

**II**

## **Double Osmosis**

## Chapter Three

### At the Skin - Alternatives to the 'Classical Theatre' of Experience<sup>1</sup>

*Overturing Platonism, then, means denying the primacy of the original over the copy, of model over image; glorifying the reign of simulacra and reflections. (DR:66)*

I have discussed the manner in which, for Deleuze and Guattari, the 'classical' operates as an attempt to freeze the productive connections of interaction. This creates what could be called the 'ice' of identity. The flow of difference is frozen into the Same. Furthermore, as has been argued, this often takes the form of a generalised *theatricalisation* of experience. For example, in commenting on psychoanalysis' employment of the Oedipal scheme to restrain those flows of the unconscious which may create lines of flight from State formations, such as the Phallus/Family, Deleuze and Guattari suggest that "...a classical theater was substituted for the units of production of the unconscious..." (AO:85).

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<sup>1</sup> A companion piece to this chapter is my article "Negotiating Presence - Performance and New Technologies" (Murphie, 1990). Huhtamo (1992, 1995) also gives a wide ranging discussing of the issues surrounding interactivity as they are presented in contemporary art's "metacommentary" upon them (1992:93), but situates this discussion in the context of a wide ranging survey of emergent interactive art forms, such as CD-ROMs, the interactive installations of artists such as Lynn Hershman and Sara Roberts, and various other attempts to give an experience of immersion. Huhtamo seriously problematises notions such as 'interactivity' and 'immersion' but still argues that "interactive technology...could well subvert prevailing media practices and supplant them with more versatile, user-friendly and 'democratic' forms" (1995:100). He notes, however, that this is not just a matter of "hardware development" but one which demands a full consideration of social, ideological and historical issues.

This theatricalisation of production - its freeze-framing within the 'proscenium arch' of a 'stage' - is a constant concern in Deleuze and Guattari's work<sup>2</sup>.

Nevertheless Deleuze and Guattari are still very interested in actual performance, not as a way of staging a classical taxonomy of experience, but as a kind of *productive simulation* which moves away from this taxonomy of identities. For them, performance, as simulation, can participate in production - thaw the ice of identity. A useful simulation for Deleuze and Guattari neither simply represents nor *reduces* the real. Like Jarry's bicycle, it *produces* it. Simulation "subjects the Same to a conversion which relates it to the different" so that "things and beings which are distinguished in the different suffer a corresponding radical destruction of their *identity*" (DR:66). The simulation, precisely because it is a *bad* copy, moves away from resemblance *towards* difference. It "carries the real beyond its principle to the point where it is effectively produced by the desiring-machine". The simulation provides, in fact, "a machine to produce the real" (AO:87).

How does this machine work? It begins with the processes whereby copies ('good' copies) *become* simulacra ('bad' copies). The copy, according to Deleuze, is "an image endowed with resemblance" (LS:257). The simulacrum, on the other hand, "is an image without resemblance" (ibid.). Its relation to an 'original' has become shaky. Its 'identity' has fallen apart. In the terms discussed before, it is a 'melting' copy with a life of its own.

For the Deleuze of *The Logic of Sense*, this allows simulacra to participate in relations of production within the Real at large. Copies look backwards to their original. Simulacra break out of this reactive frame to an *interactive* relation with the world. Deleuze (253-259) argues that, once acknowledged, these active simulacra were more important to Plato's philosophy, if more

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<sup>2</sup> To give another example, Deleuze later commented in an interview that "...the machines of desire are more and more machines of theatre...All desiring-production is erased...(there is a) reduction of the factories of the unconscious to a scene from the theatre" (PP:28-29 - my translation).

disruptive to it, than the relation between the ideal and its lesser copy (the representation of this ideal).

In *Difference and Repetition* also, Deleuze describes the way in which simulacra deal in difference rather than identity. In this book, simulacra are a kind of operative machinic force for the production of the new. They are the very substance of the return of difference, in the eternal return of difference in repetition; of the repetition of an operating differential system -

*These differential systems with their disparate and resonating series, their dark precursor and forced movements, are what we call simulacra or phantasms. The eternal return concerns only simulacra, it causes only phantasms to return<sup>3</sup>. (DR:126)*

Simulacra are 'bad' images in that their process of production does not involve the repetition of identity but of difference. Simulacra, "...in contrast to icônes<sup>4</sup> ...have externalised resemblance" (128), rather than any internalised relation to truth, "and live on difference instead" (ibid.) of living in fixed States. They are a kind of virtual machine which emerges from the actual, a machine by which the identity of the old is overturned. Again, Deleuze points out the way in

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<sup>3</sup> The differences between simulacra and phantasms are a little difficult to define. At times (e.g. DR:127), they seem to be equated. Yet, although in some ways they indicate the same entity, they seem to indicate it in different ways. Firstly, this is because they seem derived from different forms of thought. The simulacra is concerned more with the relation between classical philosophy and its images. The phantasm is at times given a psychoanalytic frame (LS:210-216). I will suggest here that the simulacrum and the phantasm are two sides of the same coin.

The simulacrum is this coin seen from the point of view of its emergence from a philosophy of the copy and identity. The simulacrum presents itself at the moment at which the 'state of affairs' is falling apart. In this sense, the simulacrum is that which occurs in the depths of a situation, in the depths of a body which is holding itself together through its assumption of the Same. In this, it is the simulacrum that cracks the body, and that rises to the surface from the body's depths. The simulacrum is like the mush of water and ice that accompanies the thaw. The phantasm is this same entity when it has reached the surface, when it is free to play over other surfaces, when identity has been smashed. To put this another way, the simulacrum is the *emergence* of difference and the phantasm is the *return* of fully flowing difference - its full force, even against the body from which a phantasm may have arisen. This explains Deleuze's comment that "the becoming-mad of the depths was climbing to the surface, the simulacra in turn were becoming phantasms, the deep break was showing as a crack in the surface" (LS:165). As Deleuze goes on to say "Nothing ascends to the surface without changing its nature" (ibid.).

<sup>4</sup> "Copies" that are supposed to contain a certain identity with that they copy.

which simulacra inhabit the heart of Plato's philosophy and overthrow it from within<sup>5</sup>. Simulacra, with the life they give to difference, are "not merely defects" but "models themselves, terrifying models of the *pseudos* in which unfolds the power of the false" (ibid.). In this, "finally, resemblance or spiritual imitation gives way" to the "repetition" of a machine of becoming (ibid.). This is a machine, not so far from Jarry's bicycle, in which technical repetition leads both to a forgetting of the past and to a journey into the unknown territory of the new.

I have previously discussed the problems of theatricalisation's relations to State forms of identity. I intend, in the next three chapters, to discuss a more positive series of relations between performance, these simulacra/phantasms and becoming. Using a Deleuze-Guattarian approach, I shall, firstly, give a general theory of the production of the 'real'; secondly, analyse some recent performance and interactive installation work focusing on the use of technology; thirdly, give a detailed analysis of Deleuze and Guattari's concept of becoming; and fourthly, draw out the importance of the application of such a concept of becoming to performance and installation work. From this the beginnings of an ethics of interaction will be derived.

## At the Skin

*Every typology is dramatic, every dynamism a catastrophe. There is necessarily something cruel in this birth of a world which is a chaosmos, in these worlds of movements without subjects, roles without actors...Even the sky suffers from its cardinal points and its constellations which, like 'actor-suns', inscribe Ideas in its flesh. There*

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<sup>5</sup> Deleuze is, in effect, putting Platonic thought into reverse, at which point its *idealism* begins to unravel. This is a clear effort at deconstructing idealism from within. Deleuze is not so much anti-Platonic, which would only involve a partial negation of the Platonic Ideal, upholding it in opposition. It rather destroys its idealism completely by un-making it, at the same time as rendering mute a *judgment* upon everything Platonic.

*are indeed actors and subjects, but these are larvae, since they alone are capable of sustaining the lines, the slippages and the rotations...* (DR:219)

There can be little doubt that the theatre is as important to Deleuze and Guattari's philosophy as it is to Aristotle's. In *Nietzsche and Philosophy* Deleuze writes of 'dramatisation' as a method (78-79), as was discussed in the previous chapter. Foucault's major essay on Deleuze is titled 'Theatrum Philosophicum' (in 1977a:165-196). There is also a collection of critical essays on Deleuze titled *Gilles Deleuze and the Theatre of Philosophy* (Boundas and Olkowski, 1994). Guattari himself was involved with performance<sup>6</sup> and both Guattari and Deleuze have written specifically on the theatre; Guattari on the Polish theatre practitioner Witkiewicz (CS:303-310) and Deleuze on Italian director, Carmelo Bene (*MM*)<sup>7</sup>. They both use the philosophies of Antonin Artaud and other theatre theorists (such as Jarry) extensively and constantly cite performance practitioners from Kleist (*ATP*:355-356) to Robert Wilson (*ibid*:98) in their writings. All this must be qualified, of course, by what they consider theatre to be. To recapitulate, in Nietzschean terms one could say that they differentiate between the two types of theatre. On the one hand there is a 'reactive' theatre, that which has been called the classical theatre here, which negates life in favour of its representations - its 'freeze framing', or what Deleuze and Guattari call its 'anti-production'. On the other hand there is an 'active' theatre, which is interactive in the terms described here. In all this, for Deleuze and Guattari the theatre is not a given reflection of the world but the production of a *problematic* within the world.

In this they perhaps follow French theatre theorist and performer, Antonin Artaud. One of their major terms, the Body without Organs, or 'BwO', which occurs throughout their work<sup>8</sup>, is drawn directly from Antonin Artaud's attempts to work through the pain of a body struggling

<sup>6</sup> See Cormann, 1994 for one description of some of his interests in the area.

<sup>7</sup> For an account of Deleuze on the theatre, see Kowsar, 1986.

<sup>8</sup> See in particular *AO* and *ATP*:149-166.

with its own organisations<sup>9</sup> - in part, at least, in a performance context. For Deleuze, Guattari and Artaud the problems of performance, of 'what a body can do'<sup>10</sup>, and, consequently, of that body's relation to representations, were paramount. For Deleuze -

*Artaud pursues in all this the terrible revelation of a thought without image, and the conquest of a new principle which does not allow itself to be represented. (DR:147)*

Part of Artaud's project was to break through representation in order to do combat, through both language and the body, with the corruption at the heart of creation itself, a position Jane Goodall argues was influenced by Gnosticism (1994a). What is striking about Artaud's project is not necessarily its originality, but its force. Since Plato, the corruption at the heart of the copy was seen as the problem at which the physical and metaphysical met, but Artaud goes further than Plato. For Plato, if one saw beyond the corruption, there was an ideal removed from humanity. For Artaud, this corruption goes to the foundation of things.

For Artaud, one could break through the classical theatres of representation only to find that that distant 'ideal' beyond was also corrupt<sup>11</sup>. According to Plato, on the other hand, much as he eschewed art as a false and deluding copy of the ideal, representation, even as it lacked, was indicative of that which it lacked, the true. Thus, as Deleuze writes, for Plato it was a question not of "opposing the world of images in its entirety but to select the good images...eliminate the bad images or simulacra" (DR:127). This is complicated in the subsequent development of a

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<sup>9</sup> Jane Goodall (1994a:191-192) writes that Deleuze and Guattari here misinterpret Artaud's attempts to work through the pain of the body, arguing that it is never so easy for Artaud to simply oppose a Body without Organs to the pain of the organs. However, while it is true that they do at times valorise the BwO and suggest that it is possible to construct it, at other times I wonder if Deleuze and Guattari themselves believe that this creation of a 'BwO' is so simple, even if it is desirable. The fragility of such operations is always marked throughout their discussion of such terms as the BwO or 'line of flight'. For example, in ATP:159 we find that the BwO is howling, and that Deleuze and Guattari see a dynamic between the organ(ised)body and the BwO which is not easily resolved.

<sup>10</sup> Deleuze writes that this is one of the central questions of Spinoza's work. Spinoza, for Deleuze and Guattari, is the "prince of philosophers" because he was "the only philosopher never to have compromised with transcendence" (WP:48).

<sup>11</sup> Goodall's book argues that this is as it was for the Gnostics, for whom the being pretending to be God was the very god of corruption.

theory of representation. For Aristotle, as for Heidegger, what (tragic) *mimesis* captured was a relation to the ineffable *beyond* any particular copy, an ineffable that was the true state of humanity - be that the control of the gods or fate, or the relation of Being, or Dasein, to death. Common to all these philosophers is the conclusion that somehow representation in the theatre comes close to something hidden that is deep, 'true' and permanent within humanity. For Artaud, however, it was exactly this hidden depth that was suspect. The deep was no less corrupt than anything else. One had to constantly be wary of representation, constantly productive of movements through or away from representation, rejecting any production of semblance as final. One moved not towards the depths (of Truth, of Being) but away from them - not towards the (hierarchically organised) organs but towards the skin, towards that surface of interaction where such notions as original and copy negated each other.

Deleuze puts this another way in *Difference and Repetition* when discussing the way in which the dynamic of difference can blur together 'surface' and 'depth', a blurring through which difference can be seen to carry either the burden of evil and sin, or the logic of cruelty -

*There is no sin other than raising the ground and dissolving the form. Recall Artaud's idea: cruelty is nothing but determination as such, that precise point at which determination maintains its essential relation with the undetermined, that rigorous abstract line fed by chiaroscuro. (29)*

For Deleuze and Guattari this "cruelty" involves the constant interactions of such difficult double becomings as that occurring between surface and depth. Similarly, for Artaud, unlike those practitioners of the 'classical' theatre, the "theatre and its double" (Artaud, 1977) has an uneasy and dynamic relationship. Nothing is so easily separated from those things with which it interacts and from which, in classical thought, it was supposed to be differentiated. For Artaud, the consequence of this is that the theatre has to move towards aggravating, at the same time as



recognising, these problematic relations, in order to (im)mobilise a Body without Organs. This involves an engagement, not a split, *between* the visceral and the mental.

*Practically speaking, we want to bring back the idea of total theatre, where theatre will recapture from cinema, music-hall, the circus and life itself, those things that always belonged to it. This division between analytical theatre and a theatre of movement seems stupid to us. One cannot separate body and mind, nor the senses from the intellect, particularly in a field where the unendingly repeated jading of our organs calls for sudden shocks to revive our understanding.* (Artaud, 1977:66)

For Deleuze and Guattari, the response to this jading of the organs *is* the BwO. This BwO is not, however, “an empty body stripped of organs” (*ATP*:30). It refers, rather, to the way in which entities separated into incompatible dichotomies, such as organs/skin, depth/surface, truth/falsity, representation/reality, ideal/copy, can be made to play on *one* surface - “a body upon which that which serves as organs...is distributed according to crowd phenomena” (ibid.). For them, “the body without organs is not a dead body but a living body all the more alive and teeming once it has blown apart the organism and its organisation” (ibid.). Paul Patton (1986) suggests several clear formulations of the BwO. It is, at once, “the ideal limit of a process of desire” in which the organ *ism* no longer exists, and also “that pure surface of intensity which is the ideal point of departure and essential precondition for any process of desire” (24). He suggests that Deleuze and Guattari differ from Artaud in the way in which, in their work, the BwO allows for the play of *all* desires, not just, as in the case of Artaud, a desire for abolition (ibid.). This means that, because “to be normal is no less a desire than to self-destruct”, the BwO takes both a ‘conservative’ and a ‘radical’ form. In its anti-productive form, the BwO has a kind of zero intensity and operates to stratify or ‘freeze-frame’ life (25). In its creative (and

therefore deterritorialising) capacity, however, the BwO is “an active, full body which functions as a plane of consistency” (ibid.) for the full workings of desiring-production.

There are, then, differences between Artaud, Deleuze and Guattari<sup>12</sup> and some of the artists to be discussed shortly (such as Stelarc) as regards what happens, and how it happens, once the organism is either blown apart, or, alternatively, turned into a circus where ideas, representations and productions are able to interact as a carnival. However, one practice, at least, is common to them all. This is that of bringing these usually discrete elements into contact with each other, emphasising the skin of their meeting as a plane of double osmosis. This in turn fundamentally changes both what is being practiced and what can be conceived of, through that practice - in a sense ‘what a body can do’.

### The Skin as Plan(e)

For Stelarc, possibly the best known Australian artist working with new technologies, this breaking away from accumulated knowledges, assumptions and practices, in what he prefers to call his “events” rather than “performances” (Stelarc, 1994:379) is crucial. It is crucial because of the present possibilities he sees in new technologies, as well as the problems the body (as gravitational entity) confronts in relation to the expanding information environment.

*This sort of Aristotelian impulse to continuously accumulate more and more information has created the situation where human cortical capacity just can't absorb and creatively process all this information...It was necessary to create technology to take over what the body can no longer do... The only evolutionary strategy I see is*

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<sup>12</sup> For example, it could be argued that Artaud's ideas are more a question of negation than Deleuze and Guattari's, although perhaps to similar ends. Of course, Artaud's "desire for abolition", as Patton puts it, is part of a creative process, not just a reactive one. See Goodall, 1994a:191-192 for a discussion of the relation between Artaud, Deleuze and Guattari and the Body without Organs.

*triggering an evolutionary dialectic, to incorporate technology into the body ...* (Stelarc - cited in *Obsolete Body/Suspensions/Stelarc* in Brown, 1995)

And for Stelarc it is once again the skin that could be critical. He has suggested that a reformulation of the skin through technology, by which, for example, the skin could both breathe and absorb nutrients, would fundamentally change the requirements of the inside of the human body<sup>13</sup> (Overall, 1991<sup>14</sup>). There would no longer be a need for the lungs or digestive organs, and, as Stelarc sees it, the entire cavity of the chest and abdomen would have space for re-equipment. The 'depths' of the body would become a massive potential series of 'surfaces'. This raises many basic questions as regards the reproduction of social relations, the individual human and the cosmos. Stelarc's work in this area can be regarded, at the very least, as the present technological equivalent to what Roszak in his novel *Flicker* (1992:307) calls the "movies before the movies". This is to say that Stelarc's work explores the different possibilities of body/technology component arrangements, rather than exploring methods of representation through a relatively fixed arrangement and pre-established use of the components of new technologies<sup>15</sup>. In this chapter I shall interweave a discussion of the problematic that Stelarc's work mobilises into a

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<sup>13</sup> Stelarc's body is, of course, a *male* body considered, rather problematically, as androgynous. There are, then, real problems with his arguments in terms of their lack of specific discussion of sexual difference. In particular these difficulties may arise in the lack of consideration of differences of 'surface/depth' relations between the sexes. It is arguable, for example, that many of the rigid structures of body and ideas that Stelarc seems simultaneously to undermine and to further are masculine structures of a body resisting its 'cracking up' under pressure. I will discuss the issue of sexual difference later in this chapter, the next and in chapter five.

<sup>14</sup> This video provides one of the most extensive interviews with Stelarc. The idea of the body being hollowed out with the skin performing most of the function of the organs which are presently kept within the depths of the body, that is, digestion, the circulation of nutrients and respiration, was also something Stelarc talked about at the Third International Symposium of Electronic Arts in Sydney, 9-13 November, 1992.

<sup>15</sup> Thus at the beginning of the motion picture industry there were very different basic arrangements, or plans for, what the cinema could become. The question here was very different to that of what could be represented and how it could be. For example, the emphasis of theories such as those of montage, as important as they are, is not primarily on the machinery per se, but on what can be done within a fairly fixed arrangement of components (projector, screen, editing facilities, etc). There is, likewise, a very large difference between theorists and practitioners such as Stelarc, who question the basic component arrangements of new technologies and those (such as Laurel, 1991), who rather question what will be represented through them, without really questioning the basic form that they take (such as screen, keyboard, processor).

more general discussion of a Deleuze-Guattarian approach to philosophy, technology and art as interactive processes.

Paul Virilio, although critical of Stelarc, has labeled him “a kind of prophet of bad news” (cited in an interview with Zurbrugg, 1995:10), an artist who expresses “like Artaud...something profoundly authentic” which is “the third technological revolution” where “technology now aspires to occupy the body, to transplant itself within the last remaining territory - that of the body” (1995:10-11)<sup>16</sup>. In *L'art du moteur* (1993) Virilio quotes extensively from Stelarc, who Virilio sees as a prime example, in a parody of Nietzsche's ‘overman’, of a late twentieth century “overexcited man” (129-167). Virilio, then, both recognises Stelarc as a prophet and, perhaps somewhat patronisingly, critiques him, primarily on the basis that “our Australian” (147) uses the argument of technological progress as a way of evading moral responsibility. Virilio suggests that what is colonised in Stelarc's work, in the name of extra-terrestrial escape, is the “body-without-soul” (ibid.). Furthermore, according to Virilio, Stelarc is a victim of technology rather than an instigator. I will reproduce this argument at length here because it is an example of a particular kind of discourse surrounding technology that cannot escape the teleological.

*As one can well see, the conversion is total. Under the pretext of an 'extra-terrestrial' emancipation, the technological rush at the body of this man-planet suspended in weightlessness leaves nothing to protect it, neither ethics nor bio-political morality. Failing to escape from our natural biosphere, we go, as is so often the case, to colonise a planet infinitely more accessible, that of a body-without-soul, a secular body, for a science without conscience which has not ceased to profane the space of the body, of the animal, slave or the colonised of former colonies. Never, in effect, has a geophysical expanse been dominated without controlling, ever more tightly, the density, the*

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<sup>16</sup> Virilio goes on here to say that Stelarc is “very much what I'd call a 'positive' prophet, insofar as he doesn't seem altogether aware of the losses implicit in new technological practices” (ibid.).

