) that gives more detail on pragmatics as the practice of translation and transportation of statements between different regimes, but also as the creation of new 'unknown statements':

...even if the result were a patois of sensual delight, physical and semiotic systems in shred, asubjective affects, signs without significance where syntax, semantics, and logic are in collapse ... cries-whispers, feverish improvisations, becoming-animal, becoming-molecular, real transsexualities, continuums of intensity, constitutions of bodies without organs' (ATP 147)

more pragmatic realm, especially in foregrounding more fluid analytic modelings (that privilege the encounter) which might allow people to ‘resingularise themselves’ (Guattari 1995: 6). As such, we might also say – rather obviously – that it is Guattari’s knowledges and experiences, especially from *La Borde* (itself a realm of heterogenetic encounters – or becomings) that also marks out *A Thousand Plateaus*’ singularity as a collaboration, or even, as itself a work of collectivity (the two authors already being several as the opening to *A Thousand Plateaus* remarks).<sup>5</sup>

All of this is no more apparent than in the becoming plateau that involves mapping out a specifically different individuation of the world (and of the entities within it):

...between substantial forms and determined subjects, *between the two*, there is not only a whole operation of demonic local transports but a natural play of haecities, degrees, intensities, events, and accidents that compose individuations totally different from those of the well-formed subjects that receive them. (ATP 253)

We might also note Deleuze’s own remarks in interview about *A Thousand Plateaus*, that, in some sense, offers a non-philosophical inflection on the above:

What we’re interested in, you see, are modes of individuation beyond those of things, persons or subjects: the individuation, say, of a time of day, of a region, a climate, a river or a wind, of an event. And maybe it’s a mistake to believe in the existence of things, persons, or subjects. (Deleuze 1995b: 26)

I will return below to this laying out of different individuations in and of the world, and which, in Deleuze and Guattari’s account, characterises the sorcerer’s perspective.

The key resources in the first sorcerer section are also, again, not philosophical concepts per se, but literature – fiction – with its authors and their invented avatars. Virginia Woolf experiencing herself ‘as a troop of monkeys, a school of fish’ alongside H. P. Lovecraft’s Carter who lives a series of ‘human and non-human, vertebrate and invertebrate, conscious and mindless, animal and vegetable’ becomings leading to more extreme inorganic – molecular and cosmic – ones (ATP 239-40).

---

<sup>5</sup> On a purely theoretical, if not philosophical, level, *A Thousand Plateaus* evidences a particularly productive entanglement of Guattari’s more therapeutic modelings with Deleuze’s more strictly conceptual work. It is in this sense that I think the project of attempting to disentangle – or ‘wrench’ – a ‘pure’ philosophical (or, indeed, scientific) Deleuze from Guattari (as in Manuel Delanda’s project of reconstruction, *Intensive Science and Virtual Philosophy* (see especially the comments in ‘Introduction: Deleuze’s World’ (London: Continuum, 2002: 1-7)) misunderstands the very nature – and thus the productivity – of collaboration.



Indeed, in the plateau, it is Lovecraft as much as Spinoza who is the thinker of becoming (the philosophical principles are, in this sense, always doubled by these literary examples).

These becomings themselves enter into larger assemblages, or war machines, which are opposed to more typical and molar formations, or the state machine. The war machine (as a name for the multiplicity of individual war machines) occupies a smooth rather than striated space, but also a time without measure (this is addressed more fully in the other central plateau of *A Thousand Plateaus*, '1227: Treatise on Nomadology: –The War Machine' (ATP 351-423)). It is in this sense that becomings are opposed to stasis, but also, more generally, to concepts of Being when these posit an originary and fixed ground. In passing we might note the importance of Deleuze and Guattari's Nietzsche here (that is itself indebted to Klossowski), and especially the reading of the eternal return in *Anti-Oedipus* as a repetition of difference set against the return of the same. In Deleuze and Guattari's account Nietzsche lives through a series of becomings or 'intensive states' – only retroactively identifying, or claiming them on the basis of affect or felt sensation ("They're *me*! So it's *me*!" (Deleuze and Guattari 1984: 21)).<sup>6</sup> Becoming destabilizes any ground, but also undoes the typical subject, naming, as it does, a more processual – intensive – mode of being in the world.

