ASIGNIFYING SEMIOTICS: OR HOW TO PAINT PINK ON PINK
SPRING 2014

Contents

Introduction

Asignifying Semiotics as Proto-Theory of Singularity: Drawing is Not Writing and Architecture does Not Speak

Deborah Hauptmann and Andrej Radman, editors

> But where does the idea that the socius is reducible to the facts of language, and that these facts are in turn reducible to linearizable and 'digitalizable' signifying chains, come from? (Guattari, 1986)[1]

To start on a personal note, we have recently witnessed a confession of a fellow architect with which we fully identify. We, too, belong to the generation educated under the semiotic regime, which – as we will argue in our introduction – has run its course. We also believe that the idea of 'architecture as language' might have been useful as an analytical tool but never as a design mechanism.[2] After all, creativity comes first and routinisation follows. As the title of Footprint 14 suggests, this is a general plea to have done with the hegemony of the *linguistic* signifier. Signifying semiotics is but a fraction of a much broader asignifying semiotics. We propose to approach the issue *qua* a Spinozist practice of ethology, defined as the study of capacities, or – as we would like to think of it – a proto-theory of singularity. This is as much an ethical or political problem as it is an aesthetic one. It concerns what the cultural critic Steven Shaviro recently qualified as a primordial form of sentience that is non-intentional, non-correlational, and anoetic.[3] The Affective Turn will be measured against the unavoidable Digital Turn. We will conclude by reversing the famous Wittgensteinian dictum whereby what we cannot speak about we must *not* pass over in silence. In the final paragraph of a politically charged epilogue, we reveal the pink-on-pink reference.

Discarding the Hegemony of the Linguistic Signifier

Gilles Deleuze famously credits Charles Saunders Peirce with propagating the *asignifying sign*, which is not formed linguistically, but aesthetically and pragmatically 'as a condition, anterior by right to what it conditions'.[4] Félix Guattari draws the line between those who relate semiotics to the science of language à la Ferdinand de Saussure, and those who consider language as merely one of many instances of general semiotics.[5] Semiotics, particularly in Europe, has generally followed de Saussure's lead and paid more attention to 'cultural' than 'natural' signs. The move in the post-war period towards what Jacques Derrida simply called 'grammatology' was marked by increasingly urgent meditations on writing. Roland Barthes, a crucial contributor to the debate on semiotics, heralds the crossing of the Atlantic of this French intellectual discourse with his 1967 essay 'The Death of the Author', first published in America. Here, the removal of authority from the author turned scriptor, paralleling Julia Kristeva's concept of intertextuality, impacted architectural theory in America in a profound way.[6]

The contribution in this issue by Stella Baraklianou, 'Moiré Effect: Index and the Digital Image', identifies in Barthes' analysis of the image 'a point where signification resists meaning, the index becomes void, and […] meaning is produced through the failure of language'. In his article entitled 'Information and Asignification', Gary Genosko,

through a nuanced reading of Guattari and Barthes, clearly articulates the difference between asignifying semiotics and signifying semiologies, while pointing to Barthes' disavowal of ideology with respect to his concept 'de-politicized speech'.

On the other hand, semiotics in the American context has provided the basis for a far more general enterprise, and a means of unifying the sciences of physics, biology and psychology. Peirce, the champion of general semiotics, treats it as a *process*. His signs are modes of sensation: the affect.[7] In its appeal to common sense, *representationalism* or indirect realism is inherently conservative. It could be argued that its sole task is to tame and domesticate difference; that is, to make it subordinate to identity.[8] By contrast, if we treat identity as a *derivative* and not as a foundational concept, we effectively denounce phenomenology for elevating *re*cognition and *re*semblance to the status of a basis of thought.[9]

The relative autonomy of the asignifying sign is paramount if we are to define a body neither by its form, nor by its organs or functions, but by its capacity for affecting and being affected in return.[10] Deleuze provides an example which at first seems counterintuitive and proves just how much we are accustomed to Aristotelian categorisation. There are greater differences between a racehorse and a workhorse than there are between an ox and a workhorse. This is because the racehorse and the workhorse do not share the same affects or the same capacity for being affected: the workhorse has more affects in common with the ox.[11] Things are no longer defined by a qualitative essence, 'man as a reasonable animal', but by a quantifiable power. The limit of something is the limit of its *action* and not the outline of its *figure*.

In his contribution to this issue, 'Video Assemblages: "Machinic Animism" and "Asignifying Semiotics" in the Work of Melitopoulos and Lazzarato', Jay Hetrick also calls on this thought model made so clear by the image of the racehorse and the ox. In developing his argument on asignifying semiotics through an analysis of *Assemblage* (Angela Melitopoulos' 2010 video installation co-created with Maurizio Lazzarato), Hetrick identifies the 'machinic' quality of the assemblage firstly in its 'functional and pragmatic' capacity to affect and be affected. This assemblage, much like the body in Spinoza, is developed in terms of 'machinic animism'. The assemblage is further identified in terms of an 'axiomatic set'; one which, following William James, can be seen as a 'conjunctive and disjunctive' set of relations.

A Spinozist Practice of Ethology
Central to Gregory Seigworth's contribution is the work of François Laruelle, to whom, he points out, Deleuze and Guattari nod their heads in their final book *What is Philosophy?*. Seigworth's understanding of the 'non-' (non-philosophy, non-science, non-thinking…) neither indicates a negation nor an opposition, but a relationship that configures and reconfigures both immanent and affective relations along the axis referred to as 'body-mind-world'. Baraklianou also points to Laruelle in her article. Here, Laurelle's 'non-photography' is cited to indicate the capacity of photography to carry out reflexive operations. Baraklianou writes of Laurelle's 'theory of doublets, a coupling of duality and unity, the theory of one-to-one'. This one-to-one, as Seigworth discusses it, is, for Laurelle, not the Spinozist 'One-All' but must be seen '[…] in the absolute singularity and solitude of the ordinary or generic human'. What is at stake here is no less than the materiality/incorporeality of the 'real'. Citing Seigworth: 'For Laurelle, the matter-ing/motor-ing of immanence provides an absolute stillness, a dense point of the tightest, most contracted infinity. For Deleuze and Guattari, the matter/motor of immanence turns an infinite process, an all-at-once absolute expanse of survey without distance.'

It is in this context of *immanence* that we can also consider the legacy of the late American psychologist James Jerome Gibson, whose highly innovative concepts, developed over thirty years ago, continue to stir controversy even among scholars of the Ecological School of Perception. Gibson was well aware of the difficulties in challenging orthodoxies.[12] His neologism *affordance*, akin to the affect, is perhaps the most important for our purposes. It is a key concept in the ecological theory of direct perception with which Gibson challenges the information-processing paradigm.[13] Affordance is not merely a new term, but a new way of organising the logos. What this quintessential part-sign conveys is that a mode of existence never pre-exists an event.[14] Hence Gibson:

> An affordance is neither an objective property nor a subjective property; or it is both if you like. An affordance cuts across the dichotomy of subjective-objective and helps us to understand its inadequacy. It is equally a fact of the environment and a fact of behavior. It is both physical and psychical, yet neither. An affordance points both ways, to the environment and to the observer.[15]

There is a striking parallel here with Deleuze, for whom concepts do not by any means constitute a set of universal coordinates that are given once and for all. They have no meaning other than to make the estimation of a continuous variation possible. It is never a matter of bringing all sorts of things under a single concept, but rather, relating each concept to the variables that explain its mutations.[16] The all-too mechanicist relationship of One and Many has to be supplanted by the One-All machinic concept of non-totalisable *multiplicity*. By 'machinic', Deleuze and Guattari simply mean extra-linguistic forms of communication.[17] According to them, 'spatiotemporal relations, determinations are not predicates of the thing but dimensions of multiplicities'.[18]

In his contribution, 'Medium Affect Desire:

Hybridising Real Virtual and the Actualised through Affective Medium Ecology', Marc Boumeester, through a complex series of relational arguments, builds a compelling case for thinking of asignification in terms of 'medium' as opposed to 'media'. Through notions akin to desire, yearning and unfulfilled-ness, Boumeester develops a double movement between information and sensation or, in line with Deleuze, what he identifies as the virtual and the sublime. On the other hand, in his 'The Birthing of Things: Bergson as a Reader of Lucretius', Patrick Healy examines the work of Henri Bergson on Lucretius and argues for its vital significance in understanding the development of Bergson's philosophy of the virtual best, exemplified in the statement 'the whole is never *given*'.

Gibson's assertion that amodal (and ambulant) perception is a rule rather than an exception, parallels Deleuze's argument that every perception is, in fact, hallucinatory because it has no object.[19] In the words of the radical empiricist William James: 'We were virtual knowers […] long before we were certified to have been actual knowers […].'[20] If perception is, *ipso facto*, virtual, the Part to Whole relationship simply makes no sense. We need to supplant it with the relationship of Ordinary vs. Remarkable (Singular).[21] The optical form does not remain invariant, but the form of the change of form is an invariant. A perceived event (whole) is not based on a static property such as form (part), but rather upon an invariant embedded in change (singularity). As Henri Bergson would have it, while parts are always in space, the (open) whole is in time.[22] It comes as no surprise that Gibson turned his attention to (formless) invariants:

> The terrestrial world is mostly made of surfaces, not of bodies in space. And these surfaces often flow or undergo stretching, squeezing, bending and breaking in ways of enormous mechanical complexity. So different, in fact, are environmental motions from those studied by Isaac Newton that it is best to think of

them as changes of structure rather than changes of position of elementary bodies, changes in form, rather than of point locations, or changes in the layout rather than motions in the usual meaning of the term.[23]

Digital Turn

As we see it, the problem with the predominant (i.e. linguistic) conceptions of experience is not that they are too abstract, but rather that they are not abstract enough.[24] We seem to be lacking a genuine theory of the concrete abstractness of experience. As the process philosopher Albert North Whitehead cautions, a fact in nature has nothing to do with the logical derivation of concepts.[25] It is therefore high time to shake off the pernicious residue of the Linguistic Turn.[26] In the words of the late architectural theorist Robin Evans: 'Drawing is not writing and architecture does not speak.'[27] As Gibson aptly said, one cannot hope to understand *natural* stimuli by analogy with *socially coded* stimuli:

> The world does not speak to the observer. Animals and humans communicate with cries, gestures, speech, pictures, writing, and television [and internet], but we cannot hope to understand perception in terms of these channels; it is quite the other way around. Words and pictures convey information, carry it, or transmit it, but the information in the sea of energy around each of us, luminous or mechanical or chemical energy, is not conveyed. It is simply there. The assumption that information can be transmitted and the assumption that it can be stored are appropriate for the theory of communication, not for the theory of perception.[28]

To try to capture the non-discursive (eventful) through what is, in terms of evolution, either a fairly recent graft of linguistic theories, or the more current input/output information processing, is certainly appealing. Yet it is impossible, not least because there is no structural homology between the (continuous) analogue and the (discrete) digital.[29] Strictly speaking, there are no digital events in nature.

Zeno's paradox continues to haunt us.[30] This is especially pertinent as we seem to be witnessing yet another major 'paradigm shift'– the Digital Turn.[31]

This issue opens with a contribution by Genosko, which lays out the trajectory of thinking that first challenges the importance of 'meaning' in semantic content and semiotic systems. Genosko identifies the beginning of this discourse to around 1940 with the work of the information theorist Claude Shannon and his interest in both abstract and concrete mathematical machines. Genosko develops a critique of informatics and the coding of 'signifying semiologies by asignifying semiotics (as) the growth of asignification […]' Through selected works by Guattari, he provides a reading of the non-discursive through the machinic and '[…] non-human assemblages of proto-enunciation'.