*microphysical profundity of being enslaved. There are so many examples which illustrate this last project of which our Australian is not the instigator but rather the victim, as is so often the case, being perverted by his master. (Virilio, 1993:147-148 - my translation).*

One would *like* to disagree with very little of tenor of the argument here<sup>17</sup>. Yet the seemingly complete rejection of technology leads to sweeping statements that compare Stelarc's work and ethnic purification, just as Heidegger compares the Holocaust and agriculture. Such an argument barely allows for *the possibilities of becoming through technology*. Although Virilio may be one of the most acute theorists of technology, he is also, like Heidegger, one who quickly reterritorialises his thoughts on a moral-apocalyptic line. Subsequently, it is once again not so much a question of what such analyses hit as of what they miss, both in Stelarc's work and in the processes of technology in general. In particular, in heading towards the somewhat pejorative "body-without-soul" Virilio seems to deny the activity of the body even more than Stelarc.

In fact, despite such criticisms, Stelarc's work *does* raise vital issues concerning the body and technology. Can we, for example, consider 'skins' more centrally as intensity and interactive possibility - as the performing surfaces by which we connect? Or are we stuck with a notion of the skin as the indication of the unknown depths that are supposed to exist beneath its theatrical representation? Is technology just going to be accommodated to the classical theatre (of Virtual Reality, pay tv, etc) *once again* without a full consideration of what potential new surfaces are being produced and brought into contact? Can classical theatrical forms *ever* allow for the kind of flux or nomadism through which relations to an outside of the known necessarily take place? What are the alternatives for the new skins involved in new technologies? It is undeniably true that, in the processes of our bodies being reorganised by new technologies, we are going to

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<sup>17</sup> Certainly Deleuze and Guattari often use Virilio's work. See *ATP*:395-396 for one example.

suffer losses that are “so important that it is still not really possible to perceive them in their totality” (Virilio in Zurbrugg, 1995:11). Yet, despite this, are we not going to *gain* something?

Whatever the answers here, all these questions point to the broader necessity of considering the issue of production before that of representation. It is particularly as we consider new technologies of increased power that we need to consider their *effects* first. That is, we need to consider what technologies produce, what we can produce through them, and which technologies we might choose to produce through. This is, perhaps, a consideration of all the complexities of Heidegger’s *technē* without necessarily mourning modern technology’s turning away from Heidegger’s disclosure of Being. This will also, in the terms discussed here, involve a movement away from the classical theatre, towards *performance* work. ‘Performance work’ will be defined simply as that which puts its productive power and its relations to an outside before its representational effects<sup>18</sup>.

Performance work - including installations and sculptures which themselves ‘perform’, as well as a more general notion of performance in which everything can be seen as ‘performing’ - will not be seen just as an alternative model to the theatrical in thinking about new technologies, but as a series of practices enabling a thorough working through of these technologies. Performance work - and a consideration of all occurrences as performances - is a way of exploring the creative possibilities of meeting technologies skin to skin. More broadly, performance is able to situate these skins amongst other meetings of skins. This is possible because performance work conceives, firstly, of itself as both productive and coextensive with both the environment and the

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<sup>18</sup> Although this does not mean that the latter are excluded. The *theatrical* will be defined simply as that which places the representational first and foremost. This is not a question of mutually exclusive terms but rather of two poles of promise in what can be seen as a series of linked and often common activities. This means that the two are sometimes not easily separated, and indeed they often, if not always, co-exist in the one activity. However, the two perform different functions - that is, performance to produce or interact, and the theatrical to represent or stand-in for absence. In this sense any performance/theatrical activity is a composite activity, perhaps because of the fundamental nature of such ambiguities surrounding representation and production in Western thinking and cultural activity.

socius, and secondly, of the environment and the socius as productive forces themselves<sup>19</sup>. The classical theatre seems to want to tame these relations within a 'mere' representation of these forces.

What is at stake here, before anything else, is a recognition of the need for an understanding of *contact* within specific ethical considerations. Firstly, there is a need to recognise that productive contact is always *already* the basis of the processes that we call the world. This is why it matters so much that Heidegger hardly commented on the Holocaust. He refused to acknowledge that there were relations of production in which his philosophy was immersed that involved very specific forms of contact with specific ethical consequences<sup>20</sup>. Also, there is a need to consider which forms of contact can allow for the becoming of 'the other', with neither its annihilation nor its retrieval into an identity measured by a stable representation.

The question becomes then, firstly, one of what artistic work is when it is not simply representation. It becomes, secondly, one of how art allows for a becoming which is not just of itself. In this and the following two chapters several Deleuze-Guattarian approaches to this issue will be given. This will be accompanied by a consideration of the artists Stelarc, Rebecca Horn, Joyce Hinterding, John Cage, Joseph Beuys, Ulay and Marina Abramovic.

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<sup>19</sup> The clearest example here of the way in which the environment, technology and the social interact at a skin might be a consideration of the 'Greenhouse effect', which itself becomes a kind of machinic site which feeds back into the productive relations which form it. There is a real sense in which, if we do still need a theatre, we urgently need one which deals with such issues. We do not yet have such a theatre.

<sup>20</sup> Virilio, of course, is very aware of these ethical issues.

## The Incorporeal as the Interaction between Bodies

There is a sense in which occurrences of any kind always happen both *to* bodies and also *between* them. This is because any given body is already a set of relations between other bodies<sup>21</sup>. For example, from the point of view of two human beings, or even two nations, a physical fight or war occurs both *between* two bodies (throwing punches, drawing knives, tanks crossing borders) and *to* two bodies (bruises, broken blood vessels, concussion, death, the rearrangement of national boundaries). Whether things are seen as happening to bodies or between them also depends upon the point of view from which occurrences are observed. In the case of a fight - this will differ according to whether that fight is observed from the point of view of the bodies of blood cells, of full human bodies, of the local socius, the nation, or the full body of the earth.

Put in a slightly different way, the same occurrence can be taken as two things, and although they are intricately related, they should not be taken as the same. Firstly, an occurrence can be taken as a representation of a 'fixed body' - that is as it confirms the present knowledges, assumptions and relations to which the occurrence refers as a 'state of affairs'. Secondly, an occurrence can be taken as an *event* - that is, as something that finds an outside to this confirmation of pre-existing relations, even if it arises from within them. The event, on the one hand, and representation, on the other, *could* be considered as forming an axis which extends from production and interaction (of an outside) to representation (deferral to inside 'depths' and a coherent and stable body). In this schema, however, representation is perhaps gaining more power than it actually possesses, and it would be more correct to see it as a component of

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<sup>21</sup> In *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy* Deleuze suggests that, in fact, a body is always made up of other interacting bodies and that all these bodies form a coherence by remaining stable only in that each body's components change at fixed ratios of speed. In other words, what is consistent about a body is not its material (cells die and are replaced, governments come and go) but the nature of the interactions between its parts (biochemical reactions assure that dead cells will be replaced with the same formations, there is always a government and opposition, in various forms) and the way in which a body is constantly *produced* (127).



production. It is perhaps production itself that needs more discussion before representation can be properly considered.

Production can be seen to have two components - or more correctly, *series* - which depend upon one another for their existence. These are what in Deleuze and Guattari's work will come to be called the 'virtual' and the 'actual', *both of which are real*. (In *Difference and Repetition*, however, these are also called the 'virtual' and the 'real', but it amounts to the same idea.) Whether virtual and actual, or virtual and real these two series are mutually dependent.

*The fact that the two series cannot exist without each other indicates not only that they are complementary, but that by virtue of their dissimilarity and their difference in kind they borrow from and feed into one another. We see both that the virtuals are deducted from the series of reals, and that they are incorporated in the series of reals. (DR:100)*

From the point of view of a production that *encompasses* representation, then, the event (as a *virtual* event in the realm of the yet to become) can be opposed to its actualisation in a state of affairs (things and bodies). The virtual is like a recipe or even the potential that lies within certain ingredients. The virtual has potential but we do not know how it will turn out. The actual is the cake - each time a different cake with each different baking, even if the recipe and ingredients are roughly the same<sup>22</sup>. As the cake contains its recipe so "virtual objects are incorporated in real objects" (101). To take another example, patriarchy or capitalism form a kind of virtual diagram which can be actualised in many different ways. Each of these actualisations incorporates the virtual through which it is produced and will, in the future, produce.

For Deleuze, therefore, the "world is an egg" (216). And, like eggs, both virtual and actual are not only the site of production, but must also be produced (102). All virtuals are, of course,

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<sup>22</sup> In fact, a recipe is probably too 'identical' a notion here. One could speak more accurately of the virtuality of cooking in general.

initially produced by interactions between bodies - “virtual objects are shreds of pure past” (ibid.) - interactions that are not just haphazard but attain consistency.

*The virtual is no longer the chaotic virtual but rather virtuality that has become consistent, that has become an entity formed on the plane of immanence that sections the chaos. This is what we call the Event, or the part that eludes its own actualization in everything that happens. The event is not the state of affairs. It is actualized in a state of affairs, in a body, in a lived, but it has a shadowy and secret part that is continually subtracted from or added to its actualization... (WP:156)*

Of course, as discussed in this passage, virtuals also *produce* bodies, in a set of interrelations or assemblages that can be described in two ways. Firstly it occurs between the event, bodies and states of affairs. Secondly, it forms a real consisting of virtual and actual. It is a complex set of relations and needs more explication than has been given in the previous chapter. It occurs in various forms in both Deleuze and Guattari's work. It is crucial to an understanding of what is happening in performance, theatre, interaction and the conceptual realm of the virtual in particular. This is a virtual which is not just colonising, as Virilio suggests, but is also being heavily colonised in the present negotiations surrounding new technologies. I shall now describe this set of relations in more detail.

It is perhaps useful to begin with a description of Deleuze's relatively early (1969) conception of the relation between representation and event. Although some of the terms used in this earlier work were to shift a little in later work, this work is still useful for our purposes in that it gives a clear view of the way in which representations *are* productions.

For Deleuze, in *The Logic of Sense*<sup>23</sup>, representation is useful, but only in that it produces something. This is the production of an “effect of flight” (159) over the constant cracking up occurring as bodies and (incorporeal or virtual) events interact. This cracking up is the very way in which bodies give rise to incorporeal events, which is, in short, to say that incorporeal events are produced by the interactions between bodies. They bridge bodies (sometimes to bring consistency to other, larger bodies). These incorporeal events given body to are, of course, already “produced by and in the depth of corporeal causes...at the innermost depth of bodies” (147). This occurs in what is produced between bodies or between the parts of a body in their interaction - the *event* of Jarry’s bicycle, for example.

Deleuze identifies another form of production here, however. He calls this the *quasi-cause*, or, in human terms, the will, which acts between events and bodies. It -

*...wills the embodiment and the actualization of the pure incorporeal events in a state of affairs and in his or her own body and flesh. Identifying with the quasi-cause, the sage wishes to ‘give a body’ to the incorporeal effect...(146-147)*

It is in the realm *between* event and body that the performer operates. The sage, or, also in Deleuze’s terms, the actor (147), does not “create, it ‘operates,’ and wills only what comes to pass”. The actor is a kind of medium. In other words, the ‘actor’ is a relay between becoming and what *is* in a very basic way - the actor deals with that which is immanent, not transcendent. The actor is not dealing with the impossible, attempting to create something which cannot exist, but with the potential, with acting as a mediator for present potentialities<sup>24</sup>. Thus the actor is in as

<sup>23</sup> Originally published as *Logique du sens* in 1969, Paris:Les Éditions du Minuit. Predating the anti-Lacanian *L’anti-oedipe* by only three years this work is strangely Lacanian, marking a kind of cusp in Deleuze’s thought.

<sup>24</sup> In another sense the actor is forced to be immanent because he or she must perform. For example, over dinner one can say what one likes about a theatrical text such as *Hamlet*. If one is to perform it, however, one has to suddenly act out these interpretations immanently and immediately. They must become specific and contingent to the circumstances of the performance.

good a position as there is to operate<sup>25</sup> through that contact both with what is and what will become. The actor is both body in the present and mime of the eternal event. *The actor is at the skin of the interaction between corporeality and the event.*

This is perhaps made a little clearer in Deleuze's comments on the 'theatrical' nature of Nietzsche and Kierkegaard, who neither reflect upon the theatre nor invent a philosophical theatre. They rather -

*...invent an incredible equivalent of the theatre within philosophy, thereby founding simultaneously this theatre of the future and a new philosophy. (DR:8).*

Like the above mentioned actor, with Kierkegaard we have -

*...a thinker who lives the problem of masks, who experiences the inner emptiness of masks and seeks to fill it, to complete it, albeit with the 'absolutely different'...Here too, for Nietzsche, it is a matter of filling the inner emptiness of the mask within a theatrical space: by multiplying the superimposed masks and inscribing the omnipresence of Dionysus in that superimposition, by inserting both the infinity of real movement and the form of the absolute difference given in the repetition of eternal return. (8-9)*

This is where representation, if seen as a series of 'empty masks', is productive - productive of a specific interactive connection between the *eternal* time of the event and the *specific* time of the present of corporeality. Representation also enables flight over the cracks produced - by the whole process of interaction - on the surfaces of corporeality<sup>26</sup>.

<sup>25</sup> In this earlier work, Deleuze makes a division between creating and operating on something. The major theme of *What is Philosophy?*, Deleuze and Guattari's last book together, is an inflection of this, but by this time creation *is* operation. Creation is made possible precisely by operating on what is - this defines what creation *is* for them.

<sup>26</sup> A simple example of these cracks is perhaps that of wrinkles as a result of age or worry. Other examples would be 'cracking up' as the result of interactions becoming too intense for one's representations of oneself to hold, even illusorily, or the way in which one must break eggs to make an omelette. Lacan famously suggests that one must break eggs to make an 'hommelette' - a little man (in Clement, 1983:97).

These cracks, formed in the process of the deterritorialisation of bodies, reach both to the depths of the body and through and outwards towards the incorporeal. Representation here is not so much a deferral to some transcendence (a copy of something somewhere else, in the depths of bodies, or beyond, in the gods or ideal forms) as a kind of doubling of what is immanent. Representation is *one* way whereby the process of body cracking up/event can attain consistency. It is a mimesis as an operation or intervention in the relations between the virtual and the actual. To take an example, the actor's doubling here might find a parallel in the action of the TV weather presenter. The aim of the representations, maps and so forth, in the weather report is not to give a copy of a stable state of climatic conditions. Neither is it to enable us to control the wind and the rain. Rather the simulacra of maps and little suns or patches of rain, together with the *acting out* of the weather person, enable us to participate in relations of contingency involving the weather<sup>27</sup>. This is not a question of reconfirming in the present a simple line stretching from the past to the future, but of opening up the possible relations between the present *instant* and all eternity. Here representation as production operates not as a re-stating of permanent knowledge or truth but as an interruption, an 'intervention' in this accepted set of knowledges in order to affirm what *is becoming*.

*Corporeal causes act and suffer through a cosmic mixture and a universal present which produces the incorporeal event. But the quasi-cause operates by doubling this physical causality - it embodies the event<sup>28</sup> in the most limited possible present which is the most precise and the most instantaneous, the pure instant grasped at the point at*

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<sup>27</sup> In personal conversation, Philip Hayward has pointed out to me that it is interesting to note that weather broadcasts vary markedly from culture to culture. He recalls seeing a Portuguese weather broadcast where the presenter slashed at a map with a thick black marker to indicate storms, his body symbolising the fury of the elements.

<sup>28</sup> The event is eternal here in the sense that it participates in eternity rather than the present. Events exist in the time of Aion - that time where there is no present but only a splitting of time into infinite extensions of past and future. In a sense, however, events also 'change' the *nature* of eternity.

*which it divides itself into future and past, and no longer the present of the world which would gather into itself the past and the future. The actor occupies the instant, while the character portrayed hopes or fears in the future and remembers or repents in the past: it is in this sense that the actor "represents"<sup>29</sup>. To bring about the correspondence of the minimum time which can occur in the instant with the maximum time which can be thought in accordance with the Aion... This is the use of representation: the mime and no longer the fortune-teller. (LS:147)*

Here an acceptance of a bridge of contingency, between the corporeal and the incorporeal, replaces the re-presentation of supposedly permanent transcendent ideals. The *shifting sense* of actions here comes from becoming physically involved with contingent interactions, rather than trying to superimpose received knowledges upon them. Here, representation is something, which through a physical doubling, intervenes in the nature of the event itself, thus producing, not eternal truths, but an ethics of mime which "prolongs the logic of sense" (ibid.) and the process by which a shifting sense is produced. Thus representation for Deleuze, at this stage of his thinking, is not something which necessarily stratifies, classifies, or represents the Truth of a situation. Rather it produces an *immediate* set of relations of *sense* both to the event and to its corporeal cause.

Theories such as Laurel's (1991) alignment of computers with Aristotelian theatre, as useful as they are in some ways, also carry with them the danger of camouflaging the very real shifts in sense that new technologies can produce. These are shifts in the way humans conceive of themselves, and may extend beyond given definitions towards the ways in which humanity as an entity is conceived *of*, from the outside, in the event. In short, some of the losses we may suffer as the result of the impact of new technologies, as Virilio mourns them, might not necessarily be

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<sup>29</sup> This could, then, be taken both in the sense of the verb 'to present' and in the sense of a doubling of 'the present'.

so bad after all. It is not always a question of mourning these losses, but of our immanent involvement in the changes they imply - of the degree of our participation in them, of who is participating. This is something recognised by Haraway, for one, in her grappling with the cyborg (as an entity between the technological and the human). Nothing less is at stake here than the ability of thought to interact with the real in the face of rapid change - *whether that real occurs in the virtual or actual register*. This is why, in order to understand this whole process of doubling, we perhaps need to align it with the acceptance of the contingency of life as it is found in the eternal return. One needs to be ready to will the return of difference in repetition through the 'throw of the dice'. In other words, one needs to accept, *before* anything else, an active participation in processes that are interpenetrating and unimpeded, as Cage (1968:46) would say. One should not understand the *will* which doubles, primarily at least, as something that intervenes in order to control, but rather as something which intervenes in order to participate, to interact more actively with the virtual and actual realms.

## The Production of Production

How do we then move from this conception of the production of sense, by which we participate in the virtual and the actual, to a more general understanding of both incorporeal and material production, as Deleuze and Guattari surely do in their work from *Anti-Oedipus* on?

It is the *interaction* between the corporeal and the incorporeal that constantly produces both. Even in the earlier *The Logic of Sense* there is a hint of this. Deleuze at this stage, both imbued by and questioning French structuralism in the context of the successes and failures of May '68, asks the question about bodies avoided by the 'dryer' side of the (post)structuralist fence<sup>30</sup> -

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<sup>30</sup> Whom I shall hesitantly portray here as the likes of Derrida and Lacan, as opposed to the likes of Foucault, Deleuze, Guattari and Irigaray. This is primarily because both Derrida and Lacan focus on

*How could the silent trace of the incorporeal crack at the surface fail to 'deepen' in the thickness of a noisy body? (LS:156-157)*

Deleuze shifts this question slightly when he asks -

*More precisely, is it possible to limit ourselves to the counter-actualization of an event - to the actor's or dancer's simple flat, representation - while taking care to prevent the full actualization which characterises the victim or the true patient? All these questions point out the ridiculousness of the thinker: yes, there are always two aspects, and the two processes differ in nature. (157)*

Here one can see the beginnings of what are essentially two types of 'actualisation-production' which are inextricably bound together. The first is that which counter-actualises an event, organizes it into a representation which is nevertheless productive within corporeality, rather than relating to a simple imitation of the real from some position which transcends it<sup>31</sup>. The second form of production is necessarily related to it. This is the full actualisation of the event in which one is no longer acting but has become a "victim" or a "patient" of the event. It is as if the weather person was to broadcast from a lightning rod during a storm. This is to say that one has cracked up totally. The trick, for Deleuze and Guattari, is to be able to allow the cracking, interactive process to occur but, through the use of counter-actualisations, to stop total cracking up and attain processual consistency.

All this leads to the notion that this chapter began with. Although Deleuze and Guattari do not deny the existence and importance of representation, for them it forms one circuit in a much

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absences, and though they perhaps take philosophy and psychoanalysis to the limits of their respective senses, it is arguable that they do not assist that much in an understanding of either what is being produced, or how we may 'double' that produced in order to mediate within it.

<sup>31</sup> Indeed, this counter-actualization is rather an ingenious sidestepping or enclosure of this latter possibility of transcendence. The doubling process does not so much *refer to* as *defer between*. This is perhaps close to what Derrida called "différance" (1973). In *What is Philosophy?* (59) Deleuze and Guattari call this "counter-effectuation", here describing the movement from the state of affairs to the virtual. In a sense this describes the movement from objects *to* an in-between.



broader, productive series of circuits. Representation is not the central question in itself. Moreover, Deleuze and Guattari are concerned with how *all* the elements of corporeality and incorporeal events interact - human *and* non-human (even the body as a non-human, with which the 'human' as event must co-exist) - rather than with how a central human(ist) consciousness perceives the world as represented to him or her. For Deleuze and Guattari then, the theatre is not a final term. It is rather a question of what is being *performed* or *produced*, *even during* acts of representation. Representation is only a *part* of counter-actualisation - "Representation must encompass an expression which it does not represent" (LS:145). Even counter-actualisation is itself a part of broader processes of production. Alone, it has no relation to reality. If it acts alone, "it belongs to a buffoon" (161). Any form of counter -actualisation is only useful in that it enables the whole process to continue without 'cracking up' totally. This, of course, only makes sense when the 'real' is conceived of as a dynamic process, not as a given set of unchanging circumstances. But, as with Deleuze and Guattari's later terms such as the 'line of flight' or the 'rhizome', such processes as the counter-actualisation are useful only in so much as they acknowledge this process, and are counter-productive when they are anti-productive<sup>32</sup>. In other words, counter-actualisation should not imprison the event in any one particular actualised state of affairs.

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<sup>32</sup> Of course, the anti-productive is productive, in the same sense as the reactive in Nietzsche's philosophy. Its production is the production of negation, the stalling of possible becomings, the redirection of the different back into pre-established relations.