In terms of the use of fiction we might briefly return to *What is Philosophy?* and note Deleuze and Guattari's comments about those intrinsic interferences between the different planes of thought, and, in particular, between philosophy and art. This is the second form of interference after a first, more straightforward one of a particular discipline having a take, from its own perspective, on another (as, for example 'when a philosopher attempts to create the concept of a sensation' (ATP 217)). An intrinsic interference, on the other hand, happens when, for example:

... concepts and conceptual personae seem to leave a plane of immanence that would correspond to them, so as to slip among the functions and partial observers, or among the sensations and aesthetic figures, on another plane ... These slidings are so subtle ... that we find ourselves on complex planes that are difficult to qualify. (Deleuze and Guattari 1994: 217)

Are not these 'complex' planes also the plateaus of *A Thousand Plateaus*, made up as they are by these slips and slidings – a blurring even – between the three great forms

---

<sup>6</sup> And Nietzsche here is doubled by Schreber who also goes through this series of 'nervous states', 'becoming a woman and many other things as well, following the endless circle of the eternal return' (AO 19).



of thought? Certainly the Becoming plateau, in its deployment of aesthetic figures *as* conceptual personae, involves precisely this grey zone between concept and affect.<sup>7</sup>

In ‘Memories of a Sorcerer II’ the first principle of multiplicity and contagion is doubled by a second: alliance with something more singular: the anomalous, understood as that which borders the pack. Again, literary examples are crucial in helping define this principle: Captain Ahab’s complex relation with Moby Dick (the ‘white wall’) and Josephine, the privileged mouse singer of Kafka’s mouse society. Philosophically speaking these literary examples are doubled by a more abstract definition of multiplicity as constituted by its boundaries and borders, by ‘the lines and dimensions it encompasses in “intension” (ATP 245). The anomalous is the border of this multiplicity, the line of flight, or ‘cutting edge of deterritorialization’ (ATP 244). But even in these more abstract definitions the implication, it seems to me, is that this is a programme for life: one needs to find ones own anomalous – follow a line of flight. Literature itself operates as a kind of manual in this sense, or at least offers up case studies for a lived life. And the philosophy itself – the invention of concepts (for example of an ‘intensive multiplicity’) – is precisely experimental and, once again, pragmatic (what will this concept allow one to think?).

In ‘Memories of a Sorcerer III’ becoming-animal is placed in sequence, with becoming-woman on the near side and becoming-molecular, ultimately, becoming-imperceptible on the far side (I will return to becoming-women below). Once again Lovecraft, this time alongside Carlos Casteneda, are the writers deployed, but, Deleuze and Guattari also point to science fiction in general as a genre ‘on’ becoming: ‘science fiction has gone through a whole evolution taking it from animal, vegetable, and mineral becomings to becomings of bacteria, viruses, molecules, and things imperceptible’ (ATP 248). At its best science fiction operates as philosophy’s own forward hurled probe-head in this sense, at least when this philosophy is defined as itself future-orientated and as a creative and constructive pursuit.

Again, philosophically speaking, this becoming as multiplicity ‘is defined by the number of dimensions it has; it is not divisible, it cannot lose or gain a dimension *without changing its nature*’ (ATP 249). Deleuze and Guattari continue:

Since its variations and dimensions are immanent to it, *it amounts to the same thing to say that each multiplicity is already composed of heterogeneous terms in symbiosis, and that a multiplicity is continually transforming itself into a string of other multiplicities, according to its thresholds and doors.* (ATP 249)

Indeed, for Deleuze and Guattari, this multiplicity is always in the process of becoming something else, always differing from itself.

---

<sup>7</sup> And no doubt a different reading of the Becoming plateau might foreground the interference between science and philosophy, especially around the concept of ‘intensive multiplicity’.