The current Digital Turn could be seen as both a blessing and a curse. It certainly endows the architect with ever more powerful tools, not just for mapping and designing, but also for literally (not literarily) expanding our *sensorium*.[32] An expansion of the range of action/perception capacitates the body. But there are also worrisome indications that the Digital Turn perpetuates the unfortunate structuralist habit of putting the cart of representation before the horse of morphogenesis.[33] In his contribution 'How to Think Constructivism? Ruskin, Spuybroek and Deleuze on Gothic Architecture', Piotrek Swiatkowski counters this tendency by reference to (neo)vitalist ontology. It is quite plausible – despite all the evidence to the contrary – that the twenty-first century will have to break with abstract concreteness (rationality) and recover the richness of concrete abstraction (pan-empiricism). The proposal is not to be taken lightly in an era of privatising profits and socialising losses. As Deleuze remarks in an interview with Toni Negri:

> [W]hat we most lack is a belief in the world, we've quite lost the world, it's been taken from us. If you

believe in the world you precipitate events, however inconspicuous, that elude control, you engender new space-times, however small their surface or volume.[34]

What We Cannot Speak about
We Must *Not* Pass Over in Silence

In contemporary readings of Spinoza on bodies and their capacity to affect and be affected, we agree with Deleuze that it is necessary to understand that there are many bodies: individual, collective, mystical, corporate, institutional, animal, even the body of the world and the heavens. And so there is a kind of indetermination and non-sense required for there to be thought processes of 'deterritorialisation' or 'lines of flight': symptoms, not codes, nor 'spaces of affect' understood in contrast to 'effecting space'. Seigworth, in his paper 'Affect Theory as Pedagogy of the "Non-"', points to Deleuze's reading of Spinoza's immanence as a 'third knowledge (following '*affectio'* or the capacity to affect and be affected as first knowledge, and common notions of relations [*affectus*] as the second)'. Referring to Guattari, Seigworth identifies the difference between 'sensory' and 'problematic' affect: the former arrives at the inside of being, the latter outside it. Citing Guattari: 'affect's spatio-temporal congruence dissolves and its elucidating procedures threaten to fly off in all directions.'

Experience is a single plane of immanence that fully integrates both subject and object, or as James would have it, there is no knower and known, there is only experience. Consequently, Truth and Falsity cannot be considered as values which exist *outside* the constitutive problematic fields that endow them with sense (Problem). This also marks the difference between detached interpretation and hands-on intervention. Consider Gregory Bateson's example of a man felling a tree with an axe. An average Westerner would say 'I cut down the tree' strongly believing that there is a delimited agent (self) which performed a 'purposive' action (cutting) upon a delimited object (tree) What he fails to apprehend

is the (open) whole:

> Each stroke of the axe is modified or corrected, according to the shape of the cut face of the tree left by the previous stroke. This self-corrective […] process is brought about by a total system, tree-eyes-brain-muscles-axe-stroke-tree; and it is this total system that has the characteristics of immanent mind. More correctly, we should spell the matter out as: (differences in tree) - (differences in retina) - (differences in brain) - (differences in muscles) - (differences in movement of axe) - (differences in tree), etc. What is transmitted around the circuit is transforms of differences. And, as noted above, a difference which makes a difference is an idea or unit of information.[35]

The Proustian apprenticeship in asignifying semiotics taught us that there are two ways to miss the sense of a sign: objectivism and subjectivism. The former characterises the belief that sense can be found in the object emitting the sign, while the latter finds sense within, in 'chains of association' (the subject). In contrast to phenomenology, where the problem of the construction of signs becomes a problem of 'bestowal of meaning', in Deleuze's account it is *sense* that is productive of signs and their meanings.[36] This distinction between *sense* and *meaning* is not purely academic nitpicking, as the feminist philosopher Claire Colebrook cautions: 'Sense is that orientation or potential that allows for the genesis of bodies but that always, if extended, would destroy the bordered organism.'[37] This in turn means that we do not look on and grasp a specific aspect of the world as detached and fully formed beings: '[A] being is what it is because it is *already* an expression of every aspect of the whole. […] Organisms are possible because they concretely embody potentialities – the power to eat, to see, to move, to think – that could have been actualized differently, *and* that can even be *counter-actualized*.'[38] According to Colebrook, a (fully) bounded organism is but an organicist fantasy. So is bounded architecture, and that is why it would

make more sense to treat it as a (semi-permeable) membrane(s) or in terms of zones and thresholds.[39] In his celebrated *Cyclonopedia*, the speculative realist Reza Negarestani explains why closure (of any system or subject) is impossible and why the effectuation of this impossibility is always catastrophically unpleasant for the subject:

> You can erect yourself as a solid and molar volume, tightening boundaries around yourself, securing your horizon, sealing yourself off from any vulnerability […] immersing yourself deeper into your human hygiene and becoming vigilant against outsiders. Through this excessive paranoia, rigorous closure and survivalist vigilance, one becomes an ideal prey for the radical outside and its forces.[40]

To conclude, experience is never *of* something, it *is* something and, as such, irreducible to what we call lived experience. The main consequence of such a revelation, according to Evans, is that goal-oriented human action cannot in any serious way be used as a design criterion because 'freedom of action is never a *de facto* established condition but always a nascent possibility'.[41] Put differently, not all potentiality is an accrued value. Consequently, the part-sign is antecedent to the signifying sign and not the other way around.[42] This discovery sheds new light on the role of theory.[43] To put it succinctly, meaning is not a matter of propositional logic, but of action.[44] To avoid any misunderstandings, the signifying sign is just not abstract enough. In the 1960s, the American artist Barnett Newman declared that: 'Aesthetics is for art what ornithology is for birds.' By analogy – and in the face of performative paradox – we want to conclude by proposing that architecture will cope just as well – if not better – in ignorance of linguistics.

Epilogue
In a recent paper, the sociologist and philosopher Maurizio Lazzarato cautions against limiting the attention of scholarly research to political economy,

and invites us to enter the field of subjective economy.[45] This politico-libidinal approach resonates with the feminist philosopher Rosi Braidotti's anti-messianic call to 'operate from the belly of the beast'.[46] The notion of asignifying semiotics, which plays a dominant role in contemporary capitalism, turns out to be indispensable in creating the very conditions for its political critique. It is not limited to the semiotics of mathematics, stock indices, money, accounting and computer codes, but includes the semiotics of music, art, architecture, cinematography, dance, and so on. What they all have in common is their repudiation of the hegemony of meta-languages. In contrast to the cardologic, they are non-representative, non-illustrative and non-narrative.[47] The assemblage is powered and amplified by the ordologic asignifying semiotics which works within it. If in representationalism a signifier functions in the logic of discursive aggregates, then in asignification it functions in the 'machinic of bodies without organs'.[48]

In their contributions to this issue, both Genosko and Hetrick employ the work of Lazzarato in developing arguments on what has recently come to be discussed under the term 'semiocapitalism'. In the case of Hetrick, this is achieved by reference to Lazzarato's machinic devices and the effects of immaterial labour on the proto-subjective and autopoietic *haecceities*. With Genosko, semiocapitalism is also identified through immaterial labour and the 'seizing effect' this has on individual freedom.

The autonomy of the asignifying sign is paramount if a body – psyche, socius and environment – is to be defined, not by its form or by its organs and functions, but by its affect; that is to say, its capacity for affecting or being affected.[49] In asignifying semiotics, signs work directly on material flows. They are not powerless as in signifying semiotics because their performance does not depend on the mediation (translation) of signification, denotation,

and representation. The 'truth' under this conception is solely a matter of production (transduction), not of adequation. There is no representation, only action – theoretical action and practical action.[50]

Asignifying semiotics operates regardless of whether it signifies something to someone. In his article 'The Work of Art as Monument: Deleuze and the (After-) Life of Art', Louis Schreel draws on the last chapter of *What is Philosophy?* to conceptualise the work of art as a paradoxical monument which does not commemorate a past but rather preserves itself in the absence of man. The vicious correlationist circle, whereby one can only ever have access to the correlation between thinking and being, and never to either term considered apart, is broken.[51] Instead of referring to other signs, asignifying signs work directly upon the real. 'The rainbow of oxidation that blooms on the heated surface of a polished steel bar'[52] is as good an example as 'the dance of the *torero* and *toro*'.[53] With the affective turn we abandon the semiotic register, since the linguistic distinction between sign and referent loses its relevance. More importantly, we shake off the bad habit of anthropocentrism in favour of becoming posthuman.[54] Which, in the words of Seigworth, is 'other than human, not anti-human but as an *a*-human-ness that nevertheless is, for us, only accessible in the oscillation of entry/exit of what-counts-as-human'.

Asignifying signs do not represent or refer to an already constitut*ed* dominant reality. Rather, they simulate and pre-produce a reality that is not yet there. Existence is not already a given, it is a stake in the experimental assemblages, be they scientific, political or artistic. This is a task for cartography, with a caveat that the transcendental must not be traced from the empirical.[55] Its task is neither to create utopian theories for the future, nor to regress to the 'better past', but to extract different possibilities in the present in order to make new thinking possible; in order to tease out any emancipatory potential,

given that, as Sven-Olov Wallenstein cautions, we have to remain at the same level of advancement as the most advanced capitalism.[56] It is a risk worth taking, even if our 'critique' seems to become inseparable from its target (the beast). Deleuze and Guattari's *principle of asignifying rupture* calls for relinquishing the tautological, and hence the trivial effort of tracing, in favour of creative mapping of this kind:

> The Pink Panther imitates nothing, it reproduces nothing, it paints the world its color, pink on pink; this is its becoming-world, carried out in such a way that it becomes imperceptible itself, asignifying, makes its rupture, its own line of flight, follows its "aparallel evolution" through to the end.[57]

Notes

1. Félix Guattari, 'The Postmodern Impasse' in *The Guattari Reader*, ed. by Gary Genosko, trans. by Todd Dufresne (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, [1986] 1996), p. 111.
2. Stan Allen, 'The Geological Turn' lecture (10/10/2012) as part of *Perspectives*: The Fall 2012 Baumer Lecture Series at Knowlton School of Architecture, The Ohio State University <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OV-ZdC8bO2Q> [accessed 23 March 2014]
3. Steven Shaviro, 'Abstract: Discognition.' <http://www.ucd.ie/t4cms/Discongnition%20Abstract.pdf> [accessed 23 March 2014] 'Organisms are affective before they are cognitive, because they are systems for accumulating and dissipating energy, before they are systems for processing information. Where cognitive science and philosophy of mind have tended to assume that affect serves cognition, we should rather see cognition as a belated and occasional consequence of a more basic affectivity. There are important philosophical precedents for this line of argument. [...] All these approaches point to a primordial form of sentience that is non-intentional, non-correlational, and anoetic; and that is best described, in a positive sense, as autistic, affective, and aesthetic.'

4. Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 2: The Time-Image* (London: The Athlone Press, [1985] 1989), p. 28. Cf. Charles S. Peirce, *Selected Writings* (New York: Dover Publications, 1958), p. 368.

5. Félix Guattari, 'Towards a Micro-Politics of Desire' in *Molecular Revolution: Psychiatry and Politics* (London: Penguin, [1975] 1984), pp. 87, 96. '[T]he semiotic fluxes are just as real as the material ones, and in a sense the material fluxes are just as semiotic as the semiotic machines. [...] abstract machinism in some sense "precedes" the actualization of the diagrammatic conjunctions between the systems of signs and the systems of material intensities.'

6. Mario Gandelsonas and Diana Agrest, 'Semiotics and Architecture: Ideological Consumption or Theoretical Work', in *Oppositions,* Volume 1, Issue 1 (New York: IAUS, 1973), pp. 93-100.

7. Félix Guattari interviewed by George Stambolian, 'A Liberation of Desire', in *The Guattari Reader*, ed. by Gary Genosko (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996), p. 205. 'G.S. What do you mean by desire? F.G. For G.D. and me desire is everything that exists before the opposition between subject and object, before representation and production. It's everything whereby the world and affects constitute us outside of ourselves, in spite of ourselves. It's everything that overflows from us. That's why we define it as flow.'

8. Manuel DeLanda, 'Deleuzian Ontology: A Sketch', presented at *New Ontologies: Transdisciplinary Objects* (University of Illinois, USA, 2002).

9. Phenomenologically driven architecture was developed under the auspices of Christian Norberg-Schulz who reintroduced the ancient Roman (organicist) idea of the *genius loci*, 'the spirit of a particular place'. Its main contemporary proponents are Juhani Pallasmaa, Alberto Pérez-Gómez and Steven Holl.

10. The fundamental thesis of empiricism is not that knowledge is derived from experience or that everything starts from the sensible, but that relations are external to their terms.

11. Gilles Deleuze, *Spinoza, Practical Philosophy* (San Francisco: City Lights Books, [1970] 1988), p. 124.

12. A vast quantity of experimental research in textbooks and handbooks is concerned with snapshot vision, fixed-eye vision, or aperture vision, and is not relevant to understanding *ambulatory* vision.

13. This did not prevent it from being excessively (mis) used in Human-Machine Interaction (HMI) research.

14. 'Essential' in the term *quint-essential* is a synonym for 'elemental'. In pre-atomic theory, there were four 'known' elements or essences - Earth, Air, Fire and Water - and a putative fifth element (*quinta essentia*). The fifth element was believed to be superior to the others, and so, 'quintessential' has come to mean something that is superior.