*To be the mime of what effectively occurs...is to give to the truth of the event the only chance of not being confused with its inevitable actualization. It is to give to the crack the chance of flying over its own incorporeal surface area, without stopping at the bursting within each body; it is, finally, to give us the chance to go farther than we would have believed possible. To the extent that the pure event is each time imprisoned forever in its actualization, counter-actualization liberates it, always for other times.*

(161)

Without such processes as both 'cracking up' and the counter-actualisations that enable movement over the cracks, there would be no production. On the other hand, in the end "health does not suffice..the crack is desirable" because "only by means of the crack and at its edges" does thought occur (160). There is, at a basic level, nothing new in the world and things must break up, crack up, in order to change. This is why, for Deleuze, and later for Guattari it is production that is all important - production is this activity of change. Empty representations become anathema to them, instruments of antiproduction. For Deleuze and Guattari, it is not a question of an interaction between representations and the human spirit or consciousness that is important in some ethereal transcendent sense (as it is from Plato to Kant and Hegel, all in different ways). For Deleuze and Guattari, what is crucial is always a relation of production between bodies and events. This cuts both ways.

*It is true that the crack is nothing if it does not compromise the body, but it does not cease being and having a value when it intertwines with the other line, inside the body. ...The eternal truth of the event is grasped only if the event is also inscribed in the flesh. But each time we must double this painful actualization by a counter-actualization which limits, moves, and transfigures it. We must accompany ourselves - first, in order to survive, but then even when we die. (161)*

This double osmosis, in which events and bodies constantly leak into each other, is a process which is the affirmation of *process* itself - of production and change. It is the way in which we affirm, and become conscious of, our participation in production, in the relations between events and bodies.

Performance, as opposed to the classical theatre, as something which acknowledges its complex relation to real time(s)<sup>33</sup>, to event both as actualisation and counter-actualisation of emergenc(i)es such as new technologies, is extremely important here. Performance firstly allows the series of incorporeal events which are behind the new technologies - what Heidegger called *technē* and Deleuze and Guattari would call the 'abstract machine'<sup>34</sup> - to inscribe themselves in the flesh. Secondly, through counter-actualisations, performance "limits, moves and transfigures" these incorporeal events.

As such, performances are not used to *solve* a problem once and for all, or to provide 'representations of an action', so much as to present the *conditions* of a problem that arise through the confrontation of flesh and technologies, technology and technique<sup>35</sup>, incorporeal events with their corporeal and material causes, and quasi-causes and counter-actualisations.

In Stelarc's work this presentation of the conditions of a problematic is made very literal in: a body raised by hooks and suspended against gravity; or a body with eyelids and mouth sewn shut and the body placed between two planks of wood (Overall, 1991); or a body's surface cracked

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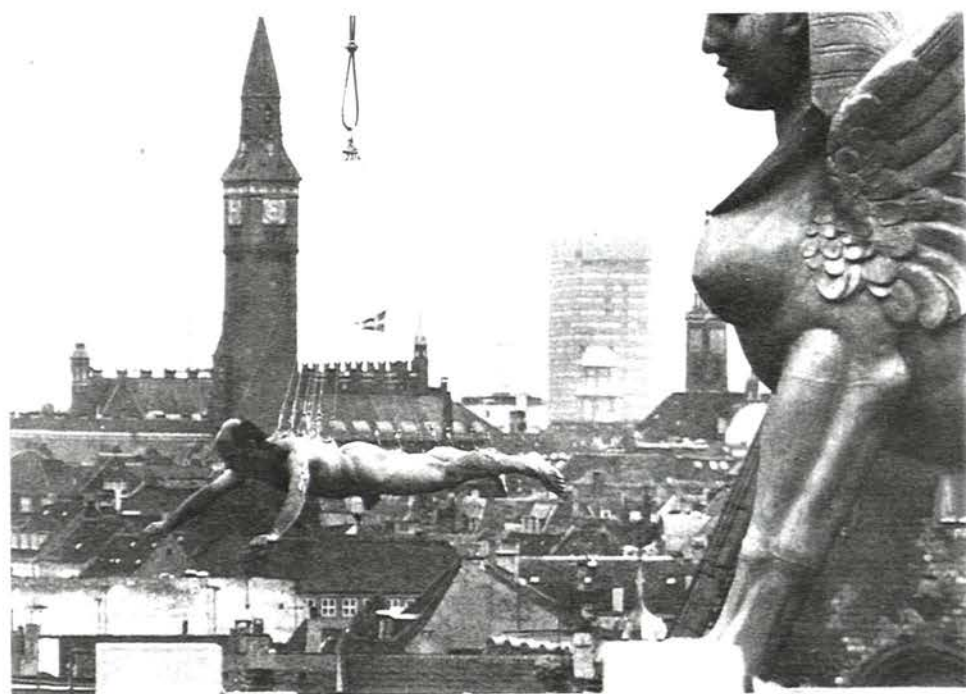
<sup>33</sup> For example, one of the ways in which Performance Art is defined, as opposed to the theatrical, is in its focus on real time and space.

<sup>34</sup> This will be discussed in chapter six.

<sup>35</sup> William Barrett (1978) points out that technology is intimately involved with the processes of technique - that "if our civilisation were to lose its techniques, all our machines and apparatus would become one vast pile of junk" (1978:18). The involvement of technique and technology is complex and Barrett's is a useful reminder. However, once again it misses out on the machinic dimension, in which production goes on with or without humanity. One assumes, for example, that if humanity were to lose all its techniques such technologies as nuclear reactors would, unfortunately, not just become one vast pile of junk. They would rather pose a serious problem to whatever was left of either humanity or any other life on the planet. Moving away from Barrett to Guattari we can perhaps begin to see why some form of ecology is the inevitable outcome of a consideration of the machinic which implicates the human but is not just controlled by human technique.



Stelarc, *Hands writing*, Maki Gallery, Tokyo, 1982. Photograph from the artist's collection; photographer Akio Okada



Stelarc, *City suspension*, above the Royal Theatre, Copenhagen, June 1985. Photograph from the artist's collection; photographer Morten Schandoff

*Figure 1 - Stelarc - taken from Marsh, 1993:114*

open by technologies, mediated by counter-actualisations that limit, move and transfigure the actualisation of the cracks.

### Stelarc's Counter-Actualisations of Technē

Although Stelarc's work seems somewhat idiosyncratic<sup>36</sup>, as regards technology at least, it is perhaps because of this that it provides a very good model for performance work which does not oppose the body and technology but enhances their interaction.

Stelarc has always been enthusiastic about high technology as bodily supplement and evolutionary saviour. He has developed a great degree of skill in robotics in the process -

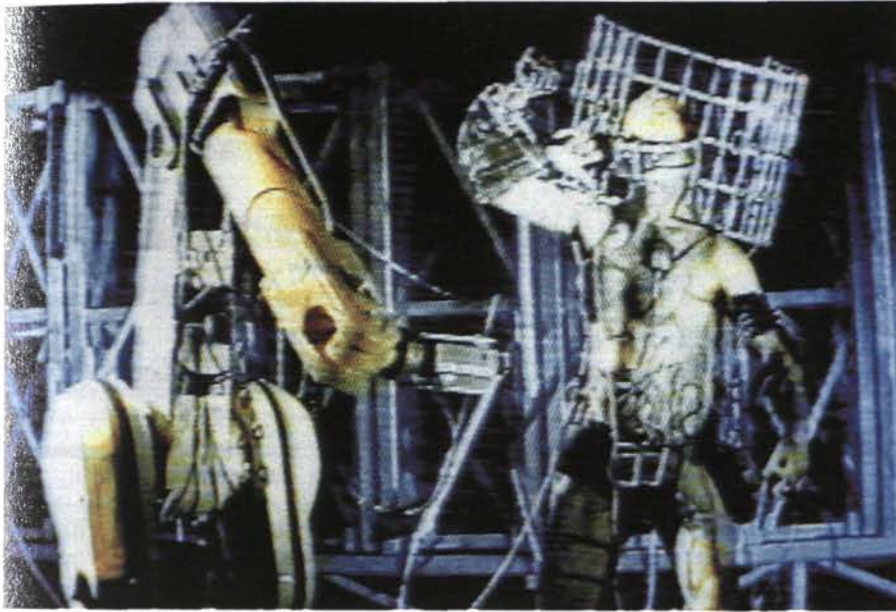
*My hand has a pinch release, grasp release, 270 degree wrist rotation...In Japan it would be state of the art. It's going to be in a show of robotics. It will be displayed as a piece of technology rather than a device I use for my performances. (cited in McCarthy, 1983:18)*

Stelarc is enthusiastic about robotics to the point that he cedes a degree of control to them in his performances. For example, technological signals determine how his muscles will move as much as he determines how his robotics prostheses will move. In his 1992 performances in Sydney at the Museum of Contemporary Art, for example, he performed with an industrial robot that had a camera at the end of its arm, controlled by switches in various forms of contact with Stelarc's skin. This camera in turn gave a 'machine's eye view' of his performance. His approach to technology comes from a clearly articulated attitude to the body. In 1983 he said -

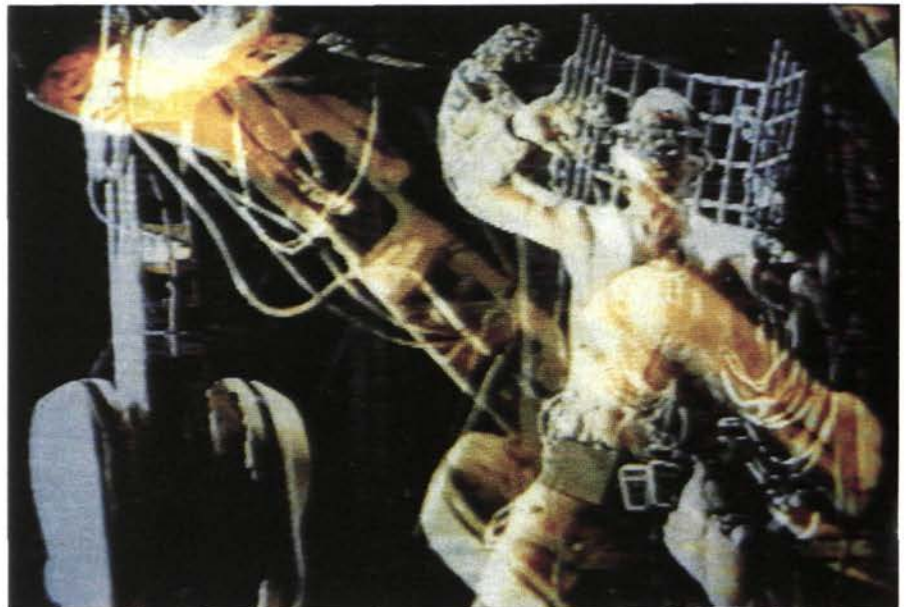
*The notion of designing the body for new environments fascinates me. Is it possible to create a thing to transcend our environment? Unplugging the body from the planet. I*

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<sup>36</sup> Some comparisons may be drawn with the techno-anarchistic self-critique of Survival Research Laboratory's military machines (Pauline, 1993).



1. Stelarc, (video-still), Remote Gestures/  
Obsolete Desires: Event for Robot  
Manipulator, Involuntary Arm and Third  
Hand, Edge Biennale, London, 1992.



2. Stelarc, (video-still), Remote Gestures/  
Obsolete Desires: Event for Robot  
Manipulator, Involuntary Arm and Third  
Hand, Edge Biennale, London, 1992.

**Figure 2 - Stelarc - taken from Cultural Diversity in the Global Village: The Third International Symposium on Electronic Art Sydney: The Australian Network for Art and Technology, 1992:73**

*see technology as an evolutionary energizer. The organic and the synthetic coming together to form a new hybrid human that has technology embedded in it...technology is just a couple of hundred years old. The body has had no time to develop a response. The first phase of technology contained the body, whereas now miniaturized technology can be imparted into the body...the end of evolution is at hand.* (in McCarthy, 1983:18-19)

For Stelarc it is the marriage of technology and the body that will save us from evolutionary obsolescence at the same time as evolution as an idea (or event) is continued through other means. However, this has its price. It can be seen as an attempt to transcend immediate social relations in favour of a 'pure' technological destiny. For others, such as Donna Haraway, McKenzie Wark (1994a) or Andrew Ross (1991), human social systems will have to adapt to a wider acceptance of our technological development, but this will occur *without* necessarily transcending the environment.

Stelarc's ambiguity as regards evolution is at the heart of his work. This ambiguity contains not only the work's insights but also its major problems. On the one hand he thoroughly revises the notion of what can be considered to be human - asking the question not 'how do we perpetuate the human that is?', but 'how do we enter into new becomings?'. On the other hand, he never questions the priority of human evolution itself. He traps all this within what is essentially still an evolutionary way of thinking - a singular line of human progress. This is partly reflected in his assumption that technology is something new, that it is just a couple of hundred years old. From this point of view Stelarc seems to be caught within a dialectic of progress, or in that which Deleuze, following Nietzsche, calls, the "species activity" of a "higher man" who is detested by both Nietzsche and Deleuze - primarily because such a man perpetuates the illusion of progress through negation (NP:164). In this framework, Stelarc's activities can be seen as a

dialectical confrontation between humanity and technology, with a resulting negation of older conceptions of (traditionally biological) humanity leading to a synthesis which consists of a new humanity that includes technology. Seen from this point of view, Stelarc, like much science fiction, is not so much a 'prophet of bad news', as a prophet of old news. Deleuze is, of course, notoriously opposed to Hegelianism and the Dialectic<sup>37</sup>.

Nevertheless in relation to the body *as an event* and to its possible actualisations, Stelarc's work does have some value. Whether as prophet of bad news, as Virilio thinks, or rather more interestingly, as performer of contemporary problematics, Stelarc is *not* eliding the body. Rather, through counter-actualisations in performance, a little in the manner of Jarry riding his bicycle, Stelarc is intervening in what is coming to pass as regards the body and technology. In line with some aspects of Virilio's thinking, this is perhaps because Stelarc is acknowledging that "the information thrust is a more significant pressure than the gravitational pull" (Overall, 1991). His work examines the question of the situation the body is in, in relation to the thrust of information. In short, the question is not what *is* the body in relation to technology, but *which* bodies are we likely to become? Stelarc says that -

*The body needs to be considered as structure, not as a site for the psyche or the social, but rather the body as an object - not as an object of desire but an object of design.* (in Overall, 1991)

There are perhaps two sides to this active notion of design in Stelarc's work, the Deleuze-Guattarian framework of which will be discussed shortly. These are the conceptual and the aesthetic. The two, of course, interact, but they are often confused by those who are critical of Stelarc's work (even perhaps including Virilio). One could put this crudely by saying that what Stelarc does (in terms of creating new aesthetic events) and what he says (about the body being

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<sup>37</sup> See Hardt, 1993 and NP:196.



'obsolete', for example) are occurring in two different registers. One must consider the singularity of these registers as well as their mutual mediations. There is a profound difference, for example, between Stelarc's earlier manifestos (such as that previously quoted from McCarthy, 1983) and the actual events of his suspensions, between talking about the 'obsolete body' and treating the body on the basis of the skin becoming "some of the stretch structure" (Overall, 1991) of the event.

As mentioned before, Stelarc himself prefers to view his work as a series of events rather than performances, thinking that they do not necessarily need an audience, and are "real situations that the body had to physically experience" (in Overall, 1991). The best known examples of these events occurred when he suspended his body by hooks through his skin, from a crane two hundred feet over Copenhagen, with five to ten thousand people watching, or poised rather dangerously over some rocks at the edge of the ocean, watched only by a few people and some incidental boats (Overall, 1991). In these events Stelarc is not merely, or *even*, one could argue, demonstrating his philosophies or concepts. He is creating what Deleuze and Guattari would call the 'percepts' and 'affects'<sup>38</sup>, the aesthetic components of an event, of what has come to pass with the body in relation to gravity and information. For example, in relation to gravity, Stelarc creates the percepts and affects of a body removed from its consideration primarily as the seat of the subject. His work here conserves the percepts and affects of the body's direct relation to gravity. This relation has perhaps been obscured in much other work in performance by psychoanalytic considerations of desire and so forth. Thus he may *say* that the body is obsolete, but in the realm of his events, as events, the body exists fully both *as an event* and in a series of

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<sup>38</sup> To give a rough caricature of percepts and affects these can be considered as perception and affection minus the subject. They are interactive vibrations. A detailed description of these important concepts in Deleuze and Guattari's work will follow later in this chapter.

impermanent actualisations, precisely in its relation to gravity<sup>39</sup>. It seems that for Stelarc what is obsolete is perhaps only a particular set of configurations which contain the body's possible body-changing interactions, which include the positioning of the body within a biological (though not 'logical') species, the human phylum (Overall, 1991).

His later work with information technology enacts this same complex economy in which the body is re-situated, but in a significantly different context. In much of this work the body becomes "a kind of vision switcher" (Overall, 1991) and far from being obsolete, is actually highly active in being interactive, in changing what it might be in the process of interaction. In Stelarc's work the body in league with technology, as opposed to the body in its relation with gravity, is far from obsolete. What is contained in the work by which, for example, he draws in the air using his laser eyes, is the possibility that "perception is an active structuring of the world rather than a passive reflection" (Stelarc, 1994:388). The 'percepts' and 'affects' here are created by the body in literal and immediate interaction with technologies. Stelarc amplifies sounds from the body's various systems and images from within the body. Electrical signals from the muscles of one part of the body are mediated by computers to produce movements in (normally) unconnected muscles in other parts of the body. These may also be used as triggers for various switches; to move a camera, or to move either his third mechanical arm or his very immediate counter-actualisation in his virtual arm. These aesthetic effects are indicating profound shifts in what it is to be human in relation to a changing socius and a changing environment. When asked about the psyche being located in the body, for example, Stelarc replied that -

*It's a convenient illusion. It's necessary for individual bodies to survive in a competitive biological and social world but the more I do and the more I think, I realise that words*

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<sup>39</sup> Put another way, there is no reason, after the 'death of the author' to assume that Stelarc is more capable than anyone else of determining the meaning of his work.

*like "I" are just a convenient shorthand for a complex interplay of social entities and situations. It's not meaningful to talk about an individual anymore. So for me, the body increasingly becomes hollow as a conceptual entity, as a physiological structure - reinforced by the sorts of experiences I have in the performances.* (Stelarc, 1994:389)

Stelarc's thinking and aesthetic creation are both heading towards the interactive rather than the representational. Despite some of the difficulties with his attitudes to evolution, there is more to be learnt from Stelarc about technology conceived as an event in the process of many actualisations, than there is from many theorists such as Brenda Laurel who take this event as given and somewhat inflexible. For Stelarc, the interior of the body becomes a new surface, containing the possibility of many interactions. It no longer houses a 'self', but in some of his interior probings quite literally "a sculpture" (388). He is not negating the body here but both performing and conceptualising its present interactions, in a sense acting as a 'sage', willing what has come to pass. Neither is he proposing a takeover by technology. Rather he feels that "there will be a hybridisation and a constant blurring between what is biological and what is synthetic"<sup>40</sup> (390).

There are, as discussed, critics of Stelarc's work. Anne Marsh (1993:107-115), for example, criticises Stelarc on the basis of gender. Marsh sees Stelarc's work in Freudian terms as a narcissistic experiment with pain to prove the control of the "I" over the fragmented and troublingly fragile body. She sees this as particularly masculine and claims that his work "appears to inscribe the ultimate position where mind and body are permanently separate" (111). This is in some ways a valid criticism, although it does appear firstly to run counter to Stelarc's anti-

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<sup>40</sup> A recent form of this was an internet event which took place on 10/11/95. In this people in Paris, Amsterdam, Hamburg, Helsinki, Vienna, Milwaukee and Toronto 'choreographed' Stelarc's body movements using a "Multiple Muscle Stimulation system. Stelarc himself was wired up in Luxembourg. Visual feedback was uploaded onto the internet. This information comes from an e.mail on the Deleuze-Guattari list which comes out of the Spoon collective in Virginia, USA. The particular e.mail was dated 9/11/95. In April, 1996, Stelarc performed a similar piece at Artspace, Sydney.

psychologism and, secondly, to oversimplify Stelarc's attitudes to the interactions *between* the mind and the body, as the above argument should demonstrate<sup>41</sup>.

Interactive attitudes as Stelarc's *could* be construed as leading him beyond a simple presentation of gender where what is important is "looking at redesigning the body and seeing the body not as a gendered, merely social construct but seeing it as a structure that largely contributes to the way it sees the world" (393). In other words it is not his interactive attitudes to the human and the technological that are necessarily masculine in themselves. Such work is not in all circumstances able to be generalised to standard arguments such as the masculine mind/body split. Its counter-actualisations, events, concepts, percepts and affects are specific and need to be taken that way. To perhaps reinfect Marsh's argument, where it may be possible to critique Stelarc's work on the basis of gender is not in its relation to technology, but precisely in its lack of specific relation to much besides, in his desire to *transcend* rather than reformulate relations with gender and the environment. There is little doubt, for example, that in Stelarc's work, both the concept and workings of the body are generalised in a way which transcends the specificities of sexual difference. I shall return to this point at the end of the chapter. Perhaps one would like to read a critique from Haraway's more flexible and technologically engaged position than from Marsh's standard psychoanalytic framework. Haraway might, for example, take the cyborg as granted, *not* as evil in itself, but then subject various formulations of the cyborg to stringent political analysis on the basis of their specific affects on sexed bodies. This would not so much judge Stelarc's work initially, as seek to analyse its specific series of interactive potentials and blocks. It would avoid an understanding of artwork such as Stelarc's on the basis of it being only a representation of a point of view. Rather such work has the complexity of an event and is

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<sup>41</sup> At a discussion at The Third International Symposium of Electronic Art, in Sydney in 1992, Stelarc received a barrage of questions along these lines. In general Marsh's book is an invaluable document of the history of performance in Australia. Its approach to theory is, however, at times and perhaps necessarily, a little hasty.

not an instance of truth. The mode of the event “is the problematic”; “the event by itself is problematic and problematizing. A problem is determined only by the singular points which express its conditions” (LS:54). As such, the problem corresponds to a question which can be asked repeatably and productively.