We might say then that the Becoming plateau draws out a kind of programme, again of transformation, dependent on this very particular and precise ontology, but developed through aesthetic figures (as conceptual personae) that ‘live’ these transformations. This is not exactly a therapeutics (at least, not in terms of producing a cohesive and centered subject), but it is certainly a form of practical analysis, when this is also understood as involving a kind of ethico-politics (or molecular politics in Guattari’s sense). In fact, in the plateau becoming is aligned more explicitly with schizoanalysis insofar as both are described as an experimental pragmatics, to do with locating a ‘line of escape’ from more striated space-times (‘a new borderline, an active line that will bring other becomings...’) (ATP 251). Indeed, becoming is pitched against ‘the great molar powers’ that restrict the possibilities of transformation: ‘family, career, and conjugality’ (ATP 233). This is dealt with in more detail in other plateaus (in particular ‘November 28, 1947: How Do You Make Yourself a Body Without Organs’ (ATP: 149-66)), but in the Becoming plateau it is given its most abstract, but also worked out and, indeed, philosophical form.

There is also another practice laid out here, of diagrammatics, that itself informs the criteria for this experimentation:

If multiplicities are defined and transformed by the borderline that determines in each instance the number of dimensions, we can conceive the possibility of laying them out on a plane, the borderlines succeeding one another, forming a broken line. (ATP 251)

Deleuze and Guattari continue: ‘Far from reducing the multiplicities’ number of dimensions to two, the *plane of consistency* cuts across them all, intersects them in order to bring into coexistence any number of multiplicities, with any number of dimensions (ATP 251). Indeed, ‘all becomings are written like sorcerers’ drawings on this plane of consistency’ (ATP 251). Once again Lovecraft becomes the writer most capable of expressing this multi-dimensional, but flat plane, although D. H. Lawrence’s apparently less cosmic writings, on the tortoise for example, also foreground this particular form of abstraction – or practice of diagrammatics (‘Lawrence, in his becoming-tortoise, moves from the most obstinate animal dynamism to the abstract, pure geometry ... he pushes becoming-tortoise all the way to the plane of consistency’ (ATP 251)).

Deleuze and Guattari also call this plane the ‘Planemon, or the Rhizosphere, the criterium ... At  $n$  dimensions, it is called the Hypersphere, the Mechanosphere’: ‘It is the abstract figure, or rather, since it has no form itself, the abstract Machine of which each concrete assemblage is a multiplicity, a becoming, a segment, a vibration. And the abstract machine is the intersection of them all’ (ATP 252). Once again this is the univocity of Spinoza (individual modes as different expressions of the same substance) mediated through Bergson (the multiplicity of different durations in

communication), but it is Woolf – ‘who made all of her life and work a passage, a becoming’ – and her book *The Waves* that best shows this abstract machine at work (and ends the sequence of memories of a sorcerer) (ATP 252).

Indeed, we have here an abstract and speculative perspective (a kind of external point of view) which is then accompanied by something more experiential and experimental (a becoming that is firmly in and with the world). It is this conjunction of the abstract and concrete – of being a part from but also a part of the world – that defines this plateau (and indeed, *A Thousand Plateaus* more generally).<sup>8</sup> Could we not also reframe this as a conjunction – or interference – between philosophy and fiction, when both, each in their own way, announce a different individuation in and of the world from typical subjects and objects, but also from different perspectives? In fact, it seems to me, that we might say in the becoming plateau fiction becomes philosophy, but also that philosophy operates as itself a kind of fiction (indeed, the different memories of the plateau – which Deleuze and Guattari later rename becomings – are themselves philo-fictions in this sense).<sup>9</sup>

### 3. Philosophy as Fictioning (Becoming-Imperceptible...Becoming-World)

‘Memories of a Haecceity’, the section that follows directly on from the two Spinoza sections, concerns itself more explicitly with these different philosophical fictions, or different individuations in and of the world.<sup>10</sup> Deleuze and Guattari use a term from Duns Scotus, ‘haecceity’ that names a certain ‘thingness’ (or ‘here and nowness’) that is irreducible to subjects or objects per se. In fact, any given body (including, as the above quote from the interview with Deleuze suggests, seasons and weather systems, certain times of the day, but also, in fact, the subject themselves) can be understood as

---

<sup>8</sup> As evidenced in the title of the final concluding chapter of *A Thousand Plateaus*, ‘Conclusion: Concrete Rules and Abstract Machines’ (ATP: 501-16).