15. James Jerome Gibson, *The Ecological Approach to Visual Perception* (New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, [1979] 1986), p. 129. In keeping with the Assemblage Theory, capacities do depend on the components' properties but cannot be reduced to them (externality of relations). See Manuel DeLanda, *A New Philosophy of Society Assemblage Theory and Social Complexity* (London: Continuum, 2009).

16. Gilles Deleuze, 'On A Thousand Plateaus' in *Negotiations, 1972-1990* (New York: Columbia UP, [1990] 1995), p. 31.

17. Félix Guattari, 'The new aesthetic paradigm', in *Chaosmosis: An Ethico-Aesthetic Paradigm* (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1995), p.108. 'One must never confuse here machinism and mechanism. Machinism [...] implies a double process – autopoietic-creative and ethical-ontological (the existence of a "material of choice") – which is utterly foreign to mechanism.'

18. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus* (London, New York: Continuum [1980] 2004), p. 290.

19. Amodal perception is a term which describes the full perception of a physical structure when it is only partially perceived, for example a table will be perceived as a complete volumetric structure even if only part of it is visible. The internal volumes and hidden rear surfaces are perceived despite the fact that only the near surfaces are exposed to view, and the world around us is perceived as a surrounding void, even though only part of it is in view at any time.

See Alva Nöe, *Is the Visual World a Grand Illusion?* (Thorverton: Imprint Academic, 2002).

20. William James, *Essays in Radical Empiricism* (New York: Cosimo, [1912] 2008), p. 32.

21. For Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari (ATP, 506-8), 'the plane of organization' is the *actual* arrangement of elements in empirically describable and historically determined configurations. 'The plane of consistency' is the virtual co-presence of all elements of a totality in their real force-potential (both individual and collective).

22. Movement is unthinkable as long as we confuse it with the space covered.

23. Invariants are patterns of stimulation over time and/or space that are left unchanged by certain transformations. See James Jerome Gibson, *The Ecological Approach to Visual Perception* (New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, [1979] 1986), p. 15.

24. Brian Massumi, *Parables for the Virtual; Movement, Affect, Sensation* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002), p.178.

25. Alfred North Whitehead, *The Principles of Natural Knowledge* (Cambridge UP, 1919), p. 188.

26. For a discussion on 'architectural semiotics and syntactics' see Geoffrey Broadbent: 'A Plain Man's Guide to the Theory of Signs in Architecture', in *Architectural Design 47* (No. 7-8, July/August 1978), pp. 474-82.

27. Robin Evans, *The Projective Cast: Architecture and Its Three Geometries* (Cambridge, MA: MIT, 1995), p. xxxvi. See also Robin Evans, *Translation from Drawing to Buildings* (London: AA Documents 2, [1986] 2003), p.154. 'Before embarking on the investigation of drawing's role in architecture, a few more words might be spent on language; more particularly, on the common antilogy that would have architecture be like language but also independent of it. All things with conceptual dimension are like language, as all grey things are like elephants.'

28. According to Gibson, the information in ambient light is *inexhaustible*, and the same applies to sound, odour, touch and natural chemicals. See James Jerome Gibson, *The Ecological Approach to Visual Perception* (New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, [1979] 1986), p. 242. For an 'apprenticeship to the signs that the world emits' see Deleuze's reading of Marcel Proust's *In Search of Lost Time*. Deleuze insists that the novel is not about memory, as is commonly assumed, but signs. Gilles Deleuze, *Proust and Signs: The Complete Text* (London: Athlone, [1964] 2007).

29. Non-discursive social interaction precedes linguistic interaction by at least 200,000 years and the computer era by 199,950 years.

30. Instants in time and instantaneous magnitudes do not actually exist. An object in relative motion cannot have a determined relative position (for if it did, it could not be in motion), and so cannot have its motion fractionally dissected as though it does, as in the paradoxes.

31. The scientific notion of 'paradigm shift' comes from Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1970). Its counterpart in the realm of art is 'style'.

32. $1/(3 \times 10^{35})$ is a (very, very small) fraction of the electromagnetic spectrum that we detect and call 'reality'. From: Howard C. Hughes, *Sensory Exotica: A World Beyond Human Experience* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2001).

33. By morphogenesis we mean the production of (meta) stable structures out of material flows. Morphogenesis is derived from the Greek terms 'morphe' (shape/form) and 'genesis' (creation).

34. Gilles Deleuze in conversation with Antonio Negri, 'Control and Becoming', trans. by Martin Joughin in *Futur Anterieur 1* (Spring 1990), p. 57.

35. Gregory Bateson, 'The Cybernetics of "Self": A Theory of Alcoholism' in *Psychiatry* (Vol. 34, No. 1, 1971), pp. 1-18. For a similar 'navigational' approach see the influential cyberneticist Heinz von Foerster, *Die Wahrheit ist die Erfindung eines Lügners* (Heidelberg, 1998). 'What does a pilot do when he wants to manoeuvre his ship toward a port? He does not follow a predetermined program but instead modifies it constantly. [...] At every moment, the deviation must be corrected. [...]'

36. Gilles Deleuze, *Proust and Signs*. See also Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*

p. 124. 'If we call the signifying semiotic system semiology, then semiology is only one regime of signs among others, and not the most important one.'

37. Claire Colebrook, *Deleuze and the Meaning of Life* (London: Continuum, 2010), p. 37. Gilles Deleuze, 'Proust Round Table' in *Two Regimes of Madness: Texts and Interviews 1975-1995* (Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2006), p. 59. 'Proust always defines the world of violence as part of the world of signals and signs. Every signal, no matter what it is, does violence.'

38. Claire Colebrook, *Deleuze and the Meaning of Life*, pp. 84, 110.

39. For a recent example of organicist fallacy related to architecture see Alejandro Zaera Polo, 'Politics of the Envelope: A Political Critique of Materialism', in *Archinet* (Volume 17, 2008), pp. 76-105. The four envelope types: flat-horizontal (X≈Y>Z), spherical (X≈Y≈Z), flat-vertical (X≈Z>Y), and vertical (X>Y≈Z). For a similar critique see Douglas Spencer, 'Architectural Deleuzism: Neoliberal space, control and the "univer-city"', in *Radical Philosophy* (No. 168, July/August 2011), pp. 9-21. 'Treated as a means to an end, affect becomes reified and is turned to a use opposite to that suggested by Deleuze and Guattari: rather than a path towards the deterritorialization of subject positions imposed by a molar order, affect serves to reterritorialize the subject within an environment governed by neoliberal imperatives.'

40. Reza Negarestani, *Cyclonopedia: Complicity with Anonymous Materials* (Melbourne: re.press, 2008), pp. 203, 221. 'To be part of the environment (viz. the economical outside) is to survive. Communication with the outside as an environment is possible only through vitalism. For this reason, openness to the outside - affordable openness that is - constitutes the fundament of vitalism, and vitalism presents living as paranoia. But what is "living as paranoia"? It is the imposition of survival upon openness. Living-as-paranoia suggests that the outside can be afforded and that one must be open in order to survive, and vice-versa. The possibility of living life as radical exteriority bespeaks of 'living and survival' as paranoia. Yet such paranoia is not consistent with its anticipated telos, which is the safeguarding of survival. The anticipated telos of the paranoia of living (living as paranoia) is defined by its attempt to stave off life as that which is radically exterior and that which cannot be possessed by living or captured by vitalism. Therefore, the paranoia of living or survival is characterized by its duplicity in regard to its vitalistic intention: this paranoia simultaneously secures existence from the exteriority of life and repels life or the source of its vitality because life is radically exterior to the living being and fundamentally detrimental to its vitality. To put it succinctly, the duplicity of living as paranoia is defined by its simultaneous (economical) openness and closure toward life.'

41. Robin Evans, 'Interference' in *Translation from Drawing to Buildings*, pp. 16-17.

42. Jacques Derrida has voiced a concern with the 'metaphysics of presence' thesis, which he regards as central to the history of Western philosophy. It posits that the subject can be self-understanding and can express itself fully in speech.

43. Freud describes psychoanalysis as the last of three Copernican revolutions, or of three major blows to human narcissism. Copernicus demonstrated that the earth was not the centre of the universe, and Darwin's theory of evolution dethrones man from his privileged place in creation. Psychoanalysis then delivers the most wounding blow of all: the discovery of the unconscious reveals that the ego is not master in its own house. According to Lacan, Freud's Copernican revolution calls into question the entire humanist tradition, with its emphasis on the centrality of the conscious subject and the ego, by decentring the subject and demonstrating that it is governed by forces outside its conscious control.

44. Michel Foucault and Gilles Deleuze, 'Intellectuals and Power', in *Language, Counter-Memory and Practice*, ed. by Donald F. Bouchard, trans. by Donald F. Bouchard and Sherry Simon (Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP, 1977), pp. 205–07.

45. Maurizio Lazzarato, '"Exiting Language", Semiotic Systems and the Production of Subjectivity in Félix

Guattari' in *Cognitive Architecture: From Biopolitics to Noopolitics: Architecture & Mind in the Age of Communication and Information*, ed. by Deborah Hauptmann and Warren Neidich (Rotterdam: 010 Publishers, 2010), pp. 502-20.

46. Rick Dolphijn and Iris van der Tuin, 'Interview with Rosi Braidotti' in *New Materialism: Interviews & Cartographies*, ed. by Rick Dolphijn and Iris van der Tuin (Open Humanities Press, 2012), pp. 19-37.

47. Gilles Deleuze, *Francis Bacon: the Logic of Sensation* (London: Continuum, [1981] 2005), p 71.

48. Charles Stivale, 'Pragmatic/Machinic: Discussion with Félix Guattari (19 March 1985)' in *Pre/Text* 14.3-4 (1993), pp. 215-50.

49. Félix Guattari, *The Three Ecologies* (London: Continuum, [1989] 2008).

50. Michel Foucault and Gilles Deleuze, 'Intellectuals and Power', pp. 205–07.

51. Meillassoux asks provocatively whether the self-proclaimed Copernican revolution of the Critical Turn was not in fact a 'Ptolemaic counter-revolution'. See: Quentin Meillasoux, *After Finitudes: An Essay on the Necessity of Contingency* (London, New York, Continuum, [2006] 2008).

52. Jesse Reiser and Nanako Umemoto, *Atlas of Novel Tectonics* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2006), p. 172.

53. Hélène Frichot, 'Bullfighting, Sex and Sensation' in *Colloquy* 5 (September 2001).

54. Rosi Braidotti, 'Nomadic Feminist Theory in A Global Era' (2012) <http://vimeo.com/51895848> [accessed 23 March 2014]

55. Gilles Deleuze, *Cours Vincennes:* 'the actual infinite-eternal, the logic of relations' (10 March 1981), <http://www.webdeleuze.com/php/texte.php?cle=42&groupe=Spinoza&langue=2> [accessed 23 March 2014]

56. Sven-Olov Wallenstein, 'Noopolitics' lecture (12/12/2013) in the Autumn Public lecture series 2013-2014 'Staging the Message. The Architecture of Communication', Umeå School of Architecture <http://www.arch.umu.se/en/events/public-lectures/staging-the-message/noopolitics/> [accessed 03 May 2014]

57. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus* (London, New York: Continuum [1980] 2004), pp. 9-12.

Biographies

Deborah Hauptmann is Professor and Chair of Architecture at Iowa State University, and previously the Director of the Delft School of Design, TU Delft. Her research interests include philosophical notions of time and space, specifically developed through a close reading of Henri Bergson and Gilles Deleuze; the problematic of the virtual; the geo-poetics and socio-politics of the city. As well as issues pertaining to the limits and extensions of trans-disciplinary thinking, as exemplified in her recent publication *Cognitive Architecture - from Biopolitics to Noopolitics: Architecture & Mind in the Age of Communication & Information,* co-edited with W. Neidich (010 Publishers: Rotterdam, 2010).

Andrej Radman has been teaching design studios and theory courses at TU Delft Faculty of Architecture and The Built Environment since 2004. In 2008 he was appointed Assistant Professor of Architecture and joined the teaching and research staff of the Delft School of Design. As a graduate of the Zagreb School of Architecture in Croatia, Radman received a Master's Degree with Honours and a Doctoral Degree from Delft University of Technology. His current research focuses on new materialism in general and radical empiricism in particular. Radman is a member of the National Committee on Deleuze Scholarship. He is also a licensed architect with a string of awards from national competitions, including the Croatian Association of Architects annual award for housing architecture in Croatia in 2002.