*We can speak of events only in the context of the problem whose conditions they determine. We can speak of events only as singularities deployed in a problematic field, in the vicinity of which the solutions are organized. (56)*

Problems conserve a question through a series of events and actualisations. These all form a kind of refrain (57), and indeed the refrain itself will become one of the major components of Deleuze and Guattari’s understanding of ethics. A refrain is a way of conserving a particular process with indeterminate ends<sup>42</sup>. It is the basis of technique. Furthermore, it is this ‘refrain-problematic’, this *series* of interactions between the corporeal and the incorporeal event, that is sense.

This early formulation of the consistency of interaction between body and incorporeal event, as outlined so far, finds itself in a different form in the discussion of the concept, percept and affect in Deleuze and Guattari’s last work together, *What is Philosophy?*. A description of the concept, percept and affect - the components of philosophy on the one hand and art on the other - will follow. This description is detailed as it provides the basis for an understanding of the way in which an ethics of interaction drawn from the work of Deleuze and Guattari is also a series of ecologies. These are ecologies of the actual *and* the virtual; of the ‘natural’, ‘social’, and even ‘technological’.

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<sup>42</sup> See Murphie, 1996b.

## Concept, Function, Proposition

Deleuze and Guattari give a series of deceptively simple definitions in *What is Philosophy?* In this book they seek to delimit the different 'event'-ual natures of the concepts of philosophy, the functions of science, the propositions of logic and the percepts and affects of art. These are not limited so much by field. Much of what purports to be philosophical activity is not, according to Deleuze and Guattari's scheme. Indeed, the field of art does sometimes produce concepts as well as affects and percepts (e.g. Stelarc's concept of the obsolete body), just as the field of philosophy comes close, at least, to producing percepts and affects (Nietzsche's aphorisms and personae such as Zarathustra; even the *story* of Plato's cave). What delimits these different activities is what they do - the plan(e)s of immanence<sup>43</sup> they create rather than the taxonomy of the fields in which they exist. It would be well to survey the concept, and more briefly the 'functive' of science and 'propositions' of logic, before turning to the percept and affect for a definition of what it is that art does.

The concept has nothing to do with reflection, perception of a pre-existing state, meditation, conversation or any such like. For Deleuze and Guattari the concept is created. It is made or produced. This is the central tenet of *What is Philosophy?* For Deleuze and Guattari, every concept, as created, is a multiplicity (WP:17) drawn from different elements that pre-exist it. As such, all concepts have a history and are constantly changing through becoming - a becoming which occurs through interaction with other concepts on the same plan(e) in order to form multiplicities which may be new concepts. This gives, at the beginning, three determinants of the concept. The first is that "every concept relates back to other concepts, not only in its history but in its becoming or its present connections" (19). Secondly, concepts have endoconsistency -

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<sup>43</sup> A plane which is the "horizon of events" (WP:36).

“...what is distinctive about the concept is that it renders components inseparable within itself.” (ibid.). This is true even though concepts can and do overlap each other. (The concept can also have exoconsistency with other concepts.) The third point is that each concept is a conceptual “point” which, as an event, traverses a field of possible actualisations; a plane of immanence (20).

We can see now that the concept is a form of incorporeal event, which, although realised in states of affairs is “not mixed up with them” (21). The concept -

*...speaks the event, not the essence or the thing - pure Event, hecceity, an entity...The concept is defined by the inseparability of a finite number of heterogeneous components traversed by a point of absolute survey at infinite speed.*<sup>44</sup> (ibid.)

Thus this peculiar entity, the concept as speaking the event, is defined by a consistency which it itself prescribes - “...it posits itself and its object at the same time as it is created” (22). Thus the concept “has no reference”. This means that concepts are not at all the same as propositions, or the functives of sciences. The latter are concerned more with reference to states of affairs or bodies. Concepts are events.

Concepts are also not, strictly speaking, *purely* discursive, but rather “freely enter into relationships of nondiscursive resonance...Concepts are centers of vibrations, each in itself and every one in relation to all the others” (23). Simply put, concepts are dynamic, not passively reflective. This is in a similar way to the Event and the Univocity of Being referred to in *The Logic of Sense* (169-180). Therefore, neither the event nor the concept are found in the cohesion produced in states of affairs and bodies, the fullness of a present time. Rather it is a question of

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<sup>44</sup> They have infinite speed firstly because becoming is initially imperceptible - it has no measure against which to be perceived. Secondly, as Paul Bains, translator of Guattari's *Chaosmosis*, noted in an e.mail response to my inquiry, it is a question of absolute survey. The concept is that which is able to survey an entire field instantaneously, thus drawing together the concept's "heterogeneous components" (WP:20).

an intensive (the concept) producing an extensive relation *between events* in the time of Aion. Concepts are not immediately and actually discursive in that they are *virtually interactive*.

Yet concepts are drawn from “sentences or their equivalent” ( *WP:24*), as are percepts and affects. If concepts are not purely discursive, how can this be?

Firstly, there is obviously more to “sentences or their equivalent”, then, than just sentences. Deleuze and Guattari are including many forms of expression here, including all the forms of expression that can effect percepts and affects - words but also paint strokes or Stelarc’s physical interaction with machines. These forms of expression in turn interact, as machines interact, both with each other, and with the plan(e)s from which they emerge. In other words, the actual interacts with the virtual.

Secondly, this implies that one has to consider discursivity itself as a *component process* of interactive multiplicities formed with non-discursive elements. In short, neither discursive nor non-discursive elements pre-exist the other.

Guattari, (*CHS:59-61*) gives a complex formulation of the relations between the discursive and the non-discursive, the actual and the virtual. This is extremely important in regard to Deleuze and Guattari’s concept of the machinic. As Guattari puts it -

*Beneath the diversity of beings, no univocal ontological plinth is given, rather there is a plane of machinic interfaces. Being crystallises through an infinity of enunciative assemblages associating actualised, discursive components (material and indicative Fluxes, machinic Phylums) with non-discursive, virtual components (incorporeal Universes and existential Territories)...In order to establish an intensive bridge between these actual and virtual functions we are inclined to postulate the existence of a deterministic chaos animated by infinite velocities. It is out of this chaos that complex*



*compositions, which are capable of being slowed down in energetico-spatio-temporal coordinates or category systems, constitute themselves. (CHS:58-59)*

To recall, the virtual, according to Deleuze and Guattari, is not nothing. It is certainly not a 'nothing' that lures us away from the real. It has always been here (or constantly *almost* been here). "Enunciative assemblages" function to link the virtual and the actual and these very basic components of ontological formation are, unlike Heidegger's determinations of Being, very much a matter of political considerations. Guattari further postulates a deterministic chaos through which the virtual can be actualised. Through all this, he proposes, in other words, a methodology through which the dynamics of the concept's and the event's actualisations, and vice versa, can be understood and analysed. This relation between virtual and actual is reciprocal, and seems without first cause or origin.

This can also be seen in a very brief consideration of Deleuze's earlier work on language, which may clarify the relationship between language and the event. For him "Events make language possible, but making possible does not mean causing to begin" (*LS*:181). Here one can see how it is always a matter of a multiplicity of interactions rather than simple causes and effects.

*...the event is not the same as the proposition; what it expresses is not the same as the expression. It does not preexist it, but pre-inheres in it, thus giving it a foundation and a condition...What renders language possible is that which separates sounds from bodies and organizes them into propositions, freeing them for the expressive function. (Ibid.)*

This 'enunciative assemblage', making language as distinct from simple sounds possible, cannot be understood until the event is seen as virtual process *within* both language and bodies which enables the actual instances of speech and language to emerge. The expression needs the event in order to come into existence.

Conversely, the virtual also needs to be actualised as it cannot continue its existence if it is not expressed. It inheres within its expressions. The virtual is not the same as its expression but constantly *needs* the expression in which to exist.

Virtual and actual, event and language, expressing and expressed; all of these are mutually dependent. This dependence involves a mutual inherence of broader 'planes of immanence' and states of affairs.

### The Plane of Immanence

Deleuze and Guattari also conceive of a created "plane of immanence" accompanying a concept, and which a concept constantly traverses. This plane of immanence (or consistency) is like a skin, a surface of intensity on which past and future are gathered. Thus -

*Concepts are events, but the plane is the horizon of events, the reservoir or reserve of purely conceptual events: not the relative horizon that functions as a limit, which changes with an observer and encloses observable states of affairs, but the absolute horizon, independent of any observer, which makes the event as a concept independent of a visible state of affairs in which it is brought about. (WP:36)*

The plane of immanence is "the image thought gives to itself of what it means to think before thought takes place" (37)<sup>45</sup>.

The plane of immanence, like the skin, gives a ground for the interaction of events, conceptual or otherwise. When events and concepts interact they form new multiplicities which are new

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<sup>45</sup> See Deleuze's *Difference and Repetition* for a similar discussion of the "ground" and the concept. In discussing Plato, Deleuze comments that "to participate means to have part in, to have after, to have in second place. What possesses in first place is the ground itself" (62). The ground provides the basis for difference. "The concept thus follows and espouses determination in all its metamorphoses...represents it as pure difference in delivering it up to a ground" (42). Of course this ground is also a kind of groundlessness, as it is the ground of difference.

concepts and events. It can easily be seen that concepts are not everlasting but can be both created and broken into components. As such, pseudophilosophical activities such as conversation or even critique are of no use if they do not also create concepts. Philosophy is not a question of defining or of assigning permanent rights and wrongs - of *judging* life. All of this negates the *process* of life<sup>46</sup>. It is a question of production, not of negation (28), of what is capable of being produced in relation to life, not *only* of what is negated through critique. This is why it is possible for Marten to claim that Heidegger's focus on elitist thinking, that can be seen in itself to negate the non-philosophical, is reactionary - a form of 'intellectual racism'<sup>47</sup>.

Thinking, then, is not primarily a question of communication<sup>48</sup>, even and especially of deep truths gained by the philosopher, but of becoming - "one does not think without becoming something else, something that does not think - an animal, a molecule, a particle - and that comes back to thought and revives it" (42). Thought takes place within a process of interaction and creation rather than the other way around, just as representation is a part of production and not the other way around. For this reason, the plane of immanence is "prephilosophical" (41).

*Artaud said: to write for the illiterate - to speak for the aphasic, to think for the acephalous. But what does 'for' mean? It is not 'for their benefit', or yet 'in their place'. It is 'before'. It is a question of becoming. The thinker is not acephalic, aphasic,*

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<sup>46</sup> It also leads one into the constant error of assessing the world on the basis of what it *was* supposed to be, and assuming that this is how it should be in the future. This is Heidegger's problem.

<sup>47</sup> Of the dangers of not realising that this pre-philosophical plane is also created and changing, see DR:131 - "...it matters little whether philosophy begins with the object or the subject, with Being or with beings, as long as thought remains subject to this Image which already prejudices everything...". This, of course, carries an implicit critique of Heidegger. On p129 Deleuze writes that "beginning means eliminating all pre-suppositions". This is the problem posed to the beginnings of most philosophies.

<sup>48</sup> Deleuze and Guattari constantly target the work of Habermas and others throughout *What is Philosophy?* (in particular they target the "Nouveaux Philosophes") as idealising a world of communication. For Deleuze and Guattari this world is in reality not much more than a series of discussions of opinion which fall very easily into the hands of marketing (something they complain that philosophy in general has become - see Deleuze in Cray and Kwinter 1992).

*Are we not led back in this way to the simple opinion of the average Capitalist, the great Major, the modern Ulysses whose perceptions are cliches and whose affections are labels, in a world of communication that has become marketing and from which not even Cezanne or Van Gogh can escape? (149)*

*or illiterate, but becomes so...We think and write for animals themselves. We become animal so that the animal also becomes something else. (109)*

This is not, however, a becoming of the subject. The subject, as a transcendental stoppage to the formation of interactive planes, be they of concepts or “subjected peoples” (108), can only form a majoritarian stratification *against* productive interaction on the plane. In reality in any case, there “is only the aborted Cogito, only the larval subject” (*DR*:110) and even “the philosopher is a larval subject of his own system” (119).

This leads to an ethical favouring of ‘becoming-minor’ - becoming as the becoming of the (non-transcendent) subjected, not of the subject - as the only possibility of becoming. This is crucial to an understanding of Deleuze and Guattari’s ethics. It also explains, for example, why much performance work occurs with plants and animals, or other ‘subjected’ entities. To take one well known example there is the work of Joseph Beuys, who worked with hares, coyotes, horses and honeybees<sup>49</sup>. Carolee Schneeman’s work with meat in *Meat Joy* in 1964 (Goldberg, 1988:138) or more recently, with images of cats in *Cat Scan* (1988) (Peterson, 1989/90) also falls into this area. It is always a question of a becoming-minor, the formation of certain planes of immanence, the increase in the possibilities of interaction and mutual becomings. It is also in the light of interaction that Deleuze and Guattari’s controversial ‘becoming-woman’ (*ATP*:232-309) must be placed. This will be discussed in chapter four.

It can be seen that immanent movement, as opposed to transcendental stoppage, is a constant necessity to both interaction and the whole process of becoming. For Deleuze and Guattari “Transcendence enters as soon as movement of the infinite is stopped” (47). This is what in

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<sup>49</sup> Beuys explained his art to a dead hare in 1965 (Centre Georges Pompidou, 1994:31), spent a week in a gallery in New York with a coyote, having been brought to the gallery from the airport in a hermetically sealed ambulance, in *I Like America and America likes Me* in 1974, (Goldberg, 1988:150), worked with a horse in *Iphigenia* in 1969 (Battcock and Nickas, 1984:297), and with honey in *Honey Pump at the Workplace* in 1977 at Kassel (Stachelhaus, 1991:164-165). For an account of Beuys’ relation to animals in general and bees in particular see Stachelhaus:55-59.

*Anti-Oedipus* they call anti-production, or stratification. It relates to their discussion of the paranoid machine - a machine of stoppage which blocks desire. In *The Logic of Sense* Deleuze, in one of his early Lacanian moments, refers to this stoppage as the heights, those which formed the basis for both Platonic ideals and for the Lacanian Phallus, both of which are desirable and infinitely already deferred<sup>50</sup>. These transcendent stoppages occur 'within' a subject, which itself requires a certain notion of transcendence, which in turn has formed the basis for many models of artistic practice. However,

*The event does not relate the lived experience to a transcendent subject = Self, but, on the contrary, is related to the immanent survey of a field without subject..(48)*

Interaction then is not just posited here as interaction between transcendent subjects, as it is in Aristotle, or a transcendent subject and field, as in Kant's aesthetics, but rather takes place *a priori* within an immanent field.

From this it can be seen that when Deleuze and Guattari refer to conceptual personae (such as Nietzsche's Zarathustra) they do not mean subjects but rather "intercessors", otherwise translated as "mediators" in a Deleuze essay on the same (Crary and Kwinter 1992:281).

*...the philosopher is only the envelope of his principal conceptual personae and of all the others who are the intercessors, the real subjects of his philosophy. ...I am no longer myself but thought's aptitude for finding itself and spreading across a plane that passes through me at several places. (WP:64)*

This is also true of the highly interactive relations *between* concepts; between art, philosophy and science; or between "concept, aggregate and function" (Crary and Kwinter 1992:283). The production of concepts, percepts and affects arises from the interactions which take place in the

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<sup>50</sup> Of course, for Deleuze, these perform work *as concepts* on a plane as well, thus showing the sophistication of a theory which can deal with the immanence of transcendent ideas.

formation of a series which then interacts with other series. In fact, for Deleuze, far from assuming the necessity of a transcendent subject, -

*...if you don't belong to a series, even a completely imaginary one, you're lost. I need my mediators to express myself, and they'd never express themselves without me...*

(Crary and Kwinter 1992:285)

Thus in *A Thousand Plateaus* the question asked of Freud as regards the wolf-man is "One or Several Wolves?" (ATP:26-38). The whole idea of becoming-multiple, determined by a becoming interactive in-between, is crucial to Deleuze and Guattari's work. This is why they are never determined to find accurate or permanent truths of Being (unless it is the being of difference), or transcendents which would stop the process of becoming. Rather they seek tools such as mediators which allow a *shifting process to develop itself with some consistency*. Even "A concept lacks meaning to the extent that it is not connected to other concepts and is not linked to a problem that it resolves or helps to resolve" (WP:79).

The plane of this interaction is conceived of as being broader than any one perspective, or even broader than thought itself, containing plants and animals as events, and other events, such as changes in the weather, other becomings such as an "intellectual, artistic or technological innovation" (Patton, 1986:28). It can therefore be seen that the plane of immanence of philosophy is infinite because it is created through constant interaction with the non-philosophical.

This finally becomes a question of literal, existential territories. Territorially, the repetition (of difference) of the ontological refrain sets up a rapport between thought and the earth. The earth, for Deleuze and Guattari, is highly interactive - the ultimate deterritorialised. It is participated in through activities as diverse as birdsong or the creation of urban territories through certain forms of popular music.

There are, then, always relations *between*, events, bodies, causes and quasi-causes, actualisations, counter-actualisations, refrains, territories, concepts, percepts and affects. All these exist on a constantly shifting plane of consistency. Thus Deleuze and Guattari can refer to their philosophy (and indeed in a sense all philosophy) as 'geophilosophy' - to do with relations on a plan(e); those between states of affairs and materials, between populations and events. Both art and philosophy "converge at this point; the constitution of an earth and a people that are lacking as the correlate of creation" (109). Geophilosophy also means that -

*Thinking is neither a line drawn between subject and object nor a revolving of one around the other. Rather, thinking takes place in the relationship of territory and the earth. (85)*

This is, of course, an open constitution - the constitution of an infinite plane and concepts as intensive singularities on it. Deleuze and Guattari, therefore, extend the notion of the environmental or ecological far beyond its regular understanding as a conservation of the 'natural' taking place alongside other interactions. For Guattari, for example, there are ecologies of the subject, the socius and the environment, all in heterogenesis (*TE*)<sup>51</sup>. In *What is Philosophy?* we find that -

*The earth is not one element among others but rather brings together all the elements within a single embrace while using one or another of them to deterritorialize territory. (85)*

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<sup>51</sup> For a detailed discussion of ecology, ethics and Deleuze and Guattari see my own "Sound at the End of the World: Nick Cave, Wim Wenders' *Wings of Desire* and a Deleuze-Guattarian ecology of popular music" (Murphie, 1996b).

Furthermore, there is more at stake for an ecology or ethics which includes both the natural environment *and* technologies than questions of mimesis for transcendent subjects. Ecologically, the self is not only transcendent subject but also immanent participant. The “self does not undergo modification, it is itself a modification - this term designating precisely the difference drawn” (*DR*:79). An ethics of interaction in Deleuze and Guattari’s terms is also an ecology, in that it must preserve the “difference drawn” - the potential for interaction as against stratification.

What is meant here by ecology, however, is obviously different to the normal use of the term. Ecology here is not just a matter of the conservation of the ‘natural’ if the ‘natural’ is opposed to the technological, the socius or the *processual* subject. Rather the *particular* ecology of the environment must be seen as interactive both within itself and with other interactive assemblages such as the socius and the processual subject. Furthermore, it is not just a question of the conservation of the actual. *It is also a question of the conservation of the virtual.* What must be ‘conserved’ here is the realm of the yet to become as much as that which already ‘is’. The question of ecology then becomes a vast one. How many of these *processes* within and between different ecologies do we wish to conserve? It is not a question of preserving fixed States but of conserving the most interactive assemblages. An example would be the conservation of a bio-diverse and highly interactive rainforest as opposed to less interactive timber plantations which, however, have a different kind of place within the broader ecology whereby the socius interacts with the environment<sup>52</sup>.

It is not just a question of the conservation of forests, however, but also of such things as ‘minor literature’ in a *general conservation of the minor*. As Patton notes, “the political task is

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<sup>52</sup> This implies, of course, that, in regard to the question of the preservation of both native forests and the jobs of timber workers, that it might not be a matter of *one* or the other. It might be a matter of more interaction between the parties involved.



not to conquer or become the majority...Deleuzian politics is, therefore, a politics of difference which defends the force of particularity against the universalising power of the majority” (1986:28). Ecology here is a matter of conserving particular creative possibilities against their universalising, of preserving processes of the highest interactivity. A simple example is that of maintaining the current semi-anarchy of the internet against Bill Gates and Microsoft Corporation’s attempt to create a managed network with its Microsoft Network, part of the *Windows* ‘95, package - a “carefully controlled alternative to the anarchic and insecure internet” (Sarno, 1995).

It must be asked, then, what degree of interaction it is possible to preserve in the virtual as well as the actual. What heterogenesis *between* the socius, environment and *processual* subject should we encourage *within* the socius, environment and processual subject? In this it is a question not just of creation, but also of destruction or dismantling in order to sometimes attain higher degrees of interactivity. What do we need to do away with? What are the socius’ and subject’s majoritarian tendencies that we need to dismantle? On the other hand, what must be maintained in order to avoid total ‘cracking up’, to enable flight over the many contemporary cracks forming in the socius, environment and self.

In regard to the question of technology, it is not a question of whether life will change or not (it will as it always has!), but of how the minor can participate best in this change - what becomings will be able to be preserved within it? These are, in fact, everyday questions. Virilio’s characterisation of a body *suddenly* invaded by technology, although perhaps encouraged by a remark of Stelarc’s that will be discussed shortly, is, in this light, perhaps as conservative, in the worst sense, as Heidegger’s rejection of modern technology. Technologies need to be *included* in ecological and ethical considerations. It is obvious, for example, that nuclear weapons do not fit into many highly interactive ecologies. Is it as obvious of nuclear power? Perhaps, but of

computers? Of Stelarc's technological augmentations of the body? Of indigenous Australians setting fire to the vegetation of the land for tens of thousands of years? It is not until the specific ecologies of these situations are addressed that we can develop an ethics as it applies to the development of interactive possibilities. The question is not one of a conservation *against* technology per se, but a conservation of interactive possibilities within relations *with* technology. It is not, however, the task here to address these specific questions but rather to provide a method of approach to them.