<sup>9</sup> In fact, this is to follow Deleuze when he remarks in the Preface to *Difference and Repetition*: ‘A book of philosophy should be in part a very particular species of detective novel, in part a kind of science fiction’ (Deleuze 1995: xx). For a compelling example of a book that uses Deleuze and Guattari (and not least the concept of becoming) in a more pronounced philo-fiction see Reza Negarestani’s *Cyclonopedia* (Negarestani 2008). I attend further to a kind of practice that results from interference between philosophy and fiction in my forthcoming book (written with David Burrows): *Mythopoesis/Myth-Science/Mythotechnesis*.

<sup>10</sup> In his own commentary on the Becoming plateau Eugene Holland points to an interesting ambiguity here – when the plateau moves from the memories of human figures to those of objects. As he suggests this might point to the author’s own memories – of haecceities, molecules and so forth – but also to the stranger and more compelling idea that these non-human and inorganic entities might themselves have memories (or becomings): ‘But if the earth can think (as per the title of the Geology plateau), why can’t molecules remember?’ (Holland 2013: 103). Again, it is in this sense, it seems to me, that *A Thousand Plateaus* is itself a kind of philo-fiction.

a haeccity, defined – in a return to Spinoza – by a longitude (relations of speed and slowness) and latitude (the capacity to affect/be affected).

Once more literature is drawn in as ‘lived’ example of this particular fictioning of the world – Charlotte Brontë, Michel Tournier, Virginia Woolf – and, following on from this, a particular form of expression or semiotic is mapped out that is appropriate and adequate to this peculiar individuation: ‘proper names, verbs in the infinitive and indefinite articles or pronouns’ (ATP 263). The proper name, for example, ‘fundamentally demarcates something that is of the order of the event, of becoming or of the haeccity. It is the military men and meteorologists who hold the secret of proper names, when they give them to a strategic operation or a hurricane’ (ATP 264).

Indeed, we also find in this section of the plateau the distinction that Deleuze develops in his single authored works between *Aeon*, ‘the indefinite time of the event’, and *Chronos*, ‘the time of measure that situates things and persons’ (ATP 262). We might say that *A Thousand Plateaus*, and the Becoming plateau in particular, is concerned specifically with the forms of individuation of *Aeon*. ‘Memories of a Plan(e) Maker’ – the next section of the plateau – concerns itself with what we might call the terrain of these haeccities, and more specifically the relation of transcendence and immanence, or the plane of organization (n+1) and the plane of consistency (n-1). The latter has no supplementary dimensions, no hidden principles – everything is, as it were, on the surface. Here it is Kleist (‘everything with him, in his writing as in his life, becomes speed and slowness’ (ATP 268)) alongside Nietzsche who best constructs this plane (for it is never a question of discovering a ready made plane of consistency, but of making one), though it is also, again, music (for example with Boulez and Cage) that best expresses the two planes (and their necessary interaction).<sup>11</sup> (Artaud is also footnoted as distinguishing between the two planes – one ‘denounced as the source of all illusions’ (ATP 542)).

---

<sup>11</sup> In terms of this construction project we might turn to Deleuze and Guattari’s remarks in ‘November 28, 1947: How Do You Make Yourself a Body Without Organs’: ‘The field of immanence or plane of consistency must be constructed. This can take place in very different social formations through very different assemblages (perverse, artistic, scientific, mystical, political) with different types of bodies without organs’ (ATP 157)). The relation of construction to expression is complex, but what one can say (and here I am explicitly following Eric Alliez’s take on Deleuze and Guattari’s philosophy) is that it is only through a construction of some kind (which is to say a practice) that expression can take place (see in particular Alliez’s ‘Deleuze’s Virtual Philosophy’ in *The Signature of the World* (Alliez 2004: 85-103). Brian Massumi’s ‘Introduction: Like a Thought’ to *A Shock to Thought* also attends to the importance of the concept of expression for Deleuze and Guattari, and, of relevance here, the connection of this concept to becoming when this names expressive processes (and practices) of actualization (Massumi 2002: xiii-xxxix).