Information and Asignification

Gary Genosko

Asignifying semiotics, understood in its most general sense as any system of signification that dissociates itself in some manner from a meaning component, or considers meaning as an irritant, has an approximate birthdate in the late 1940s. The moment when information theorist Claude Shannon contrasted an everyday definition of information based on semantic content with a technical one based on uncertainty, the 'irrelevance' of meaning for communication understood as an engineering problem was born.[1] [fig. 1] This gesture towards pure destratification did not hold for very long. Shannon's colleague, Cold War bureaucrat of big science Warren Weaver, worked the 'semantic problem' back into his popular explanation of Shannon's communication model shortly thereafter. Once out of the bottle, however, the genie of meaning has had to run an obstacle course against the forces and factors displacing it; that is to say, recourse to what could be communicated, defined logarithmically in bits, the probabilistics of choice, and the redundancies that shape it, all of which determine the relative entropy of theoretical information systems. Shannon's interests in both abstract and concrete mathematical machines, especially relay circuitry and secrecy systems, but also chess-playing computers and electromechanical maze-solving mice, offer a proto-machinic perspective of strata-crossing, apparently in the spirit of Guattarian thought.

But not so fast. While it seems obvious to index an 'origin tale' on post-war information theory since it provides an influential example of expunging meaning from the foundational model of communi-cation – or what I call the model 'to-', the index of all such modelling[2] – Guattari would have seen this as merely a 'skirmish' with meaning. After all, Weaver justified consideration of the semantic problem of communication only to the extent that the theory of the technical problem, namely accuracy, 'over-laps' it.[3] Weaver was focused on understanding the receiver of messages and his/her behaviours. The real issue remained, quite clearly, the extent to which primary, technical, asignifying messaging overlapped and subsumed analytic, secondary and tertiary levels of meaning and effectiveness (those affecting conduct).

Guattari regarded information theory's 'skir-mish' with meaning as a 'rearguard semiological conflict' – without mentioning Weaver specifically.[4] What Weaver does is add new stations to the communication model, even if, at the same time, these stations capture and arrest destratifying tendencies from Shannon's initial eschewing of meaning. [fig. 2] Weaver increases the number of boxes within the model of communication by interpolating a semantic receiver between the engineering receiver and the destination. As he explains, 'this semantic receiver subjects the message to a second decoding, the demand on this one being that it must match the statistical semantic characteristics of the message to the statistical semantic capacities of the totality of receivers, or of that subset of receivers which constitute the audience one wishes to affect'.[5]

Further, Weaver then introduces a new kind of noise – 'semantic' – which he inserts in between the information source and the transmitter: 'the box previously labelled as simply "noise" now being labelled "engineering noise". From this source is [*sic*] imposed into the signal the perturbations or distortions of meaning which are not intended by the source, but which inescapably affect the destination. And the problem of semantic decoding must take this semantic noise into account.'[6] In short, with Shannon and Weaver we never entirely get beyond signification and remain trapped in an intermediate phase where machinic potential is constrained by the vagaries of what Guattari dubs 'human "understanding"',[7] which slows down an otherwise accelerating destratification of meaning. Guattari remarks on information theory that it 'attempted to salvage something from the semiologies of signification in defining the significative redundancies as being in inverse proportion to the quantity of information'.[8] An increase in redundancy can help clean up errors, but it slows down processing time, decreasing the amount of information, whereas a decrease in redundancy gains in efficiency and evenness, but this increases the amount of information since unexpectedness contains more of it.

What Guattari would have us grasp is that 'the remainders of a signifying process accumulate in the same manner as other strata of encoding. Lines of interpretance with their hierarchies of content, and lines of significance, with their controlled proliferation, become a kind of raw material for the construction of a-signifying sign machines.'[9] Enhancements of the strata within the point-to-point model, which became a specialty of sorts for Weaver, increase the representational redundancy of the model and limit its lines of proliferation, or at least slow them down by the process of assimilating semantics to technical issues. So, the very factors that produce slowness also point forward towards intensive machinic productivity. To add a point of clarification: by 'inhabiting' a redundant molar model,

asignifying semiotic figures are not themselves molarised, burdened with redundancy, or prevented from undertaking phagocytic or parasitic activities.[10] Moreover, the cyberneticisation of the model by Shannon meant that the point-to-point sender-receiver could perhaps be automatically monitored and noisy messages 'corrected'. Shannon imagines an observer ('auxiliary device') with the ability to parse capacity and micromanage the balance between time, bandwidth and signal power, in this way the ambiguities of semantics need to be translated into statistical trends in messaging and audience absorption levels. [fig. 3] This fuzzy remodelling[11] was handcuffed by the addition of more and more components (doubling) whose machinic potential was not fully realised since the 'subjective' observer is never fully automated except in the simplest cybernetic systems. The fuzzy line of escape ran straight into two constraining layers of personified components: senders, receivers, and the one 'above' them both – the observer.

In the maieutics of Shannon and Weaver, information theory is an obvious yet ambivalent point of departure for a theorisation of the adventure of asignification. However, it is also a quite useful one since it underlines some of the tensions in its theorisation. And it is to these constructive tensions and instructive entanglements that I want to turn in more detail as I lay bare the finer points of Guattari's development, conceptualisation, and descriptive deployment of asignifying semiotics within the development of his nascent theory of semiocapitalism.

In three books published originally in 1977 and 1978, in the two editions of *Molecular Revolution*, and in *The Machinic Unconscious* from 1979, Guattari elaborated a typology of semiotic systems framed in a Peirce-Hjelmslev hybrid conceptual vocabulary. Asignifying semiotics are defined relationally by Guattari against signifying semiologies, beyond which are asemiotic encodings. In spatial terms, then, asignifying semiotics and signifying
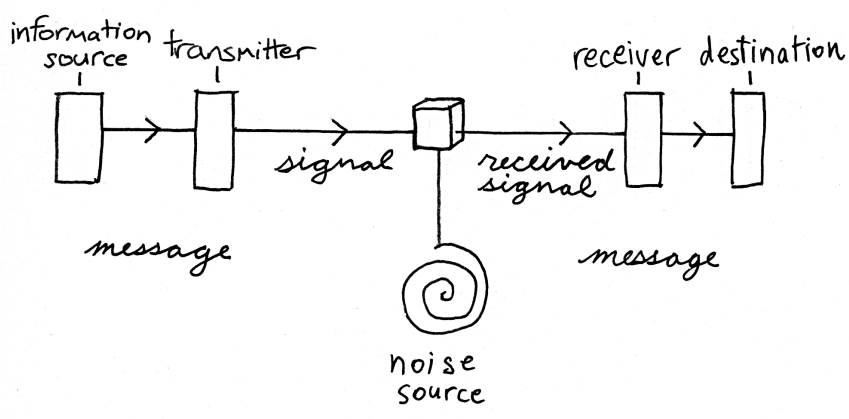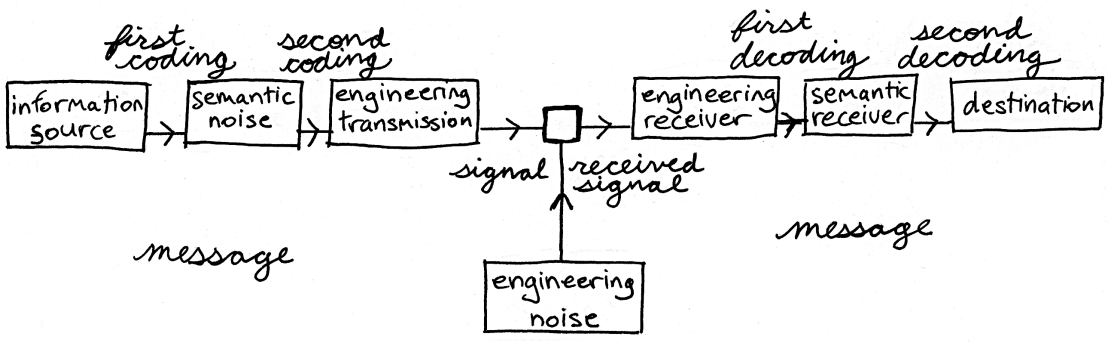
Fig. 1

Fig. 2

Fig. 1: Shannon and Weaver Model of Communication
Fig. 2: Weaver's Fuzzy Semantics

semiologies are located on the semiotic strata, and these strata are not isolated from one another. [fig. 4] Like the Shannon-Weaver models introduced above, Guattari's line diagram features boxes and arrows, but without separations, and, importantly, without a temporal dimension, which can be added to indicate the processuality of destratification. Indeed, what is instructive about Guattari's diagram is that its adumbration shows how strata accumulate like 'humus' in compost and break down over time.[12] This language suggests there is something quasi-organic about asignification or, put otherwise, that it is not only artificial. Put differently again, the machinic is irreducible to the mechanical. It is what the organic and inorganic examples share by exclusion that interests Guattari. More on this shortly.

Signifying semiologies concern well-formed substances situated on the stratified planes of expression and content, with the proviso that the transits among these strata are linguistic. Symbolic semiologies are a species of signifying semiologies and concern substances of expression that are neither completely translatable into linguistic terms, nor are they able to be overcoded by any one substance of expression among them. This rule of non-translatability and non-linearity keeps at bay linguistic imperialism: 'the semiological linearity of the structural signifier which imposes itself despotically over all other [non-linguistic] modes of semiotisation'.[13]

Guattari is never done with signifying semiologies; one never really abandons them altogether. They are 'raw material'.[14] Asignifying semiotics puts signifying semiologies into play in some manner; in this way, asignifying semiotics are not infected with semiological well-formedness, but it is something to which they may have recourse if communicating in the way that dominant significations require. But, Guattari boldly stated, asignifying semiotics 'can do without this kind of crutch'.[15] Conversely, signifying semiologies are also capable of leaning on and

'deriving their efficacity from the fact that they rely upon a certain asignifying machine'.[16] That is, they may find the deterritorialising tendencies of asignifying semiotics helpful in blurring the territories of the body or certain institutional spaces. But in the very crossing between the systems and generation of significations, new territories are breached and powers engaged, perhaps leading to the imposition of a more rigid definition, or conversely, to claims of incoherence. As the information model suggests, the intermediate position reveals that there is too much raw material to process, that the transformations of raw organic matter into humus have ceased, or that the further decomposition of humus has stalled as its stability has peaked.

Guattari's conceptual language sometimes includes examples from soil science, such as we find in *The Machinic Unconscious*: 'a-signifying components develop to some extent on the manure of signifying components; they proliferate like microscopic parasites on modes of subjectification and conscientialization'.[17] Taken together with the automation of signifying semiologies by asignifying semiotics, the growth of asignification, like mushrooms on the manure of signification, recommends the use of humification as a complementary term, and of the mixity of the semiotic processes that Guattari identifies.

The absence of a meaning dimension is less pertinent for Guattari than what is caught in the removal process: both representational and mental dimensions. Guattari has us think of the 'coefficient of deterritorialization'[18] as a constant quantity that modifies variable sign machines, often by allowing them to act by duplication at places outside human perception. Hence, his penchant for soil examples. Guattari actively decentres enunciation from the human subject to machinic, non-human assemblages of proto-enunciation. Decentring human subjectivity for the sake of machinic proto-subjectifications is one of the broad theoretical goals of
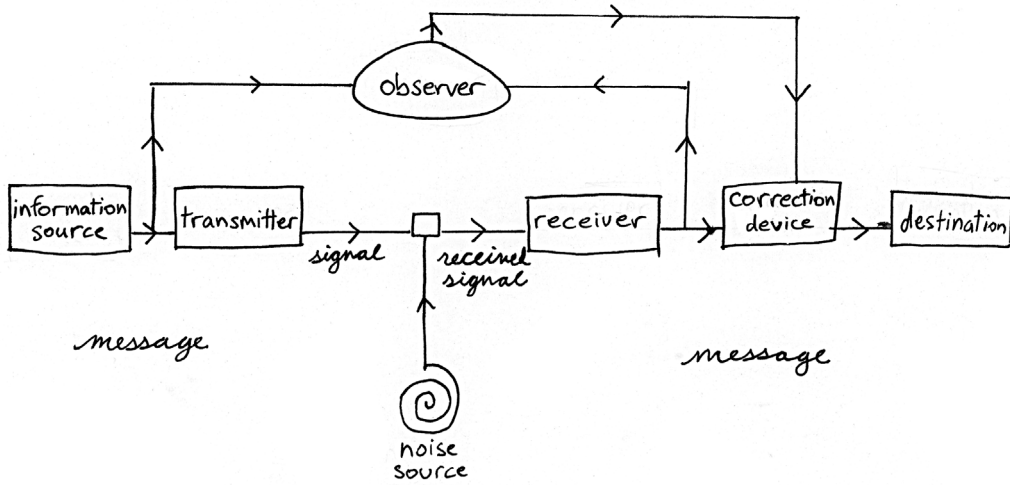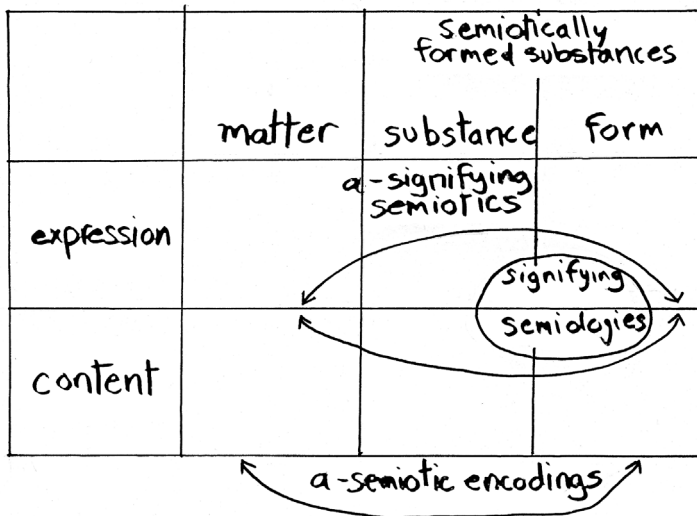
Fig. 3