To sum this up, *new principles are required which involve not just an outright rejection of technology but a recognition of the relations in which it takes part.*

A first principle is simply that more interactive potential must be made available to the ecologies of the 'minor' because to do otherwise would bring an end to the process of interaction. This is because the minor is not only that which engages in interaction with other 'minors', but also that which is created through the deterritorialising processes of interaction. The minor's 'health' is an indication of a healthy interactive ecology. The majoritarian involves a literal decrease in the possibilities of interaction. Rather than double becoming, it returns everything to the agglomeration of identity, to the State, to Capital, to the Great Thinker.

A second principle is perhaps that what should be made available to the minor is not just access to *actual* technologies, but to the virtual realm of the potential within technology's other interactions. This involves participative access to planes of consistency. For Deleuze and Guattari, ecology, as geography "is not only physical and human, but mental" ( *QQ*:91). As such, it is again a *virtual ecology*. This subsequently involves access to *territories* - actual and virtual. In this, the event is geographical as much as historical, while the concept also is "not an object, but a territory" (97).

It is only science that *must* limit the field of becoming, and this is the role of the 'functive'. Science and logic<sup>53</sup> (and religion) use the "freeze-frames" (118) of functives and propositions to create a plane of *reference* rather than a plane of immanence. These are planes of constant variables to which everything can be referred rather than planes of infinite variation.

It can now be understood that Stelarc works with the functive of science, the concept of philosophy and the percept and affect of art all at once. Thus Stelarc may be able to produce several new bodies at the same time. He may produce a new concept of the body. He may also produce new conservations of percepts and affects in regard both to the concept of that body and the variables by which particular bodies themselves can be individuated. Stelarc's work thus creates both new planes of consistency (an infinite variation of the idea of the body through an intensive concept of body which is a new multiplicity), new planes of reference (by which particular bodies are produced - with third arms, in which the depths becomes surfaces through the insertion of cameras and microphones into the body) and new conservations of sensation (hanging by hooks, entire visual and aural territories and refrains, photographs and recordings).

More generally, this work of producing the new is always complex. It combines the processes in-between pre-suppositions, transcendent subject positions and a gradual dismantling of "Urdoxa", or glorified "original opinions as propositions" (142). This is why the performative, interactive nature of simulacra is so important - that they both resemble *and* differ. They enable

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<sup>53</sup> Logic, for Deleuze and Guattari, is that which "wants to turn the concept into the function" (WP:135). This, of course, is not really philosophy according to Deleuze and Guattari's definition. Neither will such propositions as make up logic have the efficacy of science, which uses 'acts of reference' as "finite movements of thought by which science constitutes or modifies states of affairs and bodies", since logic can "only apply" the "truth value" to "already constituted states of affairs or bodies, in established scientific propositions or in factual propositions or in simple opinions" (138). Deleuze and Guattari are constantly scathing about the latter throughout their work, and they are fairly dismissive of logic in general, writing that it is the "most puerile" "of all the finite movements of thought" (139), that logic "is only interesting when it is silent" at which point it becomes a little like Zen Buddhism (140), and that it confuses "functions with concepts" (ibid.). There seems to be no need to say much more about logical propositions.

movement from Urdoxa to the immanent in-between. However, Deleuze and Guattari also suggest that a precarious balance may have to be found here between absolute immanence and transcendence, *the latter as an operation within an immanent field*. They sometimes admit to a need to preserve a kind of (processual) subject position - even sometimes with an operative, if illusory, notion of transcendence - from which to question Urdoxa (indeed Guattari is more explicit about this need in *Les Trois Ecologies*).

In any movement away from Urdoxa, however, what is again crucial is interaction. This is not only of concepts. It is, as discussed, the interaction enabled through affects and percepts.

*But an essential moment in every domain is the passage from a state of affairs to the body through the intermediary of a potential or power or, rather, the division of individuated bodies within the subsisting state of affairs. We pass here from mixture to interaction. And finally, the interactions of bodies condition a sensibility, a proto-sensibility and proto-affectivity that are already expressed in the partial observers attached to the state of affairs, although they complete their actualizations only in the lived being. What is called 'perception' is no longer a state of affairs but a state of the body as induced by another body, and 'affection' is the passage of this state to another state as increase or decrease of potential-power through the action of other bodies. Nothing is passive but everything is interactive, even gravity. (154)*

It is in this interaction through percepts and affects that real 'communication' is to be found (ibid.). This is a communication which is not between one preformed subject and another but one in which interaction always comes first.

To sum up, then, we have come a long way here from stratifying mimesis, and the simple communication between transcendent subjects within a marketed Capital that one finds in the work of Rheingold and, to some extent, in Laurel's writing. Instead, with this notion of

interaction in mind, we can arrive at a slightly different way of looking at both the event of new technologies and the event in general. It shows us that there may not be one virtual reality, but many. Furthermore, these virtuals are real and can interact both with each other and with the actual.

We need to have a very different concept of the 'mimesis of an action' to Laurel's if this mimesis is to be any match for the event, or for any sort of virtual reality.

This is found in Deleuze and Guattari's theory of art, and I shall now give a more detailed description of the percept and affect.

## Percept and Affect

For Deleuze and Guattari, what is unique about art is that it actively preserves "and it is the only thing in the world that preserves" (163). What art preserves, it preserves in itself, through the bases of its materials as long as they last. What it preserves is sensation - "a bloc of sensations, that is to say, a compound of percepts and affects" (164). Just as philosophy creates concepts and science creates functions as a subset of propositions, so art creates percepts and affects. For Deleuze and Guattari the "work of art is a being of sensation and nothing else" (ibid.). Typically, this is not a preservation of a subjective formation, of the artist, of anyone who approaches the artwork, nor even of the subject of the artwork (character and so on, although fragments of subject formation can be brought to the 'surface' and made to vibrate, to interact and change). For -

*Percepts are no longer perceptions; they are independent of a state of those who experience them. Affects are no longer feelings or affections; they go beyond the strength of those who undergo them. Sensations, percepts and affects 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. (ibid.)*

As long as such materials last, the bloc of sensations will be conserved. Yet this bloc is not static, but dynamic. For example “harmonies are affects” (ibid.), even in dissonance. Affects are interactive, and percepts and affects together must form a compound for the work of art to become art in which “the compound of created sensations is preserved in itself”. An artwork must stand up alone not just as sensation, but as a *bloc* of interactive sensation. Art is the formation of this bloc of sensations, not a consistency of meaning over a long duration. Even a performance can be regarded as an ‘art’ event -

*Even if the material lasts for only a few seconds it will give sensation the power to exist and be preserved in itself in the eternity that coexists with this short duration. So long as the material lasts, the sensation enjoys an eternity in those very moments. Sensation is not realised in the material without the material passing completely into the sensation, into the percept or affect. All the material becomes expressive. (166-167)*

Performance work, then, is also a matter of the conservation of sensation. What then are sensations? Of course they are not perceptions and affections tied to a notion of a subject. They are instead simple couplings through vibration. It is the vibration which “characterizes the simple sensation” (168). These vibrations can come together in “the clinch” or split apart in “withdrawal, division, distension”. It is once again a question of the interactive. Interaction is at the basis of art. It exists primarily not between subjects so much as between vibrations<sup>54</sup> and sensations of different types.

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<sup>54</sup> An excellent discussion of the kinds of relations that exist between these vibrations and the subject is given in Mathieson, 1995, particularly in Mathieson's discussion of the manner in which physical sensations actually challenge the formation of subjective organisation.

Becomings travel through these vibrations, and art can therefore enact a kind of movement away from the subject, as these vibrations are those subtracted from a unitary subject (as against Kant's aesthetic formulae<sup>55</sup>). Released from this unitary, transcendent subject we are in the territory of what I have previously discussed as Jarry's epiphenomenon - the phenomenon in its own existence outside of its perception by a subject. "The percept is the landscape before man, in the absence of man" (169). We can see once again that becoming is, from the point of view of a central authority such as patriarchal man as subject, always a subtraction rather than an aggrandisement. Becomings entail the stripping away of this centrality in favour of interaction, which is, though possible without 'man' or even individual men or women, impossible without sensation. Thus, firstly, the difference can be drawn between perception as an indwelling of a socially marked subject, and a percept as the resonance of the landscape which does not need perception to exist but nevertheless vibrates in connection with the eye or the ear, or at the skin. Secondly, one can understand the importance of the skin rather than the deep organs, the retina and the eardrum rather than the brain as mythical seat of subjectivity. For Deleuze and Guattari, by immersing oneself in a non-human landscape, one undergoes a process of becoming-imperceptible, precisely through subtracting from oneself one's perceptions in order to avail interactions with percepts. An artwork such as John Cage's *4'33"* is an enactment of precisely this: the removal of perception in favour of percept. In this piece, for four minutes and thirty three seconds nothing is played by the pianist. The music is a becoming of vibrations, rather than an expression of Cage or the performer, or even the audience. An open landscape of percepts emerges, something that occurs at the skin, rather than in the 'depths' of the cogito.

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<sup>55</sup> Nevertheless Deleuze, while acknowledging the difficulties of Kant in terms of his assumptions of the transcendental subject, also shows how there is a movement towards the limits of this subject - or at least towards the dominance of any one of the subject's faculties over the others. This is through the sublime and the aesthetic. See *CEC*:49. It all ends in a harmony of discord very similar to that Deleuze finds in a modern application of Leibniz at the end of *The Fold* (136-137). This will be discussed in chapter seven.

Affects are “precisely these nonhuman becomings of man”, in which, quite simply we must interact with the world in order to preserve it. We must succumb to vibrations that would transform our own in order to be in the world. It is not our affection *for* the world that matters. It is that we are affected *by* the world.

*Not a “minute of the world passes,” says Cézanne, that we will preserve if we do not “become that minute”. We are not in the world, we become with the world; we become by contemplating it. Everything is vision, becoming. We become universes. Becoming animal, plant, molecular, becoming zero...What terror haunts Van Gogh's head, caught in a becoming-sunflower? In each case style is needed - the writer's syntax, the musician's modes and rhythms, the painter's lines and colors - to raise lived perceptions to the percept and lived affections to the affect. (169-170)*

This style is *not* to do with the artist's interpretation or theorising of his or her work. This style is literally the specific assemblage of interactive percepts and affects. Style is that which enables the vibration of percepts and affects removed from such theorisations or interpretations. An artist's statements about their work is a different matter altogether and should not be confused with the work itself.

## Separating Artists from Philosophers

A simple pulling apart of Stelarc's ‘work’ - his ‘events’ on the one hand, and his discourses about them on the other, may illustrate the difference between concepts, percepts and affects. Stelarc's declarations that the body is obsolete, and that the old biological forms of evolution are at an end, are really a series of statements which create a new concept. This concept, which enables the thinking of different possibilities for the body and technology, inheres within such



statements. Such statements are not Stelarc's art however, but philosophy. Stelarc is an artist who is also part philosopher and, if he has created a concept, it is that of the obsolete body. Stelarc's artistic style, on the other hand, both in his suspensions and his work with technological augmentation of the body, should not be seen as having the same function as his concept. This is particularly important to an understanding of how art theory and artistic practice are not simply correlatives. For example, Cage's concept of Silence is not a simple description of his artistic production. It is a concept which interacts with that production but has its own impetus quite independent from that. Likewise, Cage's music is not an illustration of his theories of silence and should not be approached just from this point of view. It is a specific series of conserved percepts and affects which move through an aesthetic territorial production. The same can be said for Beuys' concept of Social Sculpture and his work, even when this work consists in part of him talking about social sculpture<sup>56</sup>.

Put another way, one does not have to always agree with the theory in order to be affected by the artwork and, vice versa, one does not always have to like to work to gain some benefit from the concept.

Stelarc's artistic work, his performances and videos, should not therefore be seen, as they almost invariably are in criticism of his work, as mere illustrations of a point of view. Firstly, of course, a concept is not just a point of view; it is both produced and productive. Secondly, and perhaps more importantly, art is not a matter of point of view but of the conservation of sensation of percepts and affects, which precisely separate themselves out from perceptions and affections attached to a subject. One can therefore see Stelarc's artistic practice as conserving the sensations created in new becomings of the human in interaction with the world, both as landscape and as technoscape. The truly radical nature of Stelarc's work is not only to be found

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<sup>56</sup> Silence and social sculpture will be discussed in chapter five.

in his declarations, even if these seem to some to negate the very foundations on which normative notions of human subjectivity are based - that is, a normative and somewhat constant human body whose skin remains intact as protection of perception and affection from the becomings imposed by outside vibrations.

The truly radical nature of Stelarc's work is in the possibilities of becomings at the skin which Stelarc opens up through his artistic work. These are the possibilities involved in the creation of sensations of percepts and affects, interactive vibrations that a becoming-skin, rather than the organs of depth, provide for the human. Thus, firstly, the importance of piercing the skin in his early suspensions as a becoming-environment, a becoming-space of the body, suspended over rocks and ocean, amidst trees, porous to air. This is a body totally subjected to gravity in order to raise the possibility of other becomings away from gravity, to give the percepts and affects of how a body is in the world when the *ideas* of the body (subjective formations) are subtracted from it. Thus, secondly, the transformation of this becoming to a becoming-technological, again through interaction at the skin, when Stelarc is suspended hundreds of feet in the air from a crane over Copenhagen. To recapitulate, Stelarc has, indeed, recently, spoken several times of an enhancement of the interactive powers of the skin through technology so as to do away with the organs. If the skin could take air in directly and convert sunlight.. into food like a plant, he says, we could do away with the organs and all the ways in which they regulate our possible becomings. Of course, all notions of beauty, ugliness, human restriction, would come into question as these are based upon the 'standard' body 'with organs' - the body organised in particular way - as a normative factor. The concept of the body *without* organs can now be seen - sometimes somewhat literally - as a body whose skin forms a kind of plane of immanence which is a seat for multiple interactions and becomings.

As discussed previously, Stelarc's becomings-technological, his subtraction of majoritarian forms of subjective identification from his work in favour of interactions with technology, do not necessarily themselves interact with other 'becomings-minor'. In this, it could perhaps be said that in some ways the potential plane of consistency that Stelarc creates through his work generates closed borders rather too quickly. Stelarc's statements become problematic in their situating of the possible becomings of the body and technology upon the fairly straight line of evolution and science. This line seems to ignore bodily differences as they presently occur. Although this evolution is seen as ending "when technology invades the body" (Stelarc cited in Goodall, 1994b:142) this only leads straight back to evolutionary thoughts of the dawn of a new era of progress and expansion (for Stelarc, into outer space). The body, in fact, is reterritorialised in this scenario on to the Major and highly gendered narrative of scientific progress and the determinations of corporeal through the scientific. At the very least, this perhaps means that the "highly problematic concept of the post-evolutionary body" (Goodall, 1994b:142) remains territorialised within certain industrial and humanist frameworks where the subject expires with the body only in order to re-establish itself on the somewhat masculine line of instrumental reason. This is an issue that Stelarc sidesteps in his theorisation of his work. When questioned about gender-based criticisms of his work, Stelarc replied that he saw things "from a human stand-point, not so much from a gendered stand-point", and that for him "what's intriguing is a human/machine interface rather than a male/female intercourse" (Stelarc, 1994:392). The problem here is that although Stelarc's work can conceptualise a becoming-minor in relation to technology, in relation to the socius there is no set of relations that would constitute such a becoming-minor. The very idea of such lines of progress is a well critiqued one. Is it possible then to say *one* thing about Stelarc's work in this respect - to maintain a suitable distance from which to critique it? Which work are we critical of - his art or his philosophy? Jane

Goodall deflects this question in an interesting way, away from the “post-evolutionary body” to what she finds more acceptable, a “post-colonial body” which “is not a bounded territory but an interactive field subject to diverse forms of occupation which need not be viewed in terms of a power struggle” (Goodall, 1994b:142). In this, she suggests, Stelarc is providing ways out of cultural binds which always situate technology within an apocalyptic framework. This seems a more constructive approach than a simple critique of Stelarc’s work. Yet his work does provoke these questions of gender and interaction. Which sexed body is becoming in Stelarc’s work? What possibilities of becoming are available in the way that Stelarc’s work does connect with industry? To whom are these possibilities available? These are, of course, questions, which *as* problematics, can have more than one answer.

Some of the answers of others to these same questions, however, such as in the work of German performer and artist, Rebecca Horn, do suggest some highly gendered operations and interactions within this field. If Stelarc’s is an approach within industrial narratives that ignores gender, what other approaches for becoming through interaction with technologies are there? I have discussed the importance of the plane of immanence as the basis for the development of concepts, percepts and affects. The plane of immanence that Stelarc’s work is involved with seems constantly to falter, to collapse back into a transcendent evolution. Can some other present percepts and affects which can account for machine/human interaction, desire and gender be involved in the creation of a more open plane of immanence than Stelarc’s? This will be discussed in the chapter five with regard to the work of Rebecca Horn and others. It is, however, first necessary to give a detailed description of Deleuze and Guattari’s notions of becoming. This will be done in the next chapter and the discussion will include a specific consideration of the problems of gender and becoming.

## Chapter Four

### Becoming - the Ground of Groundlessness

*For eternal return, affirmed in all its power, allows no installation of a foundation-ground. On the contrary it swallows up or destroys every ground which would function as an instance responsible for the difference between the original and the derived, between things and simulacra. It makes us party to a universal **ungrounding**. By 'ungrounding' we should understand the freedom of the non-mediated ground, the discovery of a ground behind every other ground, the relation between the groundless and the ungrounded, the immediate reflection of the formless and the superior form which constitutes the eternal return. (DR:67)*

For Deleuze and Guattari, becoming is the ground of groundlessness. As a concept it enables us to think through the shifting and the changing. Even as a concept *in itself*, becoming seems peculiarly and necessarily chimerical. One could almost say that each of the different Deleuze-Guattarian terms of 'becoming' - 'animal', 'minor', 'molecular', 'woman', 'imperceptible', 'intense', 'child' - are primary within different contexts, yet none of them make any sense considered without the others. None provides an originary ground for the rest. Rather each is a *departure* from an attempt to ground and stratify. Each of these 'becomings' is a nomadic escape from a different, segregated Major State - Human, Major, Molar, Man, Perceptible (well-known and easily recognised - famous and central to the culture) Adult. This means of course that any becoming is always contextual - there is no *one* formula for becoming. The very point of becoming is that it is not based upon resemblance (ATP:233) within the framework of any 'One'.

It is certainly not, for example, becoming *the same as* a dog, a minority, a woman, etc. Such resemblance would immediately, according to Deleuze and Guattari, feed into Majoritarian forms of representation. This would consequently set up a kind of sub-Major version of Dog (as *defined* by the Human), Minority (with *reference* only to Majority), or Woman (*defined only* in relation to Man). Rather than such transcendent impositions of organisation, a becoming uses *proximity* to the minor, the woman, and so on, to unleash a 'molecular revolution' which effectively undoes the relations of anti-production between molecular-Molar, woman-Man, child-Adult, etc. Those molecular elements, or singularities, which were captured within the Major, Molar forms of anti-production, and which provided its force, like the war machine captured by the State, are set free again. Becomings, then, are kinds of pathways, lines of escape, away from Major States. Becomings form, not unified States, but *series* of heterogeneous differences. The repetitions of becoming as a process without end is an opening out to these series and to their interactions with other series.

One could say that in this everything is defined *by relation* and by interaction, not *by category*. Nevertheless this does not go far enough for Deleuze and Guattari. Becoming is not the setting up of a "correspondence between relations" (ATP:237) either but a disruption of them, *a becoming of relations themselves*. Thus Deleuze and Guattari write that they "believe in the existence of very special becomings-animal traversing human beings and sweeping them away, affecting the animal no less than the human" (ibid). Becomings run *between* categories; they escape them. They occur in *blocks of becoming* that form between categories, species, or elements of fixed States with fixed relations. In this becomings participate as if in a pack, not as the becoming of some(one)thing into some(one)thing else. *They are a matter of blocs of affect*, not of feelings attached to a subject. For Deleuze and Guattari, "affect is not a personal feeling...it is the effectuation of a power of the pack that throws the self into upheaval and makes

it reel” (240). This is another way of saying that becoming is always a matter of entering into heterogeneous multiplicities, (or of accepting their pre-existence) through an acceptance of contingent proximities.

*Proximity is a notion, at once topological and quantal, that marks a belonging to the same molecule, independently of the subjects considered and the forms determined.*

(272-273)

This means that the borderline, in which there is no distinction between human and animal, adult and child, man and woman, is real and specific<sup>1</sup> - singular without necessarily being subjective<sup>2</sup>.

Deleuze and Guattari attempt to provide what they call “criteria” (251) which will allow for the continuation of the processes of becoming. In this, Deleuze and Guattari’s ‘becoming’ is simultaneously a philosophical project, an aesthetic project and an ethical project. It is not, however, meant to be a set of eternal moral prescriptions or a basis for judgment. Rather, it is philosophical because it both asserts a kind of empiricism about how the world is (that is, the world is primarily about “difference...dissemblance and disparateness, chance, multiplicity and becoming” (DR:300)) and it implies that it is only in the acceptance of difference that any basis for anything else can be found. It is aesthetic because, in becoming, affects and percepts are not just reflections or representations of a more ‘real’ world but are in fact the basis for blocks of becoming. In other words, “Affects are becomings” (ATP:256). It is an ethical project because it recognises the need for criteria by which the processes of becoming can be constantly affirmed. As such, the goal is not to “have become” but to accept the constant return of becoming as the

<sup>1</sup> The example they give here, which Massumi (1992:93-101), for one, follows is that of a becoming-dog. “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 movement and rest, or of molecular proximity, into which they enter” (ATP:274).