We also find here something that is characteristic of *A Thousand Plateaus* in general (and, in this respect, marks a key difference to the more accelerationist tone and orientation of *Anti-Oedipus*): the issue of caution:<sup>12</sup>

But once again, so much caution is needed to prevent the plane of consistency from becoming a pure plane of abolition or death, to prevent the involution from turning into regression to the undifferentiated. Is it not necessary to retain a minimum of strata, a minimum of forms and functions, a minimum subject from which to extract materials, affects, and assemblages? (ATP 270)

*A Thousand Plateaus* is concerned with strategy in this sense – and, indeed, with the maintenance of a subject, at least as a minimum consistency, or territory from which to deterritorialise. Deleuze and Guattari write more about the dangers of absolute deterritorialisation (and destratification) in other plateaus, especially, again, ‘November 28, 1947: How to Make Yourself a Body Without Organs?’ (where, they argue, that it is only ‘through a meticulous relation with the strata that one succeeds in freeing lines of flight’ (ATP 161)) but certainly the Becoming plateau is also concerned with this ‘art of dosages’.

If the ‘Memories of a Sorcerer’ sections are, for this reader at least, the key sections of the first part of the Becoming plateau (not least as they concern themselves with a minimum subject of becoming), then ‘Memories of a Molecule’ is the key section of the latter part and, indeed, takes us away from the human subject per se. Here we get a more explicit account of how becoming actually operates, not via mimesis or imitation but by the extraction of ‘particles’ (asignifying and intensive) that follows from the establishing of ‘zones of proximity’ (that itself follows from the establishment of one’s territory (that, in turn, defines one)):

Starting from the forms one has, the subject one is, the organs one has, or the functions one fulfills, becoming is to extract particles between which one establishes the relations of movement and rest, speed and slowness that are *closest* to what one is becoming, and through which one becomes. (ATP 272)

It is in this sense, as Deleuze and Guattari remark, that the process of becoming is desire, when this names a whole assemblage of elements in contact and communication (something in you desires to become something else...and begins to adjust its speeds...establishes a zone of proximity...it then, as it were, slips in amongst things...).<sup>13</sup>

---

<sup>12</sup> For a precise diagnosis of this difference (and an argument for the superiority of *Anti-Oedipus*) see Nick Land’s ‘Making it with Death: Remarks on Thanatos and Desiring Production’ (and, indeed, his other essays of the 1990s) (Land 2013: 261-88).

<sup>13</sup> It is in this sense that Deleuze talks of his interest in surfers and their relation to the wave in the ‘From A to Z’ interview with Claire Parnet (Deleuze 2012), but also, more

We are given the example of a becoming-dog (for example, when a child plays at 'being' this animal): 'Do not imitate a dog, but make your organism enter into composition with *something else* in such a way that the particles emitted from the aggregate thus composed will be canine as a function of the relation of movements and rest, or of molecular proximity, into which they enter' (ATP 274). It is in this sense that becoming animal does not necessarily involve any likeness to an animal (though it may), but rather a capture of certain kinds of affect (the particles) that, ethologically speaking, characterize a given animal (understood as a set of capacities to affect and be affected).<sup>14</sup> All becomings are molecular in this sense (though they might take on a certain molar 'appearance', this is always a secondary effect of becoming).

At stake in this section is also, again, the key idea of a sequence – or series – of becomings, beginning with becoming-women and ending with becoming-imperceptible. Becoming-women is simply, for Deleuze and Guattari, the privileged threshold, or doorway through which one embarks upon other becomings – and moves ever further from molar forms. Women as much as men must become-women in this sense (Deleuze and Guattari take time to pre-empt some of the possible feminist responses to this particular idea, but it is true that a certain form of femininity, or, at least, microfemininity is privileged (as closer to the situation of desire) and, once again it is Woolf who best expresses this state of becoming). It is in this sense that the girl – introduced as 'fugitive being' in the previous section of the plateau – is the key conceptual personae of the second part of the plateau ('What is a girl, what is a group of girls? Proust at least has shown us once and for all that their individuation, collective or singular, proceeds not by subjectivity but by haecceity ... They are pure relations of speeds and slownesses, and nothing else' (ATP 271)).