Fig. 4

Fig. 3: Shannon's Observer
Fig. 4: Guattari's Semiotic Strata

Guattari's philosophy. The field of asignification becomes for Guattari that of non-human enunciation in and among machinic systems: strictly speaking, 'equations and plans which enunciate the machine and make it act in a diagrammatic capacity on technical and experimental apparatuses'.[19] This vast region includes everything from machine language 'fetch and execute' routines, to system interoperability at different levels of exchange, or to multi-levelled cybernetic loops. These are scientifically formed by computer scientists and systems engineers. The convergence of asignification and a-subjectification is achieved most clearly in the critique of anthropocentrism through technology, but also through ethology (i.e., the Brown Stagemaker Bowerbird).

Asignifying semiotics must also define itself against signalling, since the non-necessity of semantic content in non-human communication is not negatively construed as denying something to someone (i.e., to signal using animals, from birds to primates, and how these are redeployed across species, as opposed to the ability of immune cells to multiply protectively against an invading microbe), and does not entail some variant of behaviorism. However, this is a complex issue because Guattari's preference for ethological, not to mention microbial examples, is itself a deterritorialising move that is supposed to evacuate any residual 'mind' from asignification (of the sort that clings to senders, receivers, deceivers, and observers). This brings Guattari into the orbit of analytic philosophers of the signalling evolution, such as Brian Skyrms, who, in claiming that signals transmit information but lack intrinsic meaning, retains plasticity of signalling without recourse to a mental element.[20] This evacuation of philosophy of mind has a parallel in the evacuation of the individuated subject's fateful bond with the effects of the signifier.

By the time he wrote *Chaosmosis*, however, Guattari had become much more focused on info-networks and the devices used to engage with them, namely bank and debit cards. Asignification is essentially informatic. Guattari consistently describes the assembling of particle-sign components as a-subjective and machinic; in other words, as taking place without the mediation of subjectification at all. Guattari did not reduce his machines to technical devices, yet his repeated description of how asignifying semiotics trigger processes within informatic networks highlights the interactions initiated with a plastic card bearing a magnetic stripe in activating access to a bank or credit account and engaging in an elaborate authorisation process, which makes it clear that we are dealing with a complex, info-technological network. Guattari clarifies that this has a direct purchase on material machinic processes like 'a credit card number which triggers the operation of a bank auto-teller', activates accounts, and opens access to resources.[21]

Triggering is the key action of particle-signs – signs that are partial, particle-like, and destratifying. This is Guattari's sense of the passage of molecular signs: machinic superempowerment and diagrammatisation. Guattari extricates himself from the Pericean trap of subsuming diagrams under Icons (within Peirce's Logic, diagrams are graphic representations – sketches, graphs, drawings, skeletons – in mathematics) and then gains the positive implications of losing 'aboutness' as a criterion, bringing him into constructive coherence with a critique of representation. He splits the image and diagram: the former belongs to symbolic semiologies and the latter to asignifying semiotics. In shifting into a molecular-machinic modality of explication, Guattari highlights a tightly controlled repetition, whose deployment is open-ended, but whose operations are not.

Particle-signs molecularise semiosis and are effectively blind to representation. They de-substantialise by emptying semiological and semiotic triangles, both representamen-interpretant-object

or form-substance-matter types. This hole digging is constructive. Diagrammatic particle-signs are dynamic and productive (capable of multiple articulations) but rigorously constrained – meaning is not essential in this activity, but specific codes, algorithms, materials and standards are. Meaning is a kind of bug. Particle-signs work at the techno-material level regardless of whether they signify something for someone or not. Of course they do signify, since most of us users rely on some sort of mnemonic device to remember our passcodes. As Guattari specifies, particle-signs do not 'secrete significations' – whether these are 'thoughts', 'psychical' entities, or 'mental' representations: 'Signs "work" things prior to representation. Signs (form) and things (matter) combine with one another independently of the subjective "hold" that the agents of individuated enunciation (substance) claim to have over them.'[22] However, having incapacitated a disempowering representation and brought signs and things – the material and the semiotic – closer together, Guattari then muses on sign-particle 'dust' that emanates from the emptied triangles of meaning: 'a thousand sharp points of deterritorialising particle-signs' pricking the spaces of abstract potentiality.[23] This centrifugal force of particle-signs is described by Guattari as bearing a 'quantum of absolute deterritorialisation' and is a 'machinic superpower' that ordinary, individuated subjects cannot interrupt or tame, though they will try. Shannon's introduction of an 'observer' who would feedforward corrections is a good example of what Guattari envisaged as the erection of an 'ideal point' upon which communication is concentrated and controlled.[24]

Guattari's asignifying particle-signs 'give out start and stop orders'.[25] It is easy to think of such particle-signs as the actual iron oxide particles on the tracks of the magnetic stripes of credit cards that are decoded – their polarities are immediately converted into binary digits when 'swiped' by a reader with the appropriate software. As everyone knows, there is normally more to the operation than the gestural act; today, we are more likely to 'tap' our contactless access cards on 'terminals'. Of course, Guattari's use of particles tells us that the signs of asignifying semiotics are just as much virtual, 'elementary' entities which are generated by machinic interactions like acceleration and mathematical prediction, and whose existence is verifiable theoretically. Indeed, particle-signs are the bearers of potentiality 'beyond' the material fluxes and concrete machines that manifest them.[26]

On the level of technomateriality, anyone who has received an error message during the process of inputting a PIN/password while undertaking a debit transaction or login operation understands the overt syntagmatic sensitivity of such signs (and in most cases the syntactical features – how many digits, upper and lower case sensitivity – of a password or PIN). Indeed, anyone who has ever had their card 'eaten' by a machine knows the vicissitudes of asignification – it may be just a jammed trigger, but it might also be a security countermeasure prompted by the card's use in a certain place, or for a certain purpose, inconsistent with an extrapolated pattern of usage. Moreover, when a card is, as one says, 'all swiped out' by intense usage after a shopping spree, the kind of interaction between the oxide particles on its magnetic stripe and the card reader head that converts the encoding into binary digits goes awry because the magstripe is scratched or erased or demagnetised, thus introducing imbalance into the signal/noise ratio. Likewise, contactless smart cards conform to a number of international standards and protocols, operate within a fixed frequency in the case of radio frequency signal interfaces, and obey various wireless protocols, all the while transferring energy and data across a fixed amount of space. Asignifying part-signs do not slide; conversely, if they experience significant drift, they cease working, or show signs of having been hacked.

Whether they are randomly generated or carefully selected on the basis of paradigmatic clusters of birthdates, children's ages, former addresses, initials, nicknames, etc., PINS/passwords, like the magstripe-reader encoding-decoding relation, can do without mental representations, which may of course exist, but they are not essential and no longer centre signification. Passwords just allow one to pass through the strata.

There is a tendency in the information age for asignifying semiotics to maximise its machinic force – to rapidly evolve, speed up, acquire greater mobility, miniaturise and proliferate. In asignifying semiotics, particle-signs work 'flush' (*travaillent à même*) with the 'real'; or more precisely, with material fluxes. Guattari does not, however, uncritically valorise flushness as directness. At the same level as and in parallel with is perhaps better. Borrowing a notion from Peirce, even flushness does not require physical contact, just an indexical contiguity that is not limited to proximity but has connectivity. This underlines the networked nature of asignification with select matters: it could be mycellium or silicon.

Diagrammatism, in Guattari's hands, blazes a trail beyond the human and individuated subject (of the statement) into the collective machinic dimension, escapees from the prison house of meaning: 'We leave the terrain of signification,' Guattari wrote, 'for that of the plane of machinic consistency';[27] that is, the continuum of interactions on which any machine is reducible to an individual only arbitrarily, and where hierarchies like those of 'reifying denotation and imaginary connotation are blurred'.[28] With asignifying semiotics one enters the plane of the post-human, 'more and more artificial'.[29] Guattari didn't shed any 'humanist tears' over those ill-adapted to such change, rejecting anti-modern and anti-machine recapitulations of humanism.

Machinic liberation
Meaning may not be essential, but politics is. For

Guattari, all molecular phenomena display a politics in lieu of a signified. The particle-signs are no different in this respect, though on the face of it, the move to quantity and machinic interactions (automated triggers) belies it. Let's return to the magstripe. On the stripe, which is located in a certain position on the plastic card, there are several tracks. These are not neutral tracks upon which the particles are lined up. Rather, of the three tracks available, the first was developed for use by the airline industry, whereas the second is used by financial institutions. Each track's format was developed by and for specific interests. The cards meet a variety of international standards and function by means of specific algorithms. Recall the phrase quoted above: asignifying machines may be used to 'automate' the messages of the signifying semiologies that, in a capitalist system, begin stirring at a young age, especially around basic training in capitalist behaviours, namely credit, into which one is socialised. One could argue that the very agreements that permit these cards to work, namely standards, are a good example of what it means for any kind of sign to be flush with the world, but in virtue of international protocols and accreditations, quantified by ISO designations.[30]

Asignifying diagrammatic semiotics describes for Guattari:

> […] the very texture of the capitalist world […]. A-signifying machines recognize neither subjects, nor persons, nor roles, and not even delimited objects. That is precisely what confers upon them a kind of omnipotence; they pass through signifying systems within which individuated subjects find themselves lost and alienated. One never knows when or where capitalism ends.[31]

Asignifying semiotics is perfectly adapted to the networked banking systems we use on a regular basis. Their diagrammaticity will mobilise the next extensions, not yet actualised, of cash networks

and placements of automated transaction terminals, and new radio frequencies colonised by the next corporate players, and the coordinated triggers that open pathways through the network. Guattari explicitly turned to historical examples of banking systems (i.e., the Venice-Genoa-Pisa triangle in the Renaissance) in order to explain how the diagrammatic potential of this 'liberation' of asignifying machines was successively limited throughout the history of banking by serving the principles of oligarchy, or debt, or centralisation.[32]

Today, the neologism 'semiocapitalism' combines a general semiotic and a contemporary formula of capitalism – which may or may not be the highest – and also participates in a periodisation of sorts, since the concept references the flexibilities of post-Fordism, evoking mobile productive spaces (post-factory), the rise of a precarious labour force for whom life is indistinguishable from work, and the financialisation of the economy. 'Capitalism,' as Guattari states, 'seizes individuals from the inside.'[33] Labour is a kind of machinic enslavement; in other words, it is integrated as a component part of a machinic process and functions as a relay for fluxes. Machinic enslavement works with asignifying particle-signs. Guattari observes that: 'Automatized and computerized production no longer draws its consistency from a basic human factor, but from a machinic phylum which traverses, bypasses, disperses, miniaturizes, and co-opts all human activities.'[34] Labour involves the on-demand matching (re/combination) of semiotic fragments towards the composition of a semio-commodity within an integrative digital network in which labour time bleeds into life time.

Simply put, an info-commodity under semiocapitalism consists in a non-exclusive way of asignifying particle-signs whose production and passage through digital networks contribute to the development of the machinic phylum, which is, for Guattari, the creative historical force of 'selection, elimination

and generation of machines by machines'.[35]

The immaterial labour hypothesis picks up the Guattarian emphasis on the abstract machinic character of particle-signs, which is evident in Franco Bifo Berardi's observation that 'semio-capital is capital-flux that coagulates in semiotic artefacts without materialising itself'.[36] Coagulation without immediate materialisation is the condition of the semiotic fluxes.