<sup>2</sup> This is why, paradoxically, every multiplicity has “an exceptional individual, and it is with this individual that an alliance must be made in order to become-animal” (243). How is this so? It is because this exceptional individual exists not only on, but also as a kind of “borderline” (245) of the pack or multiplicity, a position of radical deterritorialisation even in relation to the deterritorialisation of the pack from State forms. Thus this individual “has nothing to do with the preferred, domestic, and psychoanalytic individual” (244).

return of an unthought difference through becoming. It is at this point that the philosophical, the aesthetic and the ethical come together in an ethics of difference, not in the moral prescription of the Same.

What is *conserved* in becoming is this process of the return of unthought difference, in the intersection of different multiplicities such as “beings”, “drops” in the “Ocean”, and ‘voices’ (DR:304). This process is conserved on the plane of consistency which is precisely a plane which “cuts across them all” (ATP:251) and provides a “way out for” becomings (ibid.). The main criterion for becomings is therefore whether they can establish such a plane of consistency which intersects through heterogeneous multiplicities in order to “prevent them from bogging down, or veering into the void” (ibid.). If becoming has a goal or aim, it is this plane of consistency which allows for the intersection of becomings of multiplicities. In that Stelarc’s work, for example, seems to so heavily reterritorialise itself upon the human (gendered as androgynous/male), and is subsequently so quickly cut off from multiple interactions, the other proximities it sets up between bodies and machines do not *quite* seem to attain a plane of consistency.

This plane is not a transcendent plane (of the ‘beyond’ of evolution in Stelarc’s case) with signifying organs. It is a plane on which is fixed “the absolute state of movement as well as of rest, from which all relative speeds and slownesses spring, and nothing but them” (267). Deleuze and Guattari give the three examples of Cage in music, Godard in cinema and Nathalie Sarraute in writing. All of them carry becoming as far as this plane. Cage’s work “affirms a process against all structure and genesis, a floating time against pulsed time or tempo...silence as absolute rest marks the absolute state of movement” (ibid.). Again *4’33”* is a great example of this simultaneous, absolute rest and movement. Godard “carries the fixed plane of cinema to this state where forms dissolve” whilst Sarraute “liberates the particles of an anonymous matter” in writing and allows “them to communicate through the ‘envelope’ of forms and subjects” (ibid.).



The principle here is that becomings need a plane and that “planes are not a principle of organization but a means of transportation” (268). The function of transcendent forms of organisation, at best, is to provide an “envelope” or fold within which such transformations can attain consistency<sup>3</sup>.

Deleuze and Guattari’s more specific becomings need to be placed within an understanding of this processual plane, less they be understood as philosophers wanting to become ‘Molar’ Women, Children, Animals, etc. In fact, becoming, by shifting to the molecular can only undo any attempt to appropriate other Molar conditions such as Woman. In this sense, becomings are bound to fail.

Deleuze argues in an essay on T.E. Lawrence that *such induced failures of the Molar are indeed the aim of becomings*. Such failures, writes Deleuze, echoing Lawrence, constitute “our sovereign liberty” (CEC:150). Deleuze writes that Lawrence remains aware of his betrayal of the Arabs and that this inhabits the *failure* of his own ‘becoming-arab’, in fact animating it at the same time (146).

It is here that Deleuze quite specifically points out that the aim of becoming is not to “merge” with that which one’s becoming is allied with. This would amount to a form of colonisation. He points out that both Genet and Lawrence have in common -

*...the impossibility of being able to merge with the Arab (Palestinian) cause<sup>4</sup>, the shame of not being able to, and the shame more profound coming from elsewhere, cosubstantial with being, and finally the revelation of an insolent beauty which shows, as Genet says, at what point “breaking out of shame was easy”, at least for an instant...(157 - my translation)*

<sup>3</sup> A simple example is probably again 4’33” where presumably the audience attended because they were expecting the performance of a piano piece (form) written by a composer (Cage as transcendent subject). The exceeding of both form and subject does not entirely negate their usefulness in such contexts.

<sup>4</sup> A cause that was also one of Deleuze’s own political concerns, so this is highly relevant to Deleuze specific politics of becoming.

This seriously qualifies some of the critiques that can be made of Deleuze and Guattari's 'becoming'.<sup>5</sup> The Major *can* seek its own supposed abolition in a (false) becoming in the form of a totalitarian line of flight ending in a form of colonisation (England's totalitarian lines of flight to Australia, for example). For Deleuze and Guattari, however, this is nothing but an antiproduktive accumulation of affects to a despot. The Major's real becoming is not through the appropriation of another's affects, but through its *failure* to be able to become while in its continued attachment to the Major. It is only through *shame* for the betrayal by the Major of the minor in false becomings that the Major is finally abolished. At this point one does not *finally* 'become-woman' or 'become-minor'. Such finality has nothing to do with becoming. Rather, for an instant, what is recognised is the "insolent beauty" that is the plane of consistency where many becomings are possible.

Despite this, however, breaking from attachments to the Major and from various forms of colonisation of the minor is never easy. This issue has proved to be particularly complex in the area of 'becoming-woman'.

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<sup>5</sup> See, for example, Kellner and Best, who write that Deleuze and Guattari have "uncritically assimilated the modernist ethos of incessant self-transformation, becoming and psychic instability (1991:104). This assumes that Deleuze and Guattari are *only* providing an ethic where they are in fact trying to lay out some sort of plan(e) of consistency for ethical action at the intersection of pre-existing planes such as those of Capital, consumerism and the State. Kellner and Best go on to write, rather revealingly, that "one does not constantly need a new subjectivity" (107) as if Deleuze and Guattari suggest that we get up each morning and make a choice about it. Once again what is missed in such arguments is the fundamental and sensible assertion that it is not a matter of choice. The instability of subjectivity is the condition and ground for contemporary ethics. On the issue of the usage of the discourse of the machine and production, one wonders whether Kellner and Best are proposing that there is an outside to such relations at present.

For other examples drawn from an anthropological context see Lattas, 1991 and Miller, 1993. These articles do problematise Deleuze and Guattari's relation to primitivism as an 'other' of becoming but also seem confused about the conceptual aspects of Deleuze and Guattari's work as separate from this work's sometimes faulty application to examples. In fact, a recent book by Diana Fuss (1995) suggests that Deleuze and Guattari's work on the relations between colonisation and Oedipalisation may be very useful and that *Anti-Oedipus* is one of the great books written against colonialism, being a "polemic against the psychology of colonization" (158).

The most consistent and detailed critiques of Deleuze-Guattarian becoming have been given by feminists. These will be discussed shortly.

## Deleuze and Guattari's 'Becoming-Woman'

*It is probably necessary to be a woman (ultimate guarantee of sociality beyond the wreckage of the paternal symbolic function, as well as the inexhaustible generator of its renewal, of its expansion) not to renounce theoretical reason but to compel it to increase its power by giving it an object beyond its limits. (Kristeva, 1981:146)*

For Deleuze and Guattari sexuality<sup>6</sup> is “everywhere”, in “Flags, nations, armies, banks”, which “get a lot of people aroused”. Politics is therefore not a matter of an impossible desexualisation but of the restriction of flows (AO:293). This means that sexuality has to be considered as one *basis* for ethical and political thought, but not necessarily as a value in itself or even as *the* basis. What Deleuze and Guattari seek to do, as a response to this, is to fragment monumental sexual formations, such as the “couple” or “family” (ibid.) so as to open sexuality out onto planes of other becomings. Deleuze and Guattari seek a ‘thousand sexes’ or *n* sexes (296), eschewing any definition of the sexes as one or even two (294). In other words, they propose a molecularisation of sexuality to the point that any one sexual assemblage would be imperceptible, rather than highly visible and determining. This makes Deleuze and Guattari’s approach to gender both complex and potentially *problematic*.

For Deleuze and Guattari, the ‘woman’, in particular the ‘girl’, is important as a path of becoming because of ‘her’ existence in-between the dichotomies of sexual and adult-child identification that stratify sexual and subjective possibilities in Western culture.

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<sup>6</sup> ‘Sexuality’ is, of course, a loaded term. Even in the case of Deleuze and Guattari, there is a slight shift away, between the two volumes of *Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, from some of the possible essentialist overtones the term is loaded. In *Anti-Oedipus*, which is admittedly animated by the early 1970s, post Wilhelm Reichean notions of a sexuality which overflowed its socialised restrictions, this animation is still somewhat tempered by the attempt to tie sexuality into politics, not to mention subjecting it to a process of fragmentation. In *A Thousand Plateaus*, even the term ‘desire’, so present in *Anti-Oedipus*, seems fairly scarce, and there is shift to discussions of the machinic.

*The girl and the child do not become; it is becoming itself that is a child or a girl. The child does not become adult any more than the girl becomes a woman; the girl is the becoming-woman of each sex, just as the child is the becoming-young of every age.*  
(ATP:277)

This is a complex passage. It locates molecularity, for perhaps two different reasons that are important to discriminate between, with the child - with the girl. The first reason, with which it is only too easy to concur, is because these are the cultural elements which do not attain full visibility<sup>7</sup> within Western culture or Molar subjective formations. Their only visibility is as an extreme form of Woman (the girl as little Woman). They cannot be perceived beyond this Molar, Masculine perception. They are beyond its threshold. An example, significantly and problematically *drawn from a male writing about women*<sup>8</sup>, is Proust's first kiss with Albertine, in which -

*Albertine's face shatters into molecular partial objects, while those on the narrator's face rejoin the body without organs, eyes closed, nostrils pinched shut, mouth filled.*  
(AO:69)

What is important here is the in-between (though one as experienced significantly by the male narrator, not by Albertine). In other words, this is a molecular becoming that Deleuze and Guattari are talking about, not about particular girls and children. *Yet it does seem at times to be a molecular becoming from a particular position* - that of the Man and the Adult (ATP:277).

The second reason that molecularity seems located with the girl seems to consist of a somewhat essentialist identification of woman and the molecular. Why the primacy of woman? Is this a primacy for actual women or for actual men? Part of the answer to the second question at

<sup>7</sup> Subsequently, their visibility is colonised by the Masculine and the Adult, which render *highly* visible versions of Woman and Child.

<sup>8</sup> Even this is ambiguous, of course. Albertine was created a girl, although based upon a male. Although Deleuze and Guattari write that asking why Proust made Albertine a girl is a "stupid question" (ATP:277) this does not lessen the problematic potential colonising of the girl as a literal figure for the becoming of any sexuality.

least is statistical - “the man is merely the one in whom the male part, and the woman the one in whom the female part, dominates statistically” (AO:69). This in itself is a radical rewriting of a sexuality which is made up of blocks rather than inherent tendencies. Yet it seems to remain ignorant of its own possibilities for reterritorialisation on the Man and the Woman as molar entities. Nevertheless, it would be wrong to say that Deleuze and Guattari ignore these Molar issues. In *Anti-Oedipus*, Deleuze and Guattari suggest that even the more Molar Women’s Liberation movements contain that which leads directly to an escape from molarity (61).

In addition, Deleuze and Guattari are quite specific about the Molar economic conditions of women and children in a situation that “has nothing to do with the phallus and castration, but directly concerns an unbearable economic dependence” (356). So the suggestion here is *not that women should have no Molar power*. What is suggested is rather that they perhaps bear the burden (as well as everything else!) of possible social change. Is this more or less problematic? The tentative answer that I would give is that it is precisely as a *problematic* that the issue should be approached. The critical history of the debate surrounding the ‘becoming-woman’ can indeed be viewed as indicating a *crucial* problematic in the field of sexual difference. For Deleuze -

*An ‘objective’ problematic field...appears, determined by the distance between two heterogeneous orders...The act of individuation consists not in suppressing the problem, but in integrating the elements of the disparateness into a state of coupling which ensures its internal resonance. (DR:246)*

This is a constantly renewed problematic to which we are called once and again to find new, if impermanent, solutions. This may allow for the future development of differentials between the (at least) two heterogeneous series of genders which will provide the kind of harmony between dissonances that shall be discussed in chapters seven and eight. It may also provide bifurcations *away* from the ‘two’ of the heterogeneous series.

Is, then, Deleuze and Guattari's contribution to the problematic of the 'becoming-woman' really a notion of becoming-Woman? What of becoming-women? What of women's becoming? If no one can become Man, can men become anything else quite so easily? These questions are in conflict, as the debate around the concept shows<sup>9</sup>.

## The Shame of Being a Man

*The shame of being a man. Is there a better reason to write? (CEC:11)*

It is clear that the undoing of sexual binaries, although they may be in some ways unfortunately reinforced, is the aim behind Deleuze and Guattari's becoming-woman. Although becoming-woman is the first (molecular) step, it is meant to lead towards the "becoming-imperceptible" of sexualities, a becoming-imperceptible that "is the immanent end of becoming, its cosmic formula" (ATP:279).

The notion of becoming is meant as a notion that provides a way of recognising the activity and what we could call an ethics of imperceptibility. Far from the subject or despot being aggrandised, the aim here, as with the previously discussed necessity of 'failure', is to "go unnoticed", "to be like everybody else" (279). This however, "is by no means easy" (ibid.). Such concepts as "becoming-woman" make no sense without an understanding of this much less discussed (in the critical literature) "becoming-imperceptible". This -

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<sup>9</sup> Interestingly, if Deleuze and Guattari's concepts are to be treated as tools, there seems to have been little use of this particular concept outside of the debate about it. Even Deleuze's concept of the separation between masochist and sadist formations seems to have proved more *practically* useful in this area. See Nancy Holland's "What Gilles Deleuze Has to Say to Battered Women" (1993) which counters the specious argument that women either enjoy being beaten, or that they are in some kind of sadomasochistic structure in a relationship in which they are abused, with Deleuze's (CC) separation of the dynamics of masochism and sadism.

*...requires much asceticism, much sobriety, much creative involution...eliminate the too-perceived, the too-much-to-be-perceived...Becoming everybody/everything (tout le monde) is to world (faire monde), to make a world (faire un monde). By process of elimination one is no longer anything more than an abstract line, or a piece in a puzzle that is itself abstract. It is by conjugating, by continuing with other lines, other pieces that one makes a world that can overlay the first one, like a transparency. (ATP:279-280)*

This then, is *a counter-actualisation of the Molar world as molecular*. It is not the total changing of the world, or the colonisation of it. It is the immanent enhancing of the becomings of its already present particles and speeds.

Deleuze and Guattari's ethical revolution is about this immanent becoming, not about transcendent forms of religious, social, political or psychoanalytic forms of judgment. The task then, in making such worlds, is not *always* to find 'critical distance' from which to judge the world, but more often lies in finding one's "proximities and zones of indiscernibility" (ATP:280). This involves looking at movements rather than structures. A *structure* of perception will never be able to perceive a movement by definition. "Movements, becomings, in other words, pure relations of speed and slowness, pure affects, are below and above the threshold of perception" (281). Movement cannot be perceived, or gridded, and therefore any movement is "infinite". It opens out onto the infinite, to the world of everybody and everything; to, for example, the world of *n* sexes.

In this, Deleuze and Guattari finally tie the imperceptible into the plane of consistency. This is through the threshold of perception which will be discussed in chapter seven. They point out that movement can, in fact, be perceived by subjects, but only as a 'freeze-frame' on the transcendent plane of organisation. This is the purpose of the threshold of perception, which "is by nature

relative and thus plays the role of a mediation on the plane that effects the distribution of thresholds and percepts and makes forms perceivable to perceiving subjects” (ibid.). This transcendent plane of organisation is not, however, perceived itself within this framework. It is a hidden principle of organisation that, through judgment, masquerades a descent from an authority above<sup>10</sup>. It is *only* within the plane of consistency that “the principle of composition itself must be perceived...at the same time as that which it composes or renders” (ibid.).

*Perception will no longer reside in the relation between a subject and an object, but rather in the movement serving as the limit of that relation, in the period associated with the subject and object. Perception will confront its own limit; it will be in the midst of things, throughout its own proximity, as the presence of one haecceity in another, the prehension of one by the other or the passage from one to the other: Look only at the movements. (282)*

It is fundamental to an understanding of any Deleuze-Guattarian becoming to “look only at the movements”; to consider molecular particles and speeds first, and to consider the Molar only as something which must be made immanently transparent, escaped from, or moved in-between.

This is becoming-imperceptible. Such a becoming will then lead to the event, the “Untimely, which is another name for haecceity, becoming, the innocence of becoming” (ATP:296) - and to generative interactions occurring on the plane of consistency.

*It is merely a question of ascertaining that our choices in matters of love are at the crossroads of “vibrations,” which is to say that they express connections, disjunctions, and conjunctions of flows that cross through a society, entering and leaving it, linking it*

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<sup>10</sup> For example, despite the value of Stelarc’s work, his conceptual activity seems very much based upon the authority of evolution, even as he declares its end. Evolution *judges* the body through many of the statements Stelarc makes.



*up with other societies, ancient or contemporary, remote or vanished, dead or yet to be born. (352)*

Where this becoming occasionally becomes difficult is on the question of ‘*becoming-for who?*’. This difficulty is obvious in Deleuze and Guattari’s discussion of elements of the “third flux” of sexuality, that of the celibate machines or of bachelor machines, to be discussed in relation to Rebecca Horn’s counter-actualisation of them as ‘Bride-machines’ in chapter five. In *Anti-Oedipus* all the celibate machines, from those that Michel Carrouges identifies to those of Edgar Allen Poe, are created by men. What these celibate machines produce, as they remove themselves from the world of binary sexual dichotomies, is not a lack of eroticism as might be expected but the “intensive qualities” of a -

*...genuine consummation...a pleasure that can rightly be called autoerotic, or rather automatic: the nuptial celebration of a new alliance, a new birth, a radiant ecstasy, as though the eroticism of the machine liberated other unlimited forces. (AO:18)*

I have already implied the possible uses and dangers of such celibate (masculine) machines in the discussion of Stelarc. Even late in his career, Deleuze too succumbs to these dangers and writes that -

*The overman is this existence of man which no more knows the distinction between man and woman, the woman entirely passing into the machine, absorbed by the machine, the man on his own operating as celibatory potential or ‘being-able-to-be’ (‘pouvoir-être’), emblem of splitting, “far from terrestrial sexes” and “the first occurrence”. (CEC:120 - my translation)*

Of course, here the woman is sided with the (seemingly passive) machine and the man with his own (active) operating. In terms of my previous discussion of Deleuze and Guattari’s notion of

the machinic Deleuze here makes little sense, as there is no position outside of the machinic *from* which to manipulate it. There is some vacillation here, however. Deleuze, in a footnote to this same essay on Jarry, makes a specific comparison of the text of Jarry's he is discussing to Carrouges' Bachelor-Machines, and to Derrida's commentary on Heidegger. Here, however, he comments that Derrida "presupposes that Dasein according to Heidegger entails a sexuality, but irreducible to the duality that appears in being human or being animal" (ibid.). In addition, Deleuze and Guattari themselves have elsewhere diagnosed this problem quite specifically. One of their early diagnoses of Modern Man's (technological) ills was that, quoting Céline, "His delirium is a switchboard with thirteen telephones. He gives his orders to the world. He doesn't care for the ladies." (AO:335).

The solution to this particular difficulty, even as it occurs in Deleuze and Guattari's own work, is probably Deleuze's occasional alternative masculine writing position - from the point of view of the *shame of being a man*. It is only after this shame is written, examined, that there is any way out for the necessarily Majoritarian Man. The 'becoming-woman' can be seen as a *failed* attempt to do so. Nevertheless, when considered as a necessary failure, the term could be considered to be at least ethically ambiguous.

Guattari, who discussed this term in his solo work more than Deleuze and from whom we may be able to say the term came originally, often relates the concept to a *homosexual* becoming-woman (MR:233-235). Nevertheless, the term seems to fit well with part of Deleuze and Guattari's whole project as regards sexuality. This seems to be to undo the simple oppositions between "*local and nonspecific* heterosexuality and *local and nonspecific* homosexuality" (AO:74), and this is very much implicated in their discussion of the becoming-woman as a statistical, particular and local movement of a block of becoming. For them, for example, the schizophrenic is "not simply bisexual, or between the two, or intersexual. He is transsexual. He is

trans-alivedead, trans-parentchild" (77). "He" is, however, still, profoundly *he* here. *His* are not necessarily going to be the same as any number of different *women's* 'becoming-woman'. Yet this still problematises the whole Man/Woman dichotomy with third terms<sup>11</sup> (such as the celibate, the homosexual) which unlike Lacan's Phallus do not return the economy to a basic dualism, but instead open out its processual becomings. And it does raise the possibility of intensities that fall between such dichotomies, of becomings that open out to one another on the plane of consistency. It also questions the understanding of 'reproduction' in that for Deleuze and Guattari, like an egg, each of 'n' sexes contains the potential of their own genealogy, *male and female* intensities among all the others (AO:154). In an interview in 1985 with Charles Stivale<sup>12</sup>, Guattari was asked about the problem that the whole notion of 'becoming-woman' had presented to feminists in both France and the USA. He replied that the notion is -

*...a departure from binary power relations, from phallic relations, is on the side of the 'woman' alternative...Obviously it doesn't end there, for this 'becoming-woman' is nonetheless to a great extent in a relationship, even indirect, of dependence vis-à-vis masculine power so that it might rapidly be reconverted into the form of masculinized power...it's a direction. Toward what? Quite simply, toward another logic, or rather a logic I've called 'machinic', an existential machinic, i.e. no longer a reading of a pure representation, but a composition of the world...like in art, forms that construct coordinates of existence at the same time as they live them. (Stivale, 1985).*

Although it will be discussed in detail in chapter six, it is probably necessary here to briefly describe the relations between this machinic logic, gender and the complexity in which Guattari's machinic logic is attempting to participate.

<sup>11</sup> Grosz, as will be discussed, has raised the possibility of a 'becoming-lesbian' or a 'lesbian-machine' as a possibility for women.

<sup>12</sup> This has no page numbers because it has been drawn from publication on the World Wide Web.

