ASEM winter 2019

SenseLab EV 10-785

Thursdays 1pm-5pm

Erin Manning

Course Title: The Production of Subjectivity

*With Rachel Zellars*

In “The Anarchy of Colored Girls Assembled in a Riotous Manner,” Saidiya Hartman writes:

Esther Brown did not write a political tract on the refusal to be governed, or draft a plan for mutual aid or outline a memoir of her sexual adventures. A manifesto of the wayward: Own Nothing. Refuse the Given. Live on What You Need and No More. Get Ready to Be Free — was not found among the items contained in her case file. She didn’t pen any song lines: *My mama says I’m reckless, My daddy says I’m wild, I ain’t good looking, but I’m somebody’s angel child*. She didn’t commit to paper her ruminations on freedom: *With human nature caged in a narrow space, whipped daily into submission, how can we speak of potentialities*?

This gorgeous and painful fabulation of the life of Esther Brown, published in 2018 in *The South Atlantic Quarterly*, takes us back to the question of the scenes of subjection that populate slavery and its afterlife. In the introduction to this earlier book, published in 1997, Hartman writes:

In the place of the grand narrative of freedom, with its decisive events and incontrovertible advances, I offer an account that focuses on the ambivalent legacy of emancipation and the undeniably truncated opportunities available to the freed. Lacking the certitude of a definitive partition between slavery and freedom, and in the absence of a consummate breach through which freedom might unambivalently announce itself, there is at best a transient and fleeting expression of possibility that cannot ensconce itself as a durable temporal marker. If periodization is a barrier imposed from above that obscures the involuntary servitude and legal subjection that followed in the wake of slavery, then attempts to assert absolutist distinctions between slavery and freedom are untenable. Fundamentally, such assertions involve distinctions between the transient and the epochal, underestimate the contradictory inheritance of emancipation and the forms of involuntary servitude that followed in the wake of slavery, and diminish the reign of terror that accomanied the advent of freedom.

Twenty years on, Hartman’s words resonate and cut through, with remarkable precision, any easy account we might give of freedom and emancipation. “The abolition of chattel slavery and the emergence of man, however laudable, long awaited, and cherished, fail to yield such absolute distinctions; instead fleeting, disabled, and short-lived practices stand for freedom and its failure” (Hartman 1997: 13).

Twenty-five years before Hartman writes *Scenes of Subjection*, Felix Guattari assembles his thinking on the production of subjectivity and writes, with Gilles Deleuze, a book that deeply refutes the standard organization of subjectivity produced and performed through psychoanalysis. This book, *Anti-Oedipus*, emerges through the pain and power of May 68, asking how else we might consider not only an alternative political regime, but how this political regime must cut through given accounts of capital and normopathy. For Guattari, the political always pushes up against the presupposition of this normative baseline he calls normopathy. With *La Borde*, a psychiatric institution he runs with Jean Oury, Guattari experiments with what he calls “schizoanalysis.” A key question underlying this work is that of the production of subjectivity. In the chapter of *Chaosmosis* entitled “On the Production of Subjectivity” in *Chaosmosis*, Felix Guattari writes:

Considering subjectivity from the point of view of its production does not imply any return to traditional systems of binary determination – material infrastructure/ideological superstructure. The various semiotic registers that combine to engender subjectivity do not maintain obligatory hierarchical relations fixed for all time. Sometimes, for example, economic semiotisation becomes dependent on collective psychological factors – look at the sensitivity of the stock exchange to fluctuations of opinion. Subjectivity is in fact plural and polyphonic – to use Mikhail Bakhtin's expression. It recognises no dominant or determinant instance guiding all other forms according to a univocal causality. […] In such conditions it appears opportune to forge a more transversalist conception of subjectivity, one which would permit us to understand both its idiosyncratic territorialised couplings (Existential Territories) and its opening onto value systems (Incorporeal Universes) with their social and cultural implications” (1995: 3-4).

Moving through Guattari’s *Chaosmosis* and targeted readings of Deleuze and Guattari’s two books on capitalism and schizophrenia – *Anti-Oedipus* and *A Thousand Plateaus –* we will explore the question of how subjectivity, capital, normopathy and desire compose through the speculatively pragmatic thinking of Guattari’s lasting influence on Deleuze.