The furthest reaches of the series (although there is no ultimate *telos* there is a tendency to increasing dissipation) can be broken down into three aspects: a becoming imperceptible (towards the anorganic), a becoming indiscernible (towards the asignifying) and a becoming impersonal (towards the asubjective). Ultimately, to follow these is to become like everyone else, not in a reduction of singularity, but in the sense of a kind of invisibility in the world – or, more accurately, a kind of becoming-world: 'becoming everybody/everything, making the world a becoming, is

---

philosophically speaking, that he links learning to swim with the movement from the First to Second kind of Knowledge in his seminar on Spinoza (we learn to compose our body, with its particular relations of speed and slowness, with those of the wave: we are no longer subject to the wave but have, as it were, understood, and thus 'conquered' (or formed a common notion with) this element of the world) (Deleuze 1978).

<sup>14</sup> It is in this sense that 'A racehorse is more different than a workhorse than a workhorse is from an ox' (ATP 257).

to world, to make a world or worlds, in other words, to find one's proximities and zones of indiscernibility' (ATP 280).<sup>15</sup>

It is in this sense that drugs are an important, if ultimately limited, mechanism of experimentation, involving 'modifications of speed', or, more simply, changes in perception (they allow the hitherto imperceptible to be perceived) (ATP 282). As Deleuze and Guattari remark earlier in the *Becoming plateau* drugs have, in this sense, changed the 'perceptive coordinates of space-time' even in non-users (ATP 248). Drugs can also eliminate, at least temporarily, forms and subjects (they undo the plane of organization). It is here that Deleuze and Guattari posit a 'pharmacoanalysis' that would be concerned with an unconscious of these impersonal microperceptions. This is not an unconscious to be discovered, but, again, one to be constructed.<sup>16</sup> Indeed, following Spinoza, there is not so much a conscious/unconscious dualism here (or bar between the two) as a sliding scale. This is something Deleuze returns to in his later book on Leibniz with the idea of a 'dark background' from which 'clear and distinct' perceptions foreground themselves, but we might also say that the idea of a kind of plenitude of virtualities as yet unactualised characterizes Deleuze's other writings, on cinema for example, with the latter operating as precisely an 'actualising machine'.<sup>17</sup> In fact, this actual/virtual relation is, I think, an isotope of a broader finite/infinite one that has always been a key concern of philosophy (and, indeed, religion). Deleuze might be said to posit a continuum between these two – the finite and infinite – in place, again, of any bar or gap – and it also this, I think, that constitutes the importance of both Bergson and Spinoza for Deleuze as well as his difference to other post-Kantian thinkers. It is also this that gives his writings its pragmatic and transformative character (we can always become more than what we already are).

Once again, however, this foregrounding of perceptive and psychic experimentation holds its dangers (as expounded by the two key conceptual personae – or 'probe-heads' – when it comes to the pharmalogical, Artaud and Michaux): either the black hole, the line of abolition, or 'a segmentarity all the more rigid for being marginal, a territorialization all the more artificial for being based on chemical substances,

---

<sup>15</sup> Michel Tournier's *Robinson*, at least as Deleuze reconstructs the story in one of the appendices to *Logic of Sense* (Deleuze 1990: 301-20) offers a fictional case study of this becoming-world (see also the section 'Becoming world' in my *Art Encounters Deleuze and Guattari* (O'Sullivan 2006: 95-7).

<sup>16</sup> In relation to the construction of a molecular unconscious (in an analytic sense), especially in relation to 'other, non-human, animal, vegetable, cosmic, abstract machine becomings', see the section 'Unconscious versus libido' in Guattari's *Schizoanalytic Cartographies* (Guattari 2013: 29-31; quote from 31).

<sup>17</sup> See in particular Chapter 7, 'Perception in the Folds', of *The Fold* (Deleuze 1993: 85-99). And, in relation to cinema opening up different space-times, see especially Deleuze's *Cinema 2* (Deleuze 1989)).



hallucinatory forms, and phantasy subjectifications' (ATP 285).<sup>18</sup> 'Drug addicts may be considered as precursors or experimenters who tirelessly blaze new paths of life, but their cautiousness lacks the foundation for caution' (ATP 285). Drug use, we might say, does not involve an adequate (or sustainable) program of construction.