## Complexity not Technocracy

In “Machinic desire” (1993) Nick Land romanticises exactly the technological determinism which Deleuze and Guattari are trying to avoid. In doing so, Land substitutes this technological determinism for both machinic heterogenesis and political critique, in such statements as: “Capital is overflowing into cybersex”; “Cyberspace. Here it comes”; and “The terminal social signal blotted out by technofuck buzz from the desiring-machines” (481). In doing so, Land unfortunately gives good reason for some cynicism, especially among some feminist critics, about the application of Deleuze and Guattari’s notion of the machinic. In some ways echoing a debased version of Stelarc’s conceptual program, in Land’s argument *technological* complexity becomes a kind of fetish substitute for more general machinic complexity, in what is a simple repeat of the masculine desire (rather than the machinic desire) to displace general (and often bodily) interactive complexities onto harsh technological solutions<sup>13</sup>.

In order to counterbalance such misinterpretations, in “On Machines” (*OM*<sup>14</sup>) Guattari reflects on what the term “machine” was intended to do in his work. It is a term meant to allow for “composition” between all sorts of elements of interaction, rather than simple technological

<sup>13</sup> Despite a sophisticated reading of Deleuze and Guattari, Land does all this in the least interesting of ways, arguing for example, with regard to the well-known film *Blade Runner* that “*Anti-Oedipus* aligns itself with the replicants” (471) (the manufactured cyborgs who return to earth to annihilate their maker and seek some kind of affirmation of their ‘humanity’, in for example, photos, or love affairs). Nothing, of course, could be further from the point as regards Deleuze and Guattari’s work. I shall discuss their hostility to many forms of technology in chapter six, and have already discussed the fact that their theory of the machinic moves forward from Heidegger’s theories of technology, rather than backwards to an alignment of the machine and the technological. In addition, *Blade Runner* seems a very Oedipal film, finishing with the attempt to stitch back together the innate ‘humanity’ of the replicants, and the possibility of love between a classically masculine human, the blade runner himself, and a classically feminine replicant, Rachel. In typical film noir style the consummation of their supposed passion is also one of threat by the man and supposed giving in to the masculine principle by the female replicant. It conflates romance and rape. All the replicants seem to be seeking Mummy or Daddy (through photos). Nothing could be more Oedipal, in fact, than one replicant killing an authoritarian male figure while saying “I’ll tell you about my mother” or the lead replicant literally killing his maker, his ‘Father’. To sum this up, the replicants want Oedipus. Why then, does Land want Deleuze and Guattari aligned with them?

<sup>14</sup> It was published as “A propos des machines” in *Chimères*, 19, Spring, 1993.

determinism, allowing “for a creative standpoint of machinic composition, occurring in the face of the ontological curtain which separates the subject on the one side from things on the other” (12).

Guattari combines Francisco Varela’s notion of autopoiesis and Pierre Lévy’s usage of the term ‘hypertext’<sup>15</sup>. In Guattari’s account, autopoiesis is ascribed to living organisms because they are self-contained and largely self-operational. However, in typically ‘machinic’ fashion, whilst Varela opposes this to allopoiesis, “in which the machine will search for its components outside of itself” (9), Guattari prefers to allow for the breaking down of this opposition and to “take into account the *agencements* which make them live together” (ibid.<sup>16</sup>). Guattari uses Lévy’s term ‘hypertext’ as a way of emphasising the ‘in-between-ness’ of the machine and of what he is trying to describe in discussing ‘the machine’. Here, Guattari is expanding enormously on the concept of the “machinic interface” (8) in order to overcome both the “fascination with technology” and the “deathly dimension it sometimes takes” (ibid.). He acknowledges and opposes the ideas that, firstly, new technologies should lead us “so as to begin again from who knows what kind of primitive territoriality” (ibid.) and, secondly, that “technology is leading us to a situation of inhumanity and of rupture with any kind of ethical project” (ibid.).

The machine is, then, that which lies “at the crossroads” (ibid.). Its interconnectedness<sup>17</sup>, along with its opening “to the exterior” (ibid.) produced at the interface not only allows for becomings, but makes the machine’s environment necessarily part of “machinic agencements” (ibid.). This opening is what Guattari called the machine’s “ontogenesis”. In all this, Guattari is

<sup>15</sup> For Lévy’s very complete account of the virtual, in which one can situate such technologies as the hypertext, see Lévy, 1995.

<sup>16</sup> The translator, Vivian Constantinopoulos, chooses not to translate ‘agencement’ as ‘assemblage’, as is often done with other works of Deleuze and Guattari.

<sup>17</sup> Guattari himself is opposed to the term “interaction” but seems opposed to this if interaction means only “a game of interactions which develops in space and time between its component parts” (ibid.). I take this to mean that interaction is ill conceived if there is firstly, no notion of the interaction between virtual and actual, and secondly and subsequently, no notion of *becoming* in the interaction.

proposing to reverse the consideration of technique and the machine, where Heidegger's “*techné* and technique” have subordinated the less general “problem of the machine” (9). Guattari's purpose here is very clear.

*...the problem of technique would now only be a subsidiary part of a much wider machine problematic. Since the 'machine' is opened out towards its machinic environment and maintains all sorts of relationships with social constituents and individual subjectivities, the concept of technological machine should be broadened to that of machinic agencements. This category encompasses everything that develops as a machine in its different registers and ontological supports. And here, rather than having an opposition between being and the machine, or being and the subject, this new notion of the machine now involves being differentiating itself qualitatively and emerging onto an ontological plurality, which is the very extension of the creativity of machinic vectors. (ibid.)*

In short, as Guattari notes, a machine is more than a structure in space and time. It has ontogenetic and phylogenetic consistency that produces its actualisations, even its “death” (ibid.) through time. In chapter five this will be discussed in relation to Rebecca Horn's machines, and to other artists' approach to the machinic. These are ‘sober’ investigations of the machinic as opposed to that composed in the fevered imagination of Nick Land or, perhaps, in Stelarc's conceptual activity.

It is here that the machinic is tied into notions of complexity and chaos. Machines are not the same as each other. They have specificity. They have consistency. They therefore have relations of heterogeneous “alterity” (ibid.). It is because the machinic is at one level a virtual and consistent complexity of ‘interfaces’ that only later actualises various assemblages, and because the very nature of the machine is its ‘interface’, its ‘in-between-ness’ that the machinic “calls for

a development of theory” (10). In short, theory, or thought, is a kind of machinic participation in virtual complexity. However, such consistent complexity in the machine (and in thought considered as machinic) is also -

*...haunted by the chaos that will separate it, dividing its elements into an altogether different kind of decomposition. It is as though this autopoietic being, this machinic proto-subjectivity, were simultaneously in the register of complexity and chaos. (ibid.)*

As with all of Deleuze and Guattari's terms, here there is a relation between the terms of chaos and complexity. While certain consistent complexities can return to chaos, chaos itself gives rise to complexity, and is itself “the bearer of dimensions of the greatest hyper-complexity” (ibid.). Chaos is only the greatest degree of complexity. Within it there are machines within machines, consistencies which cut across each other to create other, simultaneous, consistencies. For Guattari, these “entities inhabiting chaos are animated by an infinite speed”<sup>18</sup>. Guattari posits a chaos in which great complexities can form and “de-complexify” themselves at infinite speed - giving chaos the benefit of providing the greatest number of “all kinds of potentialities” (ibid.). In this, hyper-complexity is never taken over completely by any ‘lower’ form of complexity. Rather hyper-complexity “exists in a relationship of insistence and repetition” within the complexities that emerge from it with some consistency.

For Guattari, the importance of this is in determining what can ‘become’ in a situation. Using the example of La Borde, where he worked for many years, he suggests that there must be opportunities for machinic heterogenesis which produce “vectors of care and of existential strength for the psychotics, who are going through a phase of ontological imbalance” (OM:12). They must be given chances to have access to important “autopoietic foyers of subjectification” such as a kitchen that is open to the spaces that it interacts with rather than closed in on itself.

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<sup>18</sup> Following an e-mail from Paul Bains, one of the translators of *Chaosmosis*, I will suggest that infinite speed is from the point of view of finite speed. It is a speed which cannot be seen from the point of view of a certain system.

Another example is that of the psychotic who learns to drive, as such a psychotic may be “totally incapable of having a conversation but is perfectly capable of driving a car” (ibid.). The pragmatics and ethics here are the same, the working through to something that, in machinic terms, ‘works better’ in a virtual opening onto the new. This is opposed ethically by Guattari to the “seriality of an ethological nature” which makes for “conditions of inter-human savagery” found in many hospitals.

To sum this up, the notion of the machinic is given as a way of providing two things. Firstly, it provides a form of theory by which to analyse and negotiate the forms of becoming that inhabit the virtual. Secondly, it provides a means of heterogeneous participation in relations of complexity whilst holding to a degree of consistency. These two aspects of the machinic also provide ethical criteria that can be applied to the operation of the various forms of becoming, including and especially the notion of becoming-woman. Do such notions of becoming enable a negotiation of other forms of becoming that inhabit the virtual? Do they allow heterogeneous participation in relations of complexity? Do they provide planes of consistency?

We are now able to approach the debate surrounding the ‘becoming-woman’, along with general feminist critiques of Deleuze and Guattari’s work, in order to begin to answer these questions. It is to Irigaray and others<sup>19</sup> that we can first turn for a specific series of critiques of both Deleuze-Guattari’s work in general, and of the becoming-woman in particular. It is

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<sup>19</sup> Both Krell and Cornell give a critique of Deleuze’s earlier engagement with a figure of Woman in *Nietzsche and Philosophy*. Both openly disagree with Deleuze’s reading of Ariadne and Nietzsche. Cornell points to the way in which Woman in general as a trope appears as a figure of abolition, and woman in particular is abolished in favour of her use as trope. In this she uses Krell’s argument, in which “Woman stands in as the very figure of death and sensuality” (Cornell, 1993:45). Cornell and Krell suggest that “it was precisely the confrontation with the feminine as metaphor that Nietzsche ultimately postponed” (ibid.). The criticism extends here to Deleuze, especially to *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, as I have already discussed it, where Deleuze argues that the feminine is integrated into Nietzsche’s philosophy in the form of Ariadne. Although this criticism bites, it seems strange, however, that Cornell does not address the ‘becoming-woman’ term directly, or for that matter, some of Deleuze’s other work. For example, she writes of what is at stake for Krell as being something other than “the deadly dynamic of sadomasochism” (46) (something that Deleuze himself pulls apart in “Coldness and Cruelty”).



Irigaray's critique which seems to have informed many subsequent feminist ambivalences towards Deleuze and Guattari's work.

### **Feminism<sup>20</sup> and the Anxiety about Production in Masculine Philosophy**

Even without the connotations of 'war' in the war machine<sup>21</sup>, there is perhaps something in the anxiety about the nomadic and production in Deleuze and Guattari's that matches that which Irigaray has specifically coded as masculine in *An Ethics of Sexual Difference* (1993a). For Irigaray, the 'man' is described as follows.

*He tends towards the outside, and tries to make a dwelling for himself (in the outside).*

*Outside himself, all tension, and intention is aimed at a dwelling, a thing, a production.*

*These also act as a third party or stake between men.* (Irigaray cited in Carcenac de Torné 1986:102<sup>22</sup>)

In short, the war machine's construction of smooth space, its valorisation of the construction of smooth space, speeds and projections, its tendency towards weapons as opposed to tools (ATP:395)<sup>23</sup> - all these could be seen as *logistical theoretical necessities* but necessities bound up very much in certain masculine representations of sexual difference<sup>24</sup>.

<sup>20</sup> I shall not describe in detail the whole debate surrounding feminism and Deleuze and Guattari as this has been done in many articles (such as Grosz, 1994a and 1994b). See de Lauretis, 1987:23-24 for a brief but broad description of the problems many male post-structuralists have had in dealing with gender issues.

<sup>21</sup> Patton (1984:77) suggests that Deleuze and Guattari's notion of the 'war-machine', and in particular of the 'man of war', should not be taken literally, and is more likely to be actualised in a "human rights movement or women's peace movement".

<sup>22</sup> De Torné is here translating from the French and gives no page reference.

<sup>23</sup> In what may seem another particularly masculine move Deleuze and Guattari oppose feeling as the basis of the formation of the "worker" and the subject - a passional regime - to affect as the basis of the war machine - an opposition of gravity (both as being attached to the ground and as a certain level of seriousness) to movement (ATP:400).

<sup>24</sup> It is important to note, however, that, unlike Irigaray's masculine subject, Deleuze and Guattari do not see surrounding space as "void, absence, hole, abyss, nothing, etc." (Carcenac de Torné 1986: 103).

Deleuze himself can be seen to present a similar argument early in his work. In “Coldness and Cruelty” Deleuze points out that sadism is a particularly masculine activity and quality, deriving not from a relation as in Freud between father and son, but a patriarchal, incestuous relation between father and daughter in which -

*...he represents primary nature which is beyond all constituted order and is made up of wild and lacerating molecules that carry disorder and anarchy; pater sive Natura prima. (CC:59)*

This could almost read as Deleuze’s own critique of the later concepts of becoming woman and the war machine, in that war machines seem to *exemplify* these wild and lacerating molecules and the becoming-woman is the first step “beyond all constituted order”. If these concepts have a use then, it must be acknowledged that they are, in part, concepts drawn from, and designed to function within, a patriarchal world. Deleuze, of course, accepts that interactions are necessarily a matter of force, movement and connection, disconnection within the current patriarchal world. There is no other world until it is made, and this makes the creation or production of other worlds all the more urgent. The war machine and becoming-woman as concepts must to some extent contain the patriarchal whilst creating a different world that departs from it. Yet, more critically, these terms may exemplify misogyny whilst showing ways out of it.

On the other hand, is it only, however, a question of patriarchy? For Deleuze and Guattari, it is the Capitalist machine that is the prime producer of most social assemblages. Minorities, such as women, are forced to invest in this social machine and only *afterwards* search for their specific interests, already pre-coded by the social machine.

*We see the most disadvantaged, the most excluded members of society invest with passion the system which oppresses them, and where they always find an interest, since it is here that they search for and measure it. Interest always comes after. (AO:346)*

Minorities find an interest because they must - *after* they have been coerced into the social machine. This interest will always be in accord with the relations set up by the Capitalist machine between social and desiring-production, and the latter's repression. For Deleuze and Guattari, sexuality, as we consider it in an everyday sense, constitutes only the *machinic indices* of these interactions, not their truth (AO:350). As such, for Deleuze and Guattari, the sexual revolution should not concern interests or aims, but only "machinic forms of indices" (366). In other words, for Deleuze and Guattari, liberating practices are those which broaden the dimension of what is considered to be within the realm of desiring-production. *Liberating practices do not perpetuate a system - they use elements of that system to break free from it.* "What counts is that love itself is a war machine endowed with strange and somewhat terrifying powers" (ATP:278). These powers contain a process of enhancing the thresholds of perception of complexity, so as to accommodate an increasing range of sexual differences. It is not meant to be a process of propelling forward the "wild and lacerating molecules" of a technocratic sadism that only falls back into the control of the masculine Subject who knows no shame. Yet it must be acknowledged that Irigaray, Deleuze and Guattari's viewpoints all, in their different ways, as regards gender, demonstrate that there is a lot of ambiguity in this area.

### Deleuze, Guattari and Feminism

Ever since remarks published by Luce Irigaray in 1977 there has been a prolonged and detailed debate surrounding the issue of Deleuze and Guattari and feminism. In particular, it has been the concept of 'becoming-woman' that has been understandably subject to interrogation, unfortunately until recently to the expense of much other engagement with Deleuze and Guattari's work. This is despite the use of Foucault, Derrida and Lacan (for whom the Phallus as

signifier is transcendent) in feminist studies for some time. There is not the space here to rehearse the entire debate around this issue. For this reason, and as each step in this debate has begun with a summary of the others<sup>25</sup> I will only attempt to extract and summarise the main points.

Irigaray, whose remarks predate the publication of *Mille Plateaux* in France in 1980, firstly points out that even a sexual multiplicity still has a context in (masculinely) gendered political economy. She does this, however, in terms that are at times similar to Deleuze and Guattari's<sup>26</sup>. Yet they are also not the same - *precisely because this issue is not raised from the same position within the collective assemblage of enunciation*. This difference in enunciative position also explains the need for Irigaray to be paradoxically perhaps more Lacanian than Deleuze and Guattari<sup>27</sup> in her insistence on gender politics being coded by a relation to one (masculine) language, one economy. Irigaray secondly suggests that the whole philosophical concept of the desiring-machine aligns women with technology in order to control both in a form of technocratic male power. I have just argued against this point in the discussion of Guattari's views on complexity. Irigaray thirdly asks whether, for women, "the organless body [is not] a historical condition?" (1985b:140-141)<sup>28</sup>.

<sup>25</sup> See in particular Jardine, 1985; Braidotti, 1994a; Grosz, 1994a and 1994b.

<sup>26</sup> Indeed, Teresa Brennan, in terms similar to the kind of critique that Deleuze and Guattari often find themselves subject to, criticises Irigaray for the equation she makes between "non-entropic energy systems" and "feminine sexuality" (1992:76). One wonders if it is in this area of 'the fluid' that, although there are important differences in speaking position, there might not also be some commonality found between Irigaray and Deleuze and Guattari. Later in the same book, Brennan criticises Deleuze and Guattari for equating psychosis (which she describes in clinical terms) with "the alternative to Oedipus itself" (176). She further comments that "Deleuze and Guattari work on the assumption that any form of order is a bad thing, and therefore have to take the psychotic path as the only alternative" (ibid.). Such critiques, as with similar critiques of Irigaray, are at best ill-informed.

<sup>27</sup> Although it is worth noting, as if to underline the differences in positions in the gendered political economy that, although Guattari was not expelled from the Lacanian "school" after the publication of the explicitly anti-Lacanian *Anti-Oedipus*, Irigaray was. This was two years later, in 1974, after the publication of the book, *Speculum of the Other Woman* in which this critique is given.

<sup>28</sup> The quote continues -

*And don't we run the risk once more of taking back from woman those as yet unterritorialized spaces where her desire might have come into being? Since women have long been assigned to the task of preserving "body-matter" and the "organless," doesn't the "organless body" come to occupy the place of their own schism? Of the evacuation of woman's desire in woman's body? Of what remains endlessly virginal in woman's desire? To turn the "organless body" into a "cause" of sexual pleasure, isn't it necessary to have had a relation to language and to sex - to the organs- that women have never had?*

Deleuze and Guattari's answers to many of these questions, such as to whether women haven't known the BwO as a historical condition<sup>29</sup> (and detrimental condition at that), can only have been an emphatic 'yes!' Yet Irigaray's criticism, in its specificity of speaking position, holds. Nevertheless, Of course, from either Irigaray's or Deleuze and Guattari's perspectives it could be said that a response to this difference in speaking position is complex. Although *which* solutions work and which do not is almost *the* vital question - there is no one definitive solution but instead a *field* of solutions which are virtual, not possible, and are therefore to be generated *as new* by the situation in its proximity. In short, solutions may be generated by a differential *between* at least two heterogeneous series (such as those involved here in sexual difference).

It is Alice Jardine (1985) who takes up Irigaray's remarks<sup>30</sup>. Jardine notes the insistence on the figure of the neuter which is nearly always characterised at another level as feminine, a figure which comes to carry the burden of masculine becomings once again<sup>31</sup>. She points out that one of Deleuze's favourite examples here is the wanderings of Lewis Carroll's Alice<sup>32</sup>, in which the figure of the little girl provides a path leading away from the traps of identity *for men*<sup>33</sup>. She claims that the "new spaces unfolded by D + G...are not only bodyless, but less often explicitly genderized as well"<sup>34</sup>. Jardine's bodyless "D + G", however, provides a very problematic

<sup>29</sup> Irigaray herself valorised feminine subjectivity as being fluid. In "The 'Mechanics' of Fluids" (Irigaray, 1985b:106-118), Irigaray speaks of feminine subjectivity in terms similar to Deleuze and Guattari - that is, 'mechanics' and 'fluids'.

<sup>30</sup> The specific chapter is a reworking of her 1984 article.

<sup>31</sup> Again, as with many other critics, Jardine writes with little clear determination of the relation between Deleuze and Guattari's writing. She cites, for example, Deleuze's *Logique du sens* and *Difference and répétition* as instances of Deleuze and Guattari's preoccupation with the neuter. This could easily be forgiven if it were a matter of giving an outline of the genesis of their thought. It seems, however, to be a little harsh when criticising Guattari for something written by Deleuze before their cooperation had begun.

<sup>32</sup> It is also worth pointing out that Irigaray is also concerned with Alice as figure of femininity in her own writings. See 1985:9-22.

<sup>33</sup> It is worth noting that both Deleuze and Guattari *together*, and Guattari by himself, are not nearly as naive about the necessity for the maintenance (Guattari calls it an ecology) of some sort of subject position as Deleuze, by himself, appears to be at this point.

<sup>34</sup> In general, although Jardine finds the fact that many of Deleuze and Guattari's followers at the time of the writing of her book were young men rightly problematic, she perhaps buys too much into these young men's interpretations of Deleuze and Guattari. I also think that she overdramatises the US/France split. They were also, it is worth pointing out, read in Australia very early.

ground for an argument, considering Deleuze and Guattari's focus on the body as central to thought and cultural practice. She quickly qualifies this to read that they "...want to denaturalize Bodies of all kinds" <sup>35</sup> (211). Jardine, unlike Irigaray, also claims that the "BwO does not really exist yet" (212). Yet Deleuze and Guattari's intent is not so much a futurist one as a claim that the BwO, perhaps both as entity and concept must always be reformulated in the future. It always exists (as actualised intensity) and it never exists (because it is also a virtual BwO) but must be brought into existence at each moment. Deleuze and Guattari also write that it is, in another sense preexisting and "awaits you" (ATP:149).