In a 2017 *eflux* article entitled *The Spheres of Insurrection: Suggestions for Combatting the Pimping of Life*, schizoanalyst and professor Suely Rolnik writes:

In our living condition we are constituted by the effects of forces, with their diverse and mutable relationships that stir the vital flows of a world. These forces traverse all the bodies that compose the world, making them one sole body in continuous variation, whether or not we are conscious of it” (eflux #86).

Suely Rolnik’s words bring in the third figure who moves through this triadic exploration of how subjectivity is produced: Lygia Clark. Performance artist, painter, activist, therapist, Lygia Clark’s work performs the production of subjectivity. In her work *Structuring of the Self* and many of the propositions of that later period of her life, the “relational object” moves the practice. Suely Rolnik describes the work of *Structuring the Self* and its use of relational objects this way:

The artist received each person individually for one-hour sessions, one to three times a week, over a period of months, and, in certain cases, for more than one year. Her relationship with the receiver, mediated by the objects, had become indispensable for the realization of the artwork: it was on the basis of her sensations of the living presence of the other in her own “resonant body,” in the course of each session, that the artist progressively defined the singular use of the *Relational Objects*. This very quality of opening to the other is what she was able to provoke in those who participated in her work. In this therapeutic-poetic laboratory, the work was realized in the gradually forming consistency of this quality of the relation to otherness within the subjectivity of its receivers (2007: 3).

The relational object is never an object as such. It is a tendency that carries an object likeness – Clark’s relational objects are carriers of potential. Taking the shape of bags of air, sand, water, of rocks held in the hand, of textures placed against the skin, relational objects are mobilizers for a schizosoma. A schizosoma is the expression of a shifting boundary, a structur*ing*. Too often called an individual, a schizosoma is the reminder that the self is never enclosed, that it moves across tendencies it cannot hold. *Structuring of the Self* explores the potential of the schizosoma, developing attunements to how much structure or destructuring a schizosoma needs to thrive*.* A paranoid body leaks at a rate too vertiginous to connect to its forces. In that case, a schizosomatic process may assist in temporarily shutting a valve or two. A frozen body may need the opposite. *Structuring of the Self* is a practice that attends to these necessary reorientations, bringing the body into a more desiring relation with the world. This desiring relation has nothing to do with what a body-as-interiority desires. “Strictly speaking, it would no longer be possible here to speak of identity, for this idea is incompatible with a subjectivity composed of the processual dynamic of moulding oneself” (Rolnik 1999: 19). The schizosomatic work of activating a relational field proposes not to restructure a body, but to shift the very question of both structure and self. The artful does its work here not as an object but in the relation. The practice itself is the work.

There is no attempt, in this course, to make an easy connection between the works of Guattari, Deleuze and Guattari, Clark and Hartman. *Parallelism is not the aim*. The aim is, rather, to ask how transversalities across modes of thought and practice emerge, and how those transversalities shift our understanding of what we may, in the end, call *minor socialities* – forces of existence that shift the contours of grand narratives, reorienting the shape of the social. The question that moves through our twelve weeks together is: **how does the production of subjectivity mobilize forces of existence?**

This question is, by necessity, a pragmatic one. It is also speculative. What process philosophy teaches is that all pragmatic questions carry a speculative share: there is always an operation of surplus in the excavations of how worlds come to expression.

The aim of the course will be to ask these questions and see if we can connect them to practice, and to artfulness. Artfulness, as defined in *The Minor Gesture* (Manning 2016) is the force of form that moves experience. It can be connected to an artwork, but the artwork is never its endpoint. Art, seen this way, becomes a passage, a movement toward modes of living that alter the quality of experience. How do we as artists practice the structuring of the self, and how can this structuring allow itself to complicate the often too-literal alliance between body and identity? How can the production of subjectivity trouble and texture the complexity of what a body can do?