Conclusion

Why does what Guattari calls the 'liberation' of an asignifying semiotic machine seem to result in another species of capitalism? In the late 1970s, Guattari developed a distinction between signifying semiologies and asignifying semiotics in a manner that 'remained very schematic'; in other words, insufficiently mixed: 'a signifying semiology is always haunted by a sign machine and, conversely, an a-signifying sign machine is always in the process of being recuperated by a signifying semiology'.[37] Of course, he identifies polarities – paranoid/fascist vs. schizo-nomadic – and specifies the apparatuses of capture in double articulation, how a language should be spoken, and the overcoding and axiomatisation of intensive deterritorialisations. The creative freedoms of a machinic diagram may be stratified and rendered impotent, yet the repeated assertion of such freedoms is in no way precluded. Guattari repeatedly asserted that there was no 'dialectical synthesis', no *Aufhebung*.[38] Because asignifying semiotics connects with 'traits' – the particle-signs that are unformed both semiologically and physically – in which a distinction between expression and content is not yet definitively operative,[39] it may push through the holes in the net and experiment with how particles connect and enunciate beyond the human, as it were, before becoming tangled in the binding mesh of representation, repression, organising and transformative subjectifications of pronominal voice (the splitting and de-diagrammatising of 'it' by the 'I-ego').[40] In Figure 4, Guattari

shows how asignification cuts across the strata, swerving around substance, from which it makes its escape by forging machinic connections. This diagram has many iterations; for instance, in *The Machinic Unconscious* and later in *Schizoanalytic Cartographies*, the swerve is the main focus [figs. 5 and 6] and the background is absent. In Figures 1-3, we saw how Shannon and Weaver's additions to the transmission model – the qualified relabelling of existing, and the introduction of new, semantic components – compromised the machinic logic of the original, generating what Guattari would describe as a black hole effect: the implosiveness of a modelisation that attempts to deepen and justify the irrelevance of meaning for transmission by absorbing 'meaning' components into it, dampening its own growth by recourse to personalisation. We also saw Weaver's slipping of residual 'minds'[41] into machinic communication, not to mention Shannon's all-seeing observer.

Yet this gerrymandering nevertheless spreads the elementary 'dust' of particle-signs, which stick to the components and have the power to scramble them, to disaggregate assemblages by decentring mental representation and to disindividuate desire.[42] As Guattari put it, 'In diagrammatism, substantial semantic or signifying residues of the object [denoted or represented] and of the means of expression are always superfluous. Semanticism or signifiance are only tolerated in a provisional way, and the expectation is always that they will be reduced at the next stage of technical and scientific progress.'[43]

Guattari imagined the existence of elementary particle-signs which carried 'quanta of deterritorialization' in order to find an escape from the strata and provide an energy source for his asignifying semiotics.[44] In not offering a neat solution to the capture of and release from the strata, he indicated that he was committed to a progressive view of the deterritorialisation of collective enunciative power beyond the individual, person, or even human subject. Guattari moved in this regard towards the horizon of one planetary machine, but it would be a mixed machine with a unique consciousness: the observer who was once a human subject will have become an automated algorithm. As foreboding as this may sound, Guattari was convinced that it presented an opportunity rather than a perilous outcome. Taken together, Guattari and Deleuze's remarks on control societies contribute to a critical understanding of what it means to enter a world where passwords – access and denial – form a high stakes technopolitics which the cypherpunks phrase in a somewhat outmoded language of individual versus mass surveillance – the interception and storage of telecommunications data – but which, nevertheless, awaits the creation of the analytic tools that can trigger specific actions to exploit the situation.[45] Can asignifying semiosis vouchsafe a revolutionary role in popularising cryptography? Following Guattari, the sharp-edged particle-signs radiated in the process of emptying the semiological strata, and emitted from the black holes of impotence and disempowerment, remain liberatory in their promise of creative transformation towards the autonomy of personal information.

Once upon a time we were all groupuscules. Perhaps now we are all cypherpunks in training, and our politics is a struggle over asignification.

Postscript
The difference between asignifying semiotics and signifying semiologies is established by a shared set of categories of classification; indeed, they occupy a common strata. However, asignifying particle-signs utilise signifying semiologies as tools for deterritorialisation and for making novel connections between semiotic machines and material fluxes otherwise held apart within signifying semiologies (an individuated subject detached from the real and bewitched by representative images). Guattari's conceptual language extends to activity 'triggers' (start, stop),
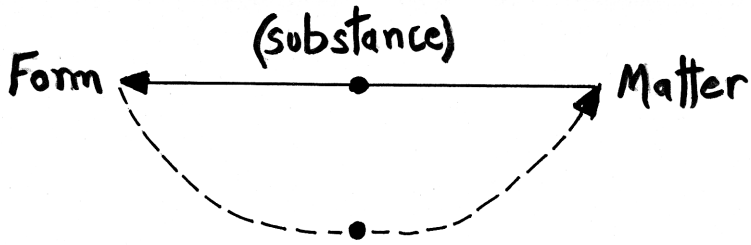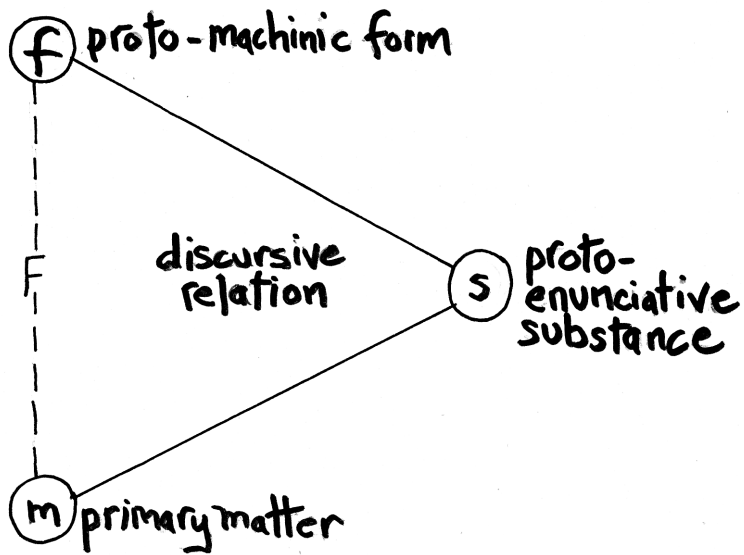
Fig. 5

Fig. 6

Fig. 5: Guattari's Form/Substance/Matter Relations
Fig. 6: Guattari's Form/Substance/Matter Relations

sentinels on magnetic stripe cards, the devices that read them, and the networks that circulate the decoded data. However, as we have seen, the example of asignifying mycellium feeding on nutrients – a rich semiological humus – before fruiting is equally relevant for Guattari.

The first question raised with regard to the relationship between these two kinds of semiosis is this: how do they relate to Roland Barthes' model of semiological accumulation in the stacked and staggered systems of meaning? There is a second question. Does Barthes, with the concept of a signifier's obtuse meaning, achieve an insight into asignification comparable to Guattari's?

In his study of myth, Barthes describes how a first-order linguistic semiological system is built upon by a second-order mythological system by means of converting the unity of the first signifier and signified as sign (final) into a new signifier (first) for a second signified and unified sign. This is an operation of 'construction', Barthes says;[46] it is the conception of final as first. Myth capitalises on semiological patterns and uses them as 'raw materials'[47] to erect a politics marked by a sly disavowal of ideology – what Barthes called 'de-politicized speech'.

By contrast, Guattari assigned to asignifying semiotics a disruptive and difficult micropolitical task of 'eating into the semiology of the dominant order'.[48] In order to accomplish this task, it 'will retain a certain partial use'[49] of signifying semiologies, which will always have a supportive but not central role to play in asignifying proliferation. With asignifying semiotics, Guattari specifies: 'The dregs of the signifier, figures of expression and pre-diagrammatic assemblages, are essential elements for the engineering of accelerators of particle-signs, the derritorialising power of which will be capable of smashing the strata of encoding.'[50] Residues of signification accumulate in the collapse of signifying

redundancies, implosions of separated strata, collectivisation of individuated human consciousness, and multiplication of double articulation (stalling this colonising machine). As destratification picks up speed and frees up more intensive processes, raw material for asignifying semiotics is generated. This raw material, once assembled (self-organised and/or machined), is none other than the particle-signs that asignifying machinic processes make use of. Guattari writes: 'Consequently, these territorial residues reorganize themselves into a-signifying particles; they will provide raw material for a-signifying semiotic machines beyond the reach of the impotentizing advances of reflexive consciousness.'[51]

Asignifying semiotics is not a meta-code or modelling in the sense that myth is a metalanguage – Barthes's so-called 'second language'. A meta-model for Guattari is critical of the model at which it points. The model in this case is signifying semiology, which has a 'limitless hegemonic claim'[52] on signification. This very ambition is displayed by Barthes in his understanding of the 'language-object' or linguistic sign in its globality (qua sign which 'lends itself' to myth): it does not require a distinction between writing and pictures as they are not simply signs. However, myth is also a colonising force of language and it works by any number of tactics: parasitism, amplification, insinuation, conjuration… Ultimately, myth remains a signifying semiology. On this point, then, Barthes and Guattari diverge, despite the superficial structural similarity their thought displays in the categories of analysis and how they relate (though Guattari's is more diverse and shows greater resistance to semiological ambition).

Barthes's traits of the obtuse function at the level of the signifier are akin to Guattari's particles, but the latter are not creatures of the signifier. Rather, they are framed in terms of fluxes articulated by expression and relational (and reversible) content

planes, and subsequently smoothed machinically (energised) as they are deterritorialised: 'passive figures of expression are transformed into active particle-signs'.[53] In short, traits from signaletic fluxes are extracted into particle-signs and put into play in combination with fluxes of energy. Having broken from the linguistic signifier, Guattari's '"basic" entities'[54] pass from extensive (space-time location and sensible traits) to intensive states (full with potential and multilocational) by means of the expression-content function and not the signifier-signified relation between psychical entities (sound-image and concept). Still, Barthes is not content with a simple definition of obtuse meaning as a signifier without a signified because it cannot be named, is non-representational, and eludes the language of criticism: 'we do without language yet never cease to understand one another'.[55] Guattari takes much the same attitude: 'It [a-signifying semiotics] can do without this kind of crutch (signifying language) […].'[56] Barthes and Guattari are close to agreeing that the obtuse/asignificational is non-representational, and that these figures are not easily absorbed into criticism, but with an important qualification. For Guattari, meta-modelling is a critical assay launched not from above but from among many models.

It is productive to tarry a bit longer with Barthes as he has also proposed what appears to be an asignifying semiotic element in the concept of obtuse meaning. Recapitulating his stacked systems, Barthes proposes a three-tier system of meaning in his analysis of stills from Eisenstein's film *Ivan the Terrible*: the first is information or communication – 'what I can learn from the setting, the costumes, the characters, their relations';[57] a second is a significational or stratified symbolic level consisting of various symbolisms – referential, diegetic, Eisenteinian, historical; and a third level of significance consists in signifying traits that do not yield a signified. Obtuse meaning is 'excessive'.[58] Whereas obtuse meaning is, as Barthes remarks, 'persistent and fleeting',[59] Guattari's particle-signs

are reticent about signifying anything to anyone. Yet Barthes, too, enlists 'indifferen[ce] to the story'[60] as a feature of obtuse meaning. But there is more. Barthes insists on the 'im-pertinence of the signifer'[61] as a robust feature of indifference to the obvious meaning of a story. He describes it as a 'de-naturing' effect, a 'distancing' from the referent by means of intense sounds and colours without 'natural' reference points. These remain 'depleted' and are not filled by signifiers.

On this medium Barthes and Guattari converge: film is a prime site for asignifying semiosis. In discussing *Badlands* (T. Malick, 1973), Guattari insists on what the critics missed: the agonising blue of the enormous skies of the location; the *amour fou* of the young couple; the asignifying connections that go nowhere (father's murder – retrieval of a toaster from the scene and its relocation to an encampment without electricity).[62] Rather than drawing upon Barthes, Guattari draws upon Christian Metz for his explanation of the asignifying fabrics (sonorous and visual) of cinema that resist signifying semiologies. This is what Barthes called the filmic as such, irreducible to the film: 'The filmic […] lies precisely […] in that region where articulated language is no longer more than approximative and where another language begins (whose science, therefore, cannot be linguistics, soon discarded like a booster rocket).'[63] Guattari finds in Metz the importance of film's images that are 'matters of content' which remain undefined, and 'matters of expression' that are unfixed.[64] But Barthes never really discards linguistics, building a vast semio-linguistic universe of interpretation. At the same time, Barthes isolated certain outer limits in his own practice while retaining – and this is an obvious point – obtuse *meaning* (extra-structural) beyond linguistically articulable and structuralisable meaning-effects. He reached the margins by focusing, self-consciously and paradoxically, on film stills, in order to grasp the processes of cinema.