'Memories of a Secret' likewise addresses the question of imperceptibility in relation to the secret, understood as (hidden) content, but also as constituting a form itself. Deleuze and Guattari discuss secret societies and their necessary co-existence within society, but also return to both the figure of the girl (as secret) and, indeed, the war machine (as that which invents/occupies a different space time – or operates *as* secret). Once more artists are the pre-eminent thinkers of the secret, especially in their deployment of a secret rhythm, a secret line, and so forth (with Henry James laying out a kind of meta-narrative of the passage of the secret from content to form).

In the penultimate section of the plateau, 'Memories and Becomings, Points and Blocks', becoming is opposed to memory, and also history. Becomings are, to follow Nietzsche, untimely. They are both in and out of time, or irreducible to the conditions that allow for them. It is in this sense that becomings are also always minoritarian, when the major names a model, or standard, that is, precisely, historical ('women, children, but also animals, plants, molecules, are minoritarian' (ATP 291)).<sup>19</sup> Becomings then proceeds not by memory but by blocks, for example 'blocks of childhood' that do not involve a regression to the child that one was, but an experimental becoming-child (it is in this sense that Deleuze and Guattari see a homology between Spinoza and children).

In this section, in an echo of the previous discussion of the two planes, two systems are counter-posed: First, the punctual, which proceeds by points (with any lines present subordinated to the latter): 'These systems are aborescent, mnemonic, molar, structural: they are systems of reterritorialization' (ATP 295). And the second multilinear with a privileging of the line over the point ('Free the line, free the diagonal' (ATP 295)). In fact, the multilinear might utilise a punctual system in order to break and go beyond it, just as becoming utilises history but is not of it. *A Thousand Plateaus* never simply privileges the rhizome over the root, the smooth over the striated and so forth, but always, again, articulates this in terms of strategy. Always the consolidation of a territory before deterritorialisation. Always the opening

---

<sup>18</sup> Deleuze and Guattari define 'probe-heads' (in relation to becomings) in the plateau 'Year Zero: Faciality' (ATP 167-91): 'Beyond the face lies an altogether different inhumanity: no longer that of the primitive head, but of 'probe-heads'; here, cutting edges of deterritorialization become operative and lines of deterritorialization positive and absolute, forming strange new becomings, new polyvocalities (ATP: 190-91)'.

<sup>19</sup> For more detail on this idea of becoming as minoritarian (and a politics that might lead on from this) see my forthcoming article 'Deleuze against Control: Fictioning and Myth-Science'.

up of a smooth space from within the striated (and, inversely, always the dangers of deterritorialisations being reterritorialised, of smooth space becoming striated). Experimentation, we might say, necessarily involves this working out of proportions. A neither moving too slow or too fast.

That said, becoming does mean leaving a given territory, following an aberrant line and then constructing a new territory. Becoming, ultimately, is creation in this sense. As Deleuze and Guattari remark 'Creations are like mutant abstract lines that have detached themselves from the task of representing a world, precisely because they assemble a new type of reality that history can only recontain or relocate in punctual systems' (ATP 296). Becoming, we might say, is a kind of world-building technology.

In contradistinction to drugs, and in the final section of the plateau, becoming-music once again becomes the preeminent (and most successful) example of becoming (even more so than painting (that involves its own deterritorialisation, of faces and landscapes). In music's case it is the deterritorialisation of the refrain that defines a becoming-music that itself processes through a series, from becoming women to becoming child to becoming molecular. It is also here that we return to the Bergsonian memories I began my own commentary with and the idea of a coexistence of different durations and, indeed, of a passage between them. Deleuze and Guattari make some compelling remarks in these last pages of the plateau, about how 'A becoming-insect has replaced becoming-bird, or forms a block with it' (ATP 308). They continue: 'The insect is closer, better able to make audible the truth that all becomings are molecular' (ATP 308). But, we might add, music can also progress to more inorganic durations and with this the production of other, stranger forms and rhythms as yet unknown. Becoming operates as a passage between then, but also names this construction and expression of a different individuation in and of the world. If this account of becoming is philosophy (one which, as I hope I have conveyed, involves its own becomings), then it is of a very strange kind. An untimely philosophy that might use its own history (that is the history of philosophy) but only as a set of conditions from which to depart. A philosophy that does not necessarily respect preset and predetermined terms and protocols (though it has its own rules), or indeed clearly demarcated subjects and objects (though it has its own individuations). It is philosophy as a fundamentally experimental and constructive – and affirmative – pursuit. Might we even say that it is philosophy as a form of fictioning when this ultimately names the production of a new kind of reality from within this one?