Jardine gives a description of the position of becoming-woman within the general framework of becoming and points out that -

*"Man" is always the subject of any becoming, even if "he" is a woman. ...Woman is never a subject but a limit - a border of and for Man... (217)*

Although concluding that -

*...D + G's work...represents the efforts of new kinds of male bodies attempting, if not always successfully, to invent new kinds of subjectivities. (223)*

<sup>35</sup> Alison Best disagrees with Jardine, writing that -

*Her primary criticism is that the Deleuzian subject is a desexed ungendered machine that resists sexual specificity. My reading suggests otherwise. The Deleuzian subject is necessarily gendered but not necessarily in binary opposition. Deleuze and Guattari posit no essential nature of 'man' or 'woman'; rather, each body contains multitudes of subjectivities... (1993:25)*

Best gives a good definition of becoming-imperceptible (26), and perhaps the strongest defence of the becoming-woman by a woman. She makes the point about Freud's patient Schreber, discussed in *Anti-Oedipus*, that his breasts are real because he creates bands of intensity (i.e. it is a Spinozan body considered as affect and speeds). She analyses *Thelma and Louise* from both a Lacanian and Deleuze-Guattarian point of view. The latter allows for a "dialectic of flight and capture [that] resists the nihilism of much postmodern writing" (26).

This leads me to consider that one could see Deleuze and Guattari's 'becoming-woman' not as an escape from subjective formations but from State subjective formations. So the risk for *Thelma and Louise* is abolition, but at least they are contesting the State in doing so. Feminism has a necessarily ambiguous relation with the State, but the answer here, as always with Deleuze and Guattari is that they recognise the possibility of abolition but also the necessity for some kind of line of flight from the State.

- Jardine also gives a devastating analysis of the way in which Woman provides the ground for a becoming of men in Deleuze's analysis of Michel Tournier's *Vendredi, ou les limbes du Pacifique* given in *The Logic of Sense*<sup>36</sup>.

Brian Massumi (1985), whilst largely agreeing with Jardine, modifies her arguments<sup>37</sup>. He notes that Deleuze and Guattari's work reflects a large investment they have in sexual stereotypes (6) and concludes that the 'becoming-woman' as a concept has little, or even negative worth. However, Massumi suggests that, "there is no man or woman, only human bodies of male and female gender revolving around societally defined centers of gravity" (14). This means that the kind of binarity that many feminist theorists both critique, and seem understandably hesitant about abandoning in the face of a history of men using such "abandonment" to keep women subordinated, "is an illusion". As Massumi points out, "becoming" travels in a "line" between these binaries, not towards either of them (ibid.). Becoming then, is always to seek to escape a relation of domination, *though necessarily into another relation of domination*. However, this is not a relation in stasis, but one of greater "comprehension" or interaction. What is captured here is not the organ-ised body but "a liberatory molecular potential" (14). For this reason, *even Man* is moving away from itself<sup>38</sup> constantly.

*Every male body is plied by micro-becomings undermining its manliness. 'Man' is only a relative state of inertia affecting the universal becoming-other. (15)*

<sup>36</sup> *Logique du sens* predates Deleuze's relationship with Guattari and is a strangely Lacanian book in many ways, something that was to shift with *Anti-Oedipus* quite profoundly. *Logique du sens*, also, of course, pre-dates the significant momentum gained by the feminist movement in the early 1970s. This is not to excuse the analysis in Deleuze's earlier work, but it does complicate it. Jardine could have discussed two of the examples given in *A Thousand Plateaus* in the course of discussing the 'becoming-woman' - those of Virginia Woolf and Nathalie Sarraute.

<sup>37</sup> This article, along with Paul Patton's "Deleuze, Guattari and the ethics of Postmodernity", forms an excellent introduction to Deleuze and Guattari's work.

<sup>38</sup> I am deliberately referring to "Man" as an 'it' here. I mean the entity as it moves through the social field.

Massumi asks two questions. Firstly, “why use the word ‘woman’ at all?”<sup>39</sup> (18) and secondly, why do men have to wait for women, rather than “launching down their own path to becoming?” (18). Nevertheless, for Massumi -

*D & G are sincere when they stress the indispensability of women's or other minorities; struggles for participation in the majority system. Their point is that it is self-defeating if the aim of such participation is to construct an identity...Becoming-other...leads to imperceptibility. (21)*

In later writings, Massumi (1992) is more equivocal about the use value of ‘becoming-woman’. Here the concept may find some use in a kind of becoming-’feminine cliché’. He still finds the becoming-woman “sexist” (89) but also notes that -

*Becoming-woman involves carrying the indeterminacy, movement, and paradox of the female stereotype past the point at which it is recuperable by the socius as it presently functions, over the limit beyond which lack of definition becomes the positive power to select a trajectory (the leap from the realm of possibility into the virtual - breaking away). (87)*

This involves a revaluation of the values implied in the stereotype so that, for example “fickleness” translates into “political refusal” (87-88). The “ultimate aim of Deleuze and Guattari” is not a shift in categories but the breaking down of the whole process of category “gridding” itself (88).

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<sup>39</sup> This is an acute analysis but perhaps leads to certain other questions - does this not also apply to dogs, other animals and children? In other words, if, as I have suggested there are two kinds of becoming - *general*, such as becoming-imperceptible, becoming-molecular, and *specific*, such as becoming-woman, becoming-child, becoming-adult - why should not Men and woMen stop talking about becoming-animal? On the other hand, how much can the question of interaction be avoided here? Is it possible *not* to become-animal? *Not* to become-woman? *Not* to become-child in some ways at least. As I shall suggest in my conclusion, we need to differentiate between becoming as unavoidable ground, and as value. As Massumi notes, are not *all* majoritarian States plied by such becomings?



According to Massumi, where this argument carries the most force is perhaps in the same area as Deleuze's 'shame of being a man'. *In order to become, Men need to 'fail successfully'*. In this Massumi hints at a possible 'becoming-man', where the "masculine stereotype" would be pushed "beyond its threshold of recuperation" (89)<sup>40</sup>.

Here Massumi's book, unlike his earlier essay, affirms a possible becoming-women as a successful destruction of Molarity. He writes of the way in which -

*...a successful becoming-woman, becoming-lesbian or -gay, becoming sadomasochistic, or becoming-bad boy lover, directly challenges the universal form of molarity under "democracy".* (126-127)

Such becomings provide paths between the binary structure that is proving so difficult to move through.

Rosi Braidotti<sup>41</sup> argues for a thinking through of the dissonances within these structures. She has written extensively on Deleuze and Guattari. In *Patterns of Dissonance* (1991), Braidotti writes, as against Spivak (1988) and Cornell that, compared to Derrida's stance on women, or to that of psychoanalysts, she prefers Deleuze (117). This is because Deleuze's philosophy "harbours no mystification as concerns femininity or the feminine" (118). Also useful with both Foucault and Deleuze are their positing of "the body as (the) field of politics", their "critique of

<sup>40</sup> For reasons already stated this is impossible, but not necessarily 'unvirtual', for a straight man. The only alternative for him is the increasingly likely self-destruction of his molarity.

*It is "real" men, molar men, who should consent to go first. i.e., self-destruct. De-form themselves...Their suicide may have to be assisted. Women and sexual minorities "should" not go first - but neither should they wait.* (Massumi, 1992:89)

<sup>41</sup> One wonders, perhaps why it has been so many Australian feminists who have made the most extensive use of Deleuze. Meaghan Morris has claimed that for her -

*I had that wide-eyed mystery about Australian history, as I still do, and I found that the work of, especially, Foucault and Deleuze when I mixed it up with feminism gave me a framework to think about cultural history in a realistic way.* (1992:478)

Braidotti, although born in Italy and now working in the Netherlands, lived and studied for a long time in Australia. Elspeth Probyn now works at Sydney University. There are many younger postgraduate feminist students and academics working on Deleuze and Guattari, such as Alison Best.

the ideal of the sexual revolution”, as well as their “redefinition of the social field as field of conflict, power and war”. Braidotti notes that -

*There is no final reconciliation between either the 'feminine' and the 'masculine' or the women and discourse, or women and philosophy. We have to acknowledge that these segmentary lines break up into a multiplicity of scattered, separate points of reflection.*

(146)

However, she points out that in the post-industrial age, particularly in the area of gender and reproduction technologies, any “blurring of gender differences” should be thought about very carefully (122).

What Braidotti substitutes for a possible indiscriminate blurring is “emergence of dissonance” as a way of thought negotiating the contemporary problematics (146). In “Of Bugs and Women: Irigaray and Deleuze on the Becoming-Woman” (1994a) Braidotti suggests that the issue is not one merely of difference but, as regards women and the specificity of their lives, one of “*how to make the feminine express a 'different difference'*”. Women may make more use in this framework of a “becoming-subject” (112).

Braidotti sees Deleuze and Irigaray converging on the point that man is the “privileged referent of subjectivity” and the Molar Man and becoming simply do not go together (115). Yet Braidotti further points out that -

*...one cannot deconstruct a subjectivity one has never been fully granted control over; one cannot diffuse a sexuality that has historically been defined as dark and mysterious*

(118).

More worrying, however, is that Braidotti is not only qualifying the becoming-woman but Deleuze’s whole anti-representational, subject modifying, project, heading instead for what from

a Deleuzian point of view is a very problematic “mimesis” as a “strategic form of essentialism” (Braidotti, 1994a:124).

In her essay, “Towards a New Nomadism” (1994c), Braidotti approaches feminism not as a monolith but as a “problematic” (159) in the light of the work of “feminist poststructuralism” (160). She argues for a use of Deleuze that is “neither ethnic- nor gender-centered”. She writes that -

*...the various feminist figurations of a new female subjectivity gain by intersecting with Deleuze's project of transforming the very image we have of thinking, and with his new vision of subjectivity as an intensive multiple, and discontinuous process of interrelations.*<sup>42</sup> (162).

She gives the examples of Laurie Anderson and Barbara Kruger, commenting that a -

*...great number of contemporary feminist performers offer perfect examples of counterrepresentations or affirmations of denaturalized, deessentialized bodies, which they turn into fields of alternative signification.* (ibid.)

She champions Irigaray here as well as Deleuze, and suggests that Irigaray's project involves a “textual strategy of mimesis” and that the reason that Irigaray is opposed to Deleuze's “proposal” of “becoming as a way of overcoming the sexual bipolarization” (170) is that “the two differ...in the political priority that must be granted to the elaboration of adequate systems of representations for an alternative female subject” (170-171). This does beg the question, as argued throughout this thesis, and even implied by Braidotti herself, as to how compatible becoming, which she certainly does defend as a strategy, and representation actually are. Perhaps if taken in the sense of ‘counteractualizations’, as discussed in chapter three ( and which seems to

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<sup>42</sup> My bold - this is, of course, one of the main areas of discussion of this thesis. She continues - *The aim is what bell hooks [sic.] rightly calls “radical postmodernism”, namely, the bringing about of an antirelativistic, specific community of historically located, semiotic, material subjects, seeking connections and articulations in a manner that is neither ethnic- nor gender-centered.*

accord with Braidotti's counterrepresentations) Braidotti's Irigaray and my version of Deleuze may not be so far away from each other. She also discusses possible theoretical contact with Haraway's cyborg and 'informatics of domination'.

Braidotti also writes very plausibly that some of the contradictions in her argument, and those of others are sometimes *necessary* contradictions<sup>43</sup>, especially in the area of the subject -

*I want to argue that this position highlights one of the paradoxes of feminist theory in the nineties: Namely that it is grounded on the very concepts that it must deconstruct and deessentialize in all its aspects: gender and sexual difference. (174)*

The 'becoming-woman' was a concept created to facilitate this deconstruction in the area of gender. It has obviously failed. *But that still leaves us with the urgent question in the face of the new "societies of control" or "informatics of domination"; what then is a "becoming-minor" in the area of gender and how is it to be made to find a grounding or its own flight?*

Elizabeth Grosz has often used Deleuze and Guattari's broad theory of 'desire as production' in the past, along with a Spinozan/Deleuzian view of the body, opposing these to Lacan's theory of desire as lack, although this has often been in fairly general terms<sup>44</sup>. In recent years (Grosz 1994a, 1994b, 1995 and Grosz and Probyn, 1995) she has given some of the best summaries<sup>45</sup> and assessments of the whole issue of the becoming-woman in particular and of the possibilities of a feminist use of Deleuze and Guattari in general (1994a, 1994b).

<sup>43</sup> If there is no identity, contradictions necessarily occur. At least these are what we might call 'coherent' or 'consistent' contradictions.

<sup>44</sup> See Grosz, 1988 "Desire, the body and recent french feminisms" in *Flesh, Intervention* 21/22:28-33, see especially p30.

<sup>45</sup> I shall not repeat these summaries. Grosz' 1994 essay "A Thousand Tiny Sexes: Feminism and Rhizomatics" (1994a) is quite similar, though not exactly so, to the chapter in *Volatile Bodies* (1994b) in which she discusses Deleuze and Guattari's work extensively. In both she gives an account of the story so far, of the legitimate reasons for feminist "suspicions" of Deleuze and Guattari (1994a:187), but also of the possible uses to which their concepts, as tools for feminist, might be put. In later essays and books (Grosz, 1995 and Grosz and Probyn, 1995) she puts these terms to use in various frameworks.

In “A Thousand Tiny Sexes” (1994a) Grosz finds it surprising that Deleuze and Guattari have received relatively little critical attention compared to other ‘postmodern’ thinkers. She adds that most of the attention that has been given has been suspicious and quotes herself, Jardine and Irigaray to demonstrate this. However Grosz likes Deleuze and Guattari’s attack on binary logic and subsequent attempt to -

*...position traditional metaphysical identities and theoretical models in a context that renders them merely effects or surface phenomena within a broader or differently conceived ontology of the subject. (191)*

Secondly, there is their focus on “difference” (192). It is in this area that becoming is important, as -

*Deleuze and Guattari invoke two forms of energy and alignment: the process of becoming and the notion of multiplicity, a becoming beyond the logic, constraints, and confines of being, and a multiplicity beyond the merely doubling or multicentering of proliferating subjects. (ibid.)*

(Although the exact working out of how these becomings can be undertaken is a difficulty for Grosz.)

Thirdly, Grosz prefers a “Deleuze-Foucauldian” conceptualisation of politics to “Marxism, socialism, liberalism, and anarchism” (ibid.). She suggests that this “confirms and, indeed, borrows” from feminist struggles. Fourthly, she finds “relevance” in notions of the body as “a discontinuous, nontotalized series of processes, organs, flows, energies, corporeal substances and incorporeal events, intensities, and durations” (194). Fifthly, Deleuze and Guattari conceive of desire as active (194). Sixthly, far from lacking ethics, as they are accused of by Jardine (1985:153), Grosz suggests that they recompose “the centrality of the question of ethics” (196). The problem for Grosz is, once again, that “her becoming-woman is the condition of his”

(1994a:207). She concludes that feminists should not “sever becoming-woman from being-woman” (209) and that it is not time for women’s struggle to become-imperceptible.

In *Volatile Bodies* (1994b), Grosz is less equivocal about their general use writing that -

*Deleuze’s writings may provide unexpectedly powerful weapons of analysis, critique, transgression, and transformation. (166)*

She still has misgivings about becoming-woman but despite the extent of these, she writes -

*...if we do not walk in dangerous places and different types of terrain, nothing new will be found, no explorations are possible, and things remain the same...if the division or the binary opposition of sexes or, for that matter, the global system constituting patriarchy can be considered as molar lines, then traversing and interrupting them and transforming, breaking them down is what Deleuze and Guattari describe as the process of “becoming woman”. (173)*

In her ensuing discussion of becoming-woman she points out that the primary figure in all this is the little girl -

*Not the little girl as vehicle for (pederastic) fantasy or the little girl as pure innocence, or indeed the girl as a romantic or representative figure, but rather the girl as the site of a culture’s most intensified disinvestments and recastings of the body. (174-175)*

She follows Jardine and Irigaray in questioning the way in which the “girl’s specificity, her body, is robbed...by Deleuze and Guattari” (175). Unlike Jardine and Irigaray, however, Grosz finds Deleuze and Guattari’s molecular revolution very useful here, “operating not simply at the level of the subject but also within and as the subject” (176). Neither is Grosz hostile to the notion of women becoming-woman for -

*"Woman" is precisely the projection of (men's) fantasies, and rhizomatics, or the problematic of becoming-woman, may be a way of dismantling its fantasmatic form.*  
(176)

Indeed, as a medium of political struggle at the micro level Grosz seems quite interested in the becoming-woman of women. She even qualifies her previously negative reading of the becoming-imperceptible which seems the aim of becoming-woman, writing that this -

*...is a path towards "being like everybody else" (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987:279), an absolute, indiscernible anonymity. Not the obliteration of characteristics - which, of course, is annihilation, but the resonance of all kinds of machines with each other, the imperceptibility of traits, characteristics, identities, positions.* (179)

This is a very subtle reading. Grosz goes on to worry about the order of becomings (179) but now concludes very differently to the article published in the same year. Here she wonders if Deleuze and Guattari "fit less easily into this category (of phallocentricism) that it seems on first reading" (180).

In her most recent (1995) work Grosz asserts that, as against psychoanalytic theory, and because of their Spinozan concern with bodily affect, "Deleuze and Guattari may have quite a lot to contribute to a refiguring of lesbian desire...in terms of bodies, pleasures, surfaces, intensities" (180). In this she invents the terms "becoming-lesbian" and the "lesbian-machine" (184), in one of the bifurcations that can be activated when a 'multiplicity of flows' (184) is released and sexuality is viewed not as an identical state of being but as a process of becoming<sup>46</sup>.

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<sup>46</sup> Many other feminist are also now using Deleuze and Guattari. In the book edited by Probyn and Grosz (1995), Deleuze is cited and used extensively, as if, in fact, Deleuze and Guattari's work is in full interactive flower. Probyn (1993) also uses them in her own work. Another example is Camilla Griggers "Surge Suppressors" (1995). Griggers uses a Deleuze-Guattarian framework to critique the way in which women are suppressed in a psychiatric framework, writing, for example, that -

*In the micropolitics of psychopharmacology, the components for potential desiring-assemblages -- repressed memory (interiorized expressions of impressions and experiences which lack exteriorized forms of expression) and the resulting surges of repressed affect (deterritorializing velocities of asignification*

Kath Jones (1995)<sup>47</sup> also suggests that only women should attempt a ‘becoming-woman’. Jones argues that much contemporary theory is unable to deal with the complexities in which the body now interacts with technologies, virtual technologies, new viruses and so forth. She suggests that there are three responses to this. Firstly, there is the attempt to go back to the enlightenment project by extending the categories of the human subject which she associates with much feminist philosophy. Secondly, there is the “demand for a rejection of current trends and a return to a lost subjectivity” (34) which she associates with philosophers such as Lyotard and Jean-Luc Nancy and calls for a new community and new forms of justice. Thirdly, there is a nihilist response which she associates with “a celebration of apocalypse culture such as in the work of Arthur and Marilouise Kroker” (34).

Jones diagnoses the problems that occur when the “creative aspect of desiring production in the late twentieth century” is not fully acknowledged, but rather “becomings of the body...fail because they repress and/or domesticate desire, accrediting a teleology to the process itself” (34). This assumes, of course, that becomings of the body always need to be successful. I would rather amend Jones’ thinking here to suggest that becomings, both in their success and as *necessary* failures, be assessed not only by external criteria, but also by their own. To reiterate, these criteria are three. Firstly, do particular becomings enable a negotiation of the other processes of becoming that inhabit the virtual? Secondly, do they allow heterogeneous participation in relations of complexity? Thirdly, do they provide planes of consistency which allow for the continuation of a high degree of interaction. The becoming-woman, as a concept, seems of limited or ambivalent ethical value when assessed by these criteria. When employed by

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*traversing the body's limbic system) – are reterritorialized through a psychochemical-machine whose delivery system is psychiatric diagnosis and prescription of psychotropic drugs. (1)*

<sup>47</sup> In an article which unfortunately clearly and substantially plagiarises Massumi’s work from *The Users Guide to Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, and which I will subsequently not be taking too seriously as her own work. She quotes (36-37) Massumi (without citing him!) for several paragraphs (from Massumi, 1992:86-87). I have already dealt with Massumi’s arguments.



men in particular it seems to have a constricting effect on the relations of complexity between the (*only* two) gendered heterogeneous series it assumes. This is because it can lead to a 'successful' becoming-woman of the man which amounts to a specific reterritorialisation of the feminine onto the masculine, and a concurrent deterritorialisation of a feminine existential territory that is only just being rendered 'present' in broader cultural terms. Nevertheless, as a strategy for women, the becoming-woman may provide a method of negotiating with other forms of becoming and inhabiting the virtual, of taking more part in virtual ecologies opened and made more consistent by such becomings. The becoming-woman of the man, if only something provoked by anxiety and not by shame, will involve annihilation of the other, a lessening of the degree of interaction that is possible with the other, and a dismantling of the planes of consistency on which these interactions can continue to proliferate.

More generally, however, the (partial) *failure* of the 'becoming-woman' as a term only alerts us to a more careful consideration of becoming, which is not simply about a shift in relations but a revaluation of what relations themselves can become. If, then, the becoming-woman is not of use, it will only be because it is not 'becoming' enough. Like Stelarc's admirable conceptual attempts to free up the virtual ecology of the body which, however, only end up reterritorialising that body on a techno-evolutionary line (in his conceptual work), the becoming-woman does not seem to open out to other becomings, such as the becoming-imperceptible, as much as it might. It does not, as Jones puts it, acknowledge fully the "creative aspect of desiring-production in the late twentieth century", although I have argued that its failure may *begin* to do so. Perhaps this is what Deleuze and Guattari, in positing the becoming-woman as a first step to other becomings, meant the concept to do. As such, we must remember not only that becoming is a process, but that it is an *anti-teleological* process, a process which makes the immanent more complex rather

than one which simply re-affirms the transcendent. I shall discuss this in more detail in the conclusion.

The next chapter will give accounts of artists whose work seems more related to this anti-teleological, immanent and undomesticated desire than to a transcendence of *some* of the more interactive aspects of the machinic through techno-determinism.