Evaluation:

This will be a course in close-reading. Rachel Zellars and Erin Manning will orient a close encounter with the materiality of Hartman and Guattari and Deleuze and Guattari’s works. This will require a slowness that troubles the idea of “arriving” somewhere. We will take seriously that the speculatively pragmatic question of how subjectivity is produced germinates in the encounter. We will follow the tendencies of that encounter. To facilitate this, we propose that a schizosomatic session accompany each class. This schizosomatic session asks the question of the production of subjectivity according to whatever means feel necessary at that juncture. Small groups will facilitate these sessions. They can involve movement of any and all kinds (including sleep). There is no pressure to perform. In true schizoanalytic form, the propositions are considered techniques, and techniques are not there to be judged, but to be experimented. A final event will be crafted collectively for April 11. We will explore together what seeds need to be carried by that event. Although the academic world requires individual evaluations, this final event will be collectively produced to foreground how no individual can alone produce the conditions for collective experience. *What is sought is not an imposed togetherness, however*. The solitary, understood through a schizosomatic lens, is already multiple, already affected by the world. In our final event, we will nurture that multiple solitariness, exploring the minor socialities that run through us. Saidiya Hartman will visit us either for this event or for the preceding class.

Participation: 20% (this includes having prepared the readings in advance)

Schizosomatic proposition: 40% (work in groups to propose a weekly body-world exploration)

Final event: 40% (collective schizosomatic event)

Class schedule:

BOOKS

Saidiya Hartman *Scenes of Subjection* London: Oxford UP, 1999.

Felix Guattari *Chaosmosis: An Ethico-Aesthetic Paradigm*. Trans. Paul Bains and Julian Pefanis. Indiana: Indiana UP, 1995.

Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. Trans Mark Seem, Helen R. Lane and Robert Hurley. Minneapolis: Minnesota UP, 1993.

Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. Trans Brian Massumi. Minneapolis: Minnesota UP, 1987.

January 10

Saidiya Hartman, “The Anarchy of Colored Girls Assembled in a Riotous Manner” (read out loud)

Lygia Clark *Caminhando*

Schizosomatic Proposition – *Structuring of the Self*

January 17

Saidiya Hartman, chapter 1, first half “Innocent Amusements” pp. 17-36

Felix Guattari, chapter 1, first half “The Production of Subjectivity,” pp. 1-18

Schizosomatic Proposition -

January 24

Saidiya Hartman, chapter 1, second half, “Innocent Amusements” pp. 36-48

Felix Guattari, chapter 1 second half, “The Production of Subjectivity,” pp. 18-32

Schizosomatic Proposition -

January 31

Saidiya Hartman, chapter 2, first half “Redressing the Pained Body” pp. 49-61

Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*  first half “The Desiring Machines” pp. 1-21

Schizosomatic Proposition -

February 7

Saidiya Hartman, chapter 2, second half “Redressing the Pained Body” pp. 61-78

Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*  second half “The Desiring Machines” pp. 22-50

Schizosomatic Proposition -

February 14

Saidiya Hartman, chapter 3, first half “Seduction and the Ruses of Power” pp. 79-94

Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*  first fifth “Introduction to Schizoanalysis” pp. 273-295

Schizosomatic Proposition -

February 21:

Saidiya Hartman, chapter 3, second half “Seduction and the Ruses of Power” pp. 94-112

Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*  second fifth “Introduction to Schizoanalysis” pp. 296-322

Schizosomatic Proposition -

March 7

Saidiya Hartman, chapter 4, “The Burdened Individuality of Freedom” pp. 115-124

Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*  third fifth “Introduction to Schizoanalysis” pp. 322-340

Schizosomatic Proposition -

March 14:

Saidiya Hartman, chapter 5, first half, “Fashioning Obligation” pp. 125-145

Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*  fourth fifth “Introduction to Schizoanalysis” pp. 340-360

March 21

Saidiya Hartman, chapter 6, second half, “Fashioning Obligation” pp. 145-163

Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*  final section “Introduction to Schizoanalysis” pp. 360-382

Schizosomatic Proposition -

March 28:

Saidiya Hartman, chapter 6, first half, “Instinct and Injury” pp. 164-183

Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus* “Year 0 - Faciality” pp. 167-179

April 4:

Saidiya Hartman, chapter 6, first half, “Instinct and Injury” pp. 183-206

Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus* “Year 0 - Faciality” pp. 179-

191

Schizosomatic Proposition -

April 12 – SCHIZOSOMATIC EVENT