The crossing points between Barthes' obtuse meaning and Guattari's asignifying semiotics are sufficiently dense as to warrant close consideration. Just as I showed with regard to the remodellings of Shannon and Weaver, the invention of asignification with Barthes in the equation remains stuck in an intermediary state of advances and rearguard actions in the name of meaning. The eclipse of meaning, as Guattari reminds us, is never accomplished once and for all. It is not so much a temporary obscuration as a counter-hegemonic destabilisation and decentring of signification that opens up hitherto closed routes of escape, but is not itself immune to cycles of liberation and recapture.

Notes

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3. Warren Weaver, 'Recent Contributions to the Mathematical Theory of Communication', *The Mathematical Theory of Communication* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1949), p. 3.
4. Félix Guattari, *La révolution moléculaire* (Fontenay-sous-Bois: Encres/Recherches, 1977), p. 335.
5. Weaver, 'Recent Contributions', p. 11.
6. Ibid.
7. Guattari, *La révolution moléculaire*, p. 336.
8. Ibid., p. 335.
9. Ibid., p. 336.
10. Guattari, *The Machinic Unconscious*, trans. by T. Adkins (Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2011), p. 220.
11. On the fuzzification of communication, see Rudolf Seising, '60 years "A Mathematical Theory of Communication" – Towards a "Fuzzy Information Theory"', *IFSA-EUSFLAT* (2009), pp. 1332-37.
12. Guattari, *La révolution moléculaire*, p. 332.
13. Guattari, *Chaosmosis*, trans. by P. Bains and J. Pefanis (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995), p. 49.
14. Guattari, *La révolution moléculaire*, p. 243.
15. Ibid., p. 281.
16. Guattari, *La révolution moléculaire* (Paris: Editions 10/18, 1978), p. 236.
17. Guattari, *The Machinic Unconscious*, p. 51.
18. Ibid., p. 59.
19. Guattari, *Chaosmosis*, p. 36. Today we call this computer code. It is firstly machinic (proto-enunciative) and secondly linguistic; that is, signifying. On this point see A. R. Galloway, *The Interface Effect* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2012), p. 71.
20. Brian Skyrms, *Signals* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), pp. 7 and 32.
21. Guattari, *Chaosmosis*, p. 49.
22. Guattari, *La révolution moléculaire*, p. 282.
23. Ibid., p. 344.
24. Ibid., p. 345.
25. Guattari, *Chaosmosis*, p. 49.
26. Guattari, *La révolution moléculaire*, p. 344.
27. Ibid., p. 260.
28. Ibid., p. 259.
29. Ibid., p. 264.
30. Lawrence Busch, *Standards* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2011), p. 3.
31. Guattari, *La révolution moléculaire*, p. 237.
32. Guattari, *La révolution moléculaire*, pp. 345-46.
33. Guattari, 'Capital as an Integral of Power Formations', trans. by C. Wolfe and S. Cohen, *Soft Subversions* (New York: Semiotext(e), 1996), p. 220.
34. Ibid., p. 207.
35. Guattari, 'So What?' trans. by C. Wiener, *Chaosophy* (New York: Semiottext(e), 1995), p. 18; and 'Institutional Practice and Politics', trans. by L. Baker, *The Guattari Reader*, ed. by G. Genosko (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996), p. 126.
36. Franco Berardi, 'Schizo-Economy', trans. by M. Goddard, *SubStance*, 36, 1 (2007), p. 76.
37. Guattari, *La révolution moléculaire*, p. 346.
38. Ibid., p. 356.
39. This point is made by Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, trans. by B. Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), p. 347.

40. Guattari, *La révolution moléculaire*, p. 347.

41. Dirk Baecker, 'Systemic Theories of Communication', in *Theories and Models of Communication*, ed. by P. Cobley and P.J. Schulz (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2013), p. 87.

42. 'Particle-signs associate the smallest degree of actual consistency with the greatest degree of potential consistency'. Guattari, *The Machinic Unconscious,* p. 219.

43. Guattari, *La révolution moléculaire*, p. 336.

44. Félix Guattari, *Schizoanalytic Cartographies,* trans. by A. Goffey (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), p. 74; and Guattari, *The Machinic Unconscious*, p. 221.

45. Julian Assange et al., *Cypherpunks: Freedom and the Future of the Internet* (New York: OR Books, 2012), pp. 37-40.

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47. Ibid., p. 123.

48. Guattari, *La révolution moléculaire*, p. 245.

49. Ibid., p. 266.

50. Ibid., p. 336.

51. Ibid., p. 341.

52. Ibid., p. 341.

53. Guattari, *Schizoanalytic Cartographies*, trans. by A. Goffey (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), p. 88.

54. Ibid., p. 92.

55. Roland Barthes, 'The Third Meaning', in *Image/Music/Text*, trans. by S. Heath (New York: Hill & Wang, 1977), p. 61.

56. Guattari, 'The Place of the Signifier in the Institution', trans. by G. Genosko, *The Guattari Reader*, p. 151.

57. Barthes, 'The Third Meaning', p. 52.

58. Ibid., p. 52.

59. Ibid., p. 54.

60. Ibid., p. 61.

61. Ibid., p. 61.

62. Guattari, *La révolution moléculaire*, p. 206-ff.

63. Barthes, 'The Third Meaning', p. 65.

64. Guattari, *La révolution moléculaire*, pp. 222-23.

Biography

Gary Genosko is Professor of Communication at the University of Ontario Institute of Technology in Toronto, Canada. His most recents books include *When Technocultures Collide: Innovation from Below and the Struggle for Autonomy,* and *Remodelling Communication: From WWII to the WWW*. He has published extensively on Félix Guattari, with well-known titles including: *Félix Guattari: A Critical Introduction*, *Félix Guattari: An Aberrant Introduction*, *The Guattari Reader*, *The Party Without Bosses: Félix Guattari and Lula da Silva*, and *Deleuze and Guattari: Critical Assessments of Leading Philosophers*.

The Birthing of Things: Bergson as a Reader of Lucretius

Patrick Healy

I would like to examine, in this short paper, the work of Henri Bergson on Lucretius, first published in 1884 under the title *Extraits de Lucrèce*, and argue for its significance in understanding the development of his philosophical thinking.[1] This publication was intended to serve as an introduction to extracts from Lucretius for Bergson's students at Clermont-Ferrand, and included a commentary and notes on the poetry, philosophy, physics and language of Lucretius's poem *De Rerum Natura*.[2] In the published volume, most of Bergson's overview of Lucretius is given in the long preface, and this is followed by extracts in Latin without translation into French, but with comments on lines and individual words covering all the books of the original poem. By 1899 it was in its third edition, and was still in print until the 1960s. Copies today are difficult to obtain, and only recently has a full electronic version become available on the Internet Archive, to which readers here are directly referred.[3]

In the new edition of Henri Bergson's *Écrits philosophiques*, edited by Worms, the *Extraits* have been omitted. The editorial decision may indicate that it is seen as work in 'classics' or a literary work, or that it is not 'philosophical', and is therefore not to be included in a new full critical edition of Bergson. Worms takes *Time and Free Will* as Bergson's first philosophical work, and allows the inclusion of the French translation of the minor thesis *Quid Aristoteles de loco senserit,* as well as some essays. Yet in almost a thousand pages of this first 'critical' edition, he has made no reference whatsoever to the *Extraits* of Lucretius, nor is it listed as a separate publication in the bibliography.[4]

Bergson's work on Lucretius has not completely disappeared from view; for example, it has been noted in the recent *Cambridge Companion to Lucretius*,[5] but no extensive analysis exists. It is effectively seen as an exercise in pedagogic assistance for young students in Bergson's care, and a kind of preparatory work for what is taken to be a later, more significant development. Bergson's actual starting point is not seen by many contemporary scholars as his true beginning. My intention in this paper is simply to draw attention to this rich and neglected source in understanding Bergson's philosophical matters of concern.

A double turn has occurred in recent work which has brought philosophers back to Bergson, and by routes that could not have been anticipated. The increased attention paid to the work on ancient philosophy in Foucault and Deleuze, the engagement with Lucretius, for example in the work of Serres, and the new thinking in the philosophy of science in Prigogine and Stengers, has reopened for consideration the very theoretical problems Bergson faced in his reading of Lucretius. This has led to a new awareness that Bergson's relation to reading the philosophical past is not an historicist exercise but the very means by which he becomes, to use a later turn of phrase, the event of his own thinking.[6]

Reflection on creation and the world leads him to philosophical problems and questions which, it can be argued, preoccupy him throughout his published work; in other words, it can be shown that the reading of Lucretius, the extracts made, and his notes and commentary, make it possible to read *Creative Evolution*, written almost fifty years later, as the return of earlier thinking, as the future of his own philosophy, which can then be seen as a philosophy of creation *simpliciter*. By a double turn, the later work helped make the earlier relevant again in a different and more urgent way, so that the reading of Lucretius is now seen as crucial for Bergson. It brings him to a cosmological understanding of a world which is free of *stasis* or of predicative geometry – Euclidean – and allows him to think in terms of cosmogenesis and existence as a constant process of creation. Bergson's engagement with classical atomism and atomistic theory moves him away from the dualisms of mind/matter, spirit/body and consciousness/unconsciousness, and towards thinking in terms of aspects and states of eternally shifting cosmic matter as 'becoming'. It is also both a direct engagement with a materialist philosophy and a commitment to the philosophy of science and the study of ancient physics in the Atomists, and, later, Aristotle.

The *Extraits* were intended to be an introduction to the work of Lucretius, a Latin poet whose teachings were also the poetic rendering of someone who considered himself a disciple of Epicurus, a faithful disciple and author of the most significant philosophical poem in the Latin language, yet one who remains less known than any of those who drew on his work. Bergson remains a scrupulous reader, approaching his task, however, with a very specific aim, namely to talk about the philosophical import of the poem, and thus he deals with philological matters only and in so far as his primary reading is affected. The book is laid out with a preface and introduction in which Bergson signals his procedure and hermeneutic position.

Bergson begins by referring to the lack of knowledge that surrounds such a famous name, as little is actually known about the life of Lucretius. He notes Jerome's anecdote that Lucretius was probably born around 99-98 BCE, and in his early forties took, or was given, some kind of love potion and went mad and died, or committed suicide around 55 BCE This legend of the suicide of Lucretius may have been taken from the lost *De Poetis* by Suetonius, or it may have been invented to underline the connection between personal despair and lack of belief in God. In his *Le Miel et l'Absinthe*, Comte-Sponville, the only contemporary French author to comment in any detail or engage directly with Bergson's interpretation of Lucretius, spends some time on this anecdote from Jerome, and, in turn, notes the way in which Bergson has identified in his reading of the poem a curious paradox, namely that the most loyal disciple of Epicurus produced a work in which living is seen as a sad and discouraging burden; in short, a view of Lucretius as someone who lived a hidden life, following the Epicurean injunction, but as a resolute melancholic, and that a temperament of melancholy pervades the whole work.[7]

A second suggestion from Bergson, also taken up by Comte-Sponville, is that Lucretius is largely unknown to us because he was a 'dangerous friend'. It is for the most part idle to speculate, given the dearth of biographical sources, why this is mentioned by almost all ancient authors who cite and respond to Lucretius in significant detail, a good example being – as Hardie has shown – Virgil's echo and retort to Lucretius in his *Eclogues*; and further, the presence of Lucretius in Horace and Ovid. It is Bergson's view that these writers are loathe to invoke Lucretius personally due to the fashion for religious cults and public rituals which returned under Augustus, thus making Lucretius a 'dangerous friend' given his known rejection of religion.[8]

Bergson begins his consideration by also

pointing to the greater likelihood that Lucretius was living as a philosopher, and it is the theme of the philosophical life that is an important emphasis in Book II. But for Bergson, and this is very specific to his interpretation, the first and dominant impression of *De Rerum Natura* is that it is profoundly melancholic. The poem is sad and discouraging; it raises the question: why life? Life is monotonous and always exhibits unsatisfied desire, its pleasures are deceiving, it lacks animal joy, and every source of delight is mixed with bitterness. A baby cries on entering the world, and Bergson remarks that this is the correct response. The passage from Lucretius at V, 222-227, suggests a sense of life that is given without choice: the individual comes in a world into which he or she has been literally thrown or regurgitated.