#### Bibliography:

Alliez, E. (2004) *The Signature of the World, Or, What is Deleuze and Guattari's Philosophy?*, trans. E. R. Albert and A. Toscano, London: Continuum.

Delanda, M. (2002), *Intensive Science and Virtual Philosophy*, London: Continuum.

Deleuze, G. (1978) 'Lecture on Spinoza: *Cours Vincennes* 24 January 1978', available at <http://www.webdeleuze.com/php/texte.php?cle=14&groupe=Spinoza&langue=2>, last accessed 20 August 2015.

Deleuze, G. (1989) *Cinema 2: The Time Image*, trans. H. Tomlinson and R. Galeta, London: Athlone.

Deleuze, G. (1990) *The Logic of Sense*, trans. M. Lester with C. Stivale, ed. C. V. Boundas, New York: Columbia University Press.

Deleuze, G. (1993) *The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque*, trans. T. Conley, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Deleuze, G. (1995a), *Difference and Repetition*, trans. P. Patton, New York: Columbia University Press.

Deleuze, G. (1995b) *Negotiations: 1972-1990*, trans. M. Joughin, New York: Columbia University Press.

Deleuze, G. (2012), *Gilles Deleuze: From A to Z*, interview with C. Parnet, Dir. P-A. Boutang, trans. C. J. Stivale, Los Angeles: Semiotext(e).

Deleuze, G. and F. Guattari (1984) *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. R. Hurley, M. Seem and H. R. Lane, London: Athlone Press.

Deleuze, G. and F. Guattari (1988) *A Thousand Plateaus*, trans. B. Massumi, London: Athlone Press.

Deleuze, G. and F. Guattari (1994) *What is Philosophy?*, trans. H. Tomlinson and G. Burchell, London: Verso.

Foucault, M. (1984), 'Preface', to G. Deleuze and F. Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. R. Hurley, M. Seem and H. R. Lane, London: Athlone Press.

Guattari, F. (1995) *Chaosmosis: An Ethico-Aesthetic Paradigm*, trans. P. Bains and J. Pefanis, Sydney: Power Publications.

Guattari, F. (2013) *Schizoanalytic Cartographies*, trans. A. Goffey, London: Bloomsbury.

Hadot, P. (1995), *Philosophy as a Way of Life*, trans. M. Chase, ed. A. I. Davidson, Oxford: Blackwell.

Holland, E. (2013), *Deleuze and Guattari's A Thousand Plateaus: A Reader's Guide*, London: Bloomsbury.

Land, N. (2013), 'Making it with Death: Remarks on Thanatos and Desiring Production', *Fanged Noumena: Collected Writings 1987-2007*, eds. Ray Brassier and Robin Mackay, Falmouth: Urbanomic, 2013, pp. 261-88.

Massumi, B. (2002), *A Shock to Thought: Expression after Deleuze and Guattari*, London: Routledge.

May, T. (2000), 'Philosophy as Spiritual Exercise in Foucault and Deleuze', *Angelaki: Journal of the Theoretical Humanities*, 5:2, 223-229.

Negarestani, R. (2008), *Cyclonopedia: Complicity with Anonymous Materials*, Melbourne: re.press.

O'Sullivan, S. (2005) *Art Encounters Deleuze and Guattari: Thought Beyond Representation*, London: Palgrave.

O'Sullivan S. (2012) *On the Production of Subjectivity: Five Diagrams of the Finite-Infinite Relation*, Basingstoke: Palgrave.

O'Sullivan, S. (forthcoming), 'Deleuze against Control: Fictioning and Myth-Science', *Theory Culture Society*.

O'Sullivan, S. and D. Burrows (forthcoming) *Mythopoesis/Myth-Science/Mythotechnesis*.