The tone of melancholy is further strengthened by additional observations in which no false comfort is afforded to anyone, including the belief that living in the countryside would somewhat ameliorate the condition of dwelling in the city. This is an illusion, even the rusticated life is full of hardship and toil, and the earth resists the cultivation of vain happiness. Then, of course, there is also old age and the omnipresent, childish fear of death. Thus everything is *misère* here below, and our greatest consolation is that everything finishes with us when our life is over (*Extracts*, p. III). This is the most explicit teaching Bergson finds in Lucretius, and the conclusion of all philosophy, which literally demands of us a ridding of illusions and an acceptance of the fatal destiny of being born and dying.

For Lucretius, the absence of any illusion is the way of enlightenment, but again it has a power and rapture which goes beyond the calmness and tranquillity of soul that Epicurus speaks of. The most powerful lines in which mankind's existential situation is described can be found at the end of Bk. III, 1046-1094:

Men seem to feel some burden on their soul,
Some heavy weariness. Could they but know
Its origin, its cause, they'd never live
The way we see most of them do, each one
Ignorant of what he wants, except a change.

In Lucretius's bleak summary, each man flees himself, but as might be expected, the self whom he cannot escape clings to him, even more so and against his will, and he hates himself because he is sick and does not know the cause of his complaint. Or in the beautiful, compressed and pungent Latin of the poet:

hoc se quisque modo fugit (at quem scilicet, ut fit, effugere haut potis est, ingratius haeret) et odit propterea, morbi quia causam non tenet aeger;
(Bk. III, 1068-1070)

(Each man flees from himself or tries, but the pest clings to him, even more ungraciously, He hates himself because he does not know the reason for his sickness.)

Lucretius offers a remedy, and it remains one of the most pointed declarations of his poem, in which, as will be argued later, the dualism of nature/reason is rejected. There is no disjunction but, instead, a thoroughgoing naturalism which is also a thoroughgoing rationalism, and thus in Bk. II, 54-61:

omnis cum in tenebris praesertim via laboret.
nam veluti pueri trepidant atque omnia caecis
in tenebris metuunt, sic nos in luce timemus
interdum, nilo quae sunt metuenda magis quam
quae pueri in tenebris pavitant finguntque futura.
hunc igitur terrorem animi tenebrasque necessest
non radii solis neque lucida tela diei
discutiant, sed naturae species ratioque.

(Life is one long struggle in the dark,
Even as children shiver and fear things
in the blind darkness, trembling, so

> we, in the light, shudder at things not less
> awful than what babies fear, and the horror
> they imagine that is on its way.
> Our terrors and gloom of mind
> must be dispelled not by the sun's rays or shafts of light,
> but by the aspect and law of nature.)

The last line may also be paraphrased as 'insight into nature and systematic reflection'. Furthermore, the role of knowledge is to remind us that we hardly count in the order of the universe, we are just an accidental combination of elements with whom the 'gods' are not in the least concerned, and we die and decompose like other living matter.

Bergson raises the question, having identified the overwhelming mood, as to where this melancholy comes from. He points to the civil strife of the late Republic, the rivalry of Marius and Sulla, which is indicated in the opening verse, and their prayer for peace. The civil war left sombre images in the mind of Lucretius, but that is nevertheless neither the real source of the melancholy, nor the main subject of the poem. If he did write in the light of such events, Lucretius would have considered knowledge a *pis-aller*, or a simple means of consolation (*Extraits*, IV). Rather, it was for Lucretius the object of human life, and public disasters are real ills because they tear intelligence away from the only noble pursuit and occupation worthy of it.

It is at this point in his reflections that Bergson identifies the first great 'double' of his analysis: the variety and diversity of nature, its contingency, and yet its obedience to fixed laws. Lucretius has made the same double in the relationship between nature and reason. It is clear from Bk. V that Lucretius loved nature passionately, exemplified by his minute observations, and that he saw a range of infinitely diverse and changing phenomena yet believed that a fixed law worked uniformly and invariably, producing determined effects. It is to this dual phenomenon of variety and fixity that the melancholy of Lucretius

attaches, as well as to the predictability of the fatal consequences of such causality – that the laws of nature can be mathematically predicted – and this for Bergson is the *ideé mâitresse* of the poem. This 'fatality' is what Bergson identifies as the *certus* of which Lucretius speaks in Bk. V, 920.

The whole poem exhibits for Bergson a preoccupation with this same idea, 'celle de la fixité des lois de la nature' (*Extraits*, p. VIII). Nothing explains the suffusion of melancholic insight more than brooding on such a double reality, and nothing requires more *pitié* – genuine compassion – than the realisation that humanity is just a plaything of forces: it comes into existence through the accident of a poor combination of atoms that fatal laws join for a time and one day disperse. Rather than the idea of birth and dying, there is the actual fact of appearing and disappearing again, from and into the material of atoms. This passage is not epiphenomenal, since Bergson does not posit any doctrine of two worlds, but rather posits a double which is in unity, the unity of what is held, retained, maintained, as physically existent. The flux and the fixity are both held together in the tension of a mobile image which is in constant motion. This can be seen as a dynamic monism, in that the holding together is the co-equivalence, or the active mutual interpretation and exchange that is taken as the reflexive and recursive power, or the dynamism of the existent.

We are deluded if we think that matter is made for us, and from Lucretius's advice to labourers in Bk. II, 1142, one sees that the consolation is simply to know that we are subject to fatal laws and that the world is on the way to ruin. Hence there is really no particular praise or blame in an act of suicide. These are the truths that Lucretius will bring to the Romans, whose eminent practical nature was taken up with establishing long solutions to satisfy conservative aims through aggressive means. Jerome's anecdote recounting that Lucretius was a member of the equestrian order rings true and may explain the

subtle linguistic echoes of Ennius and occasional archaic preferences in the choice of vocabulary in the poem. In his own life as a poet and philosopher, Lucretius enacts the tensions held as one, even if they are mutually seen as opposites, contradictory, or polar. He makes no claim to be a sage, and thus his struggles and moods are presented equally with his intense observation and analysis of previous thinkers whom he admires.

Bergson then points out that Lucretius could not have advanced such thinking without his fidelity to the thoughts of Epicurus, and yet at the same time he displays originality. This is one of the enigmas of discipleship. The originality of Lucretius comes from his fidelity to Epicurus and Democritus. Bergson then posits his teaching as faithful to the real sources of Epicurus, namely the atomists, and that atomism was one of the most profound systems of philosophy in antiquity, founded by Leucippus and his disciple Democritus. Virgil's fidelity to Homer is similar in its eventuating in an original achievement.

Broadening this perspective, we still have the poet and his concerns. Bergson invites his students to consider this claim by remarking on some methodological features of the system, as found in Democritus, namely its overwhelming simplicity, and how this is the true characteristic of the best explanation: the reduction of complexity to simple elements, and, in this case, the elements which form material objects are atoms. Bergson reads the question of the doctrine of the atomists largely via Democritus, which he sees as its most perfect expression, and which he identifies as 'l'expression la plus parfaite peut-être du matérialisme'.

> Atoms are indivisible, infinite in number and eternal, they have no other quality but form, and this is how they differ. Since atoms are eternal and do not change, it is form that differs. Atoms are endowed with movement and even the soul is composed of atoms, which are very round, mobile and polished. Indeed, one's

> thoughts are moving atoms, and this is a remarkable event of speed. There never has been, and there never will be anything but atoms, the void, and movement (*Extraits*, p. XIII).[9]

The second source of thinking with which Lucretius engages is that of Epicurus. Bergson is again pithy in his characterisation of the aims of the philosophy of Epicurus, namely that it seeks to secure happiness by the shortest route. The aim is how to secure inner peace and inalterable security in the present. What impedes such a goal is twofold: the fear of Gods and the fear of death. What counters this double superstition and fundamental source of religion, which poisons life and profoundly corrupts us, is the claim that the gods are not bothered with us – which does not, of course, necessarily say they do not exist – and that death is not the end. Epicurus has the role of one who brings enlightenment, and he does this with the doctrine of atomism. By showing, as Democritus had, that there are only atoms in the world, and by showing the natural chain of causes, superstition is overcome and the fear of death also vanishes.[10]

Bergson, then, rather than dealing with the complex series of arguments advanced by Aristotle against movement in the void, or how it can be explained that atoms have directionality etcetera, points only to the important direct contention of Epicurus, suggesting that Epicurus gave weight to atoms, which therefore fell from above to below. Bergson may be drawing directly on the work of Zeller in his *History of Greek Philosophy*, which his teacher Boutroux had introduced to students at the École Normale Supérieure. Zeller maintained that Democritus has also argued for the weight of atoms, which goes against Aristotle at *Metaphysics*, I. 4, and the reports of Plutarch in Stobaeus, but Zeller further adds that if Democritus did ascribe weight, he didn't think of it as the cause of movement.

The Epicureans contend that one can show the

movement of atoms in a void, and respond to the question of how, if they fall at the same speed, they can meet. This is done by introducing the notion of *kinesis kata pareklision,* and what is called the *clinamen,* which is the fundamental character of deviation and cannot be predicted. It is, as Bergson says, 'un caprice d'atome'. The *clinamen* is a capricious and contingent collision (*Extraits*, p.XVI).

It is thus that one explains the formation of worlds and one can speak of cosmogenesis, which moves from upper to lower and lower to upper simultaneously, giving rise to turbulence, or more correctly, rotation. Such a scheme posited infinite worlds different from each other, and new worlds that are always being created: there is no need for an intelligent cause for our world; everything is explained by the laws of matter. All possible combinations arise from an infinity of atomic movement; we see what we take to be best for survival and then designate it as admirable order.

In Bergson's annotations to the lines of Bk. I and II of Lucretius, one can follow in specific and very precise detail how he makes the differential reading between Lucretius, Epicurus and Democritus possible. It is also in Bergson's comments on these selected sections that one is presented with what he takes to be the essential philosophy of Lucretius, and how he maintains his principle of interpreting the philosopher from his own words and not via the remarks of later thinkers, although this becomes an impossible task since even the surviving manuscripts of the 'copyists' are part of the received history and not free of interpretative consequences. Such a commitment does not preclude Bergson from adding corrections and critical points to the material on which he is commenting. There is no neutral commentator: that is a fiction of exegetical fanaticism. For example, Bergson corrects Lucretius in line 66 of the first book by noting that Epicurus was not the *primum homo* against the gods, and mentions the banning from Athens of Protagoras for

his view on religion. He refers to the conquest of Epicurus, who returns with the knowledge of what can come into being and what cannot, or, in sum, how each thing has its powers defined and its deep-set boundary marked:

> Thus his force
> His vital force of mind…
> With wit and wisdom came back to us
> Bringing news of what can be
> And what cannot, limits and boundaries,
> The borderline, the benchmark, set forever.

For Bergson, this indicates that a determinate cause can only produce a determinate effect. That is the principle of every version of materialism.

Bergson also keeps repeating and underlining the attack by Lucretius on religion that includes superstition,[11] where again, false beliefs about the origin of the soul and its destiny are seen as the main sources. He draws freely on contemporary scholarship to advance his view, thus the sources of Lucretius are listed in Siemerin's *Quaestionum Lucretianarum* (Koeningsberg, 1867). He draws attention to Lucretius's complex vocabulary and inventive punning, referring to Schubert's *De Lucretiana verborum formatione* (Halle, 1805). In his reading of line 150, Bergson focuses on what he takes to be the general principle of the system – that nothing comes from nothing, that nothing is annihilated – 'nullam rem e nilo gigni divinitus umquam', which may be rendered as: 'no thing is ever produced through divine power from nothing'. He sees this as a translation of the phrase attributed to Epicurus: 'ouden gignetai ex tou me ontos pan ek pantos', where he is probably drawing on Diogenes Laertius at Bk. X, 38.

De Rerum Natura is pre-eminently a poem on physics. Physics is naturalism because nature is all that there is, and this distinction between science and the whole of things resonates most clearly in

Greek. *Phusis*, from which physics is derived, like the word *natura* in Latin, is related to what is coming into existence, birthing – *natura* from *nascor*, and *phusis* meaning 'what grows'. Lucretius emphasises that his study is of the 'things' of nature. The desire of the poet, who is also writing a kind of tragic version of his own teacher's doctrine, is to write on everything that is: 'omne quod est' (Bk. I, 958). Lucretius had set out his programme, to write on the scheme of things and to set out an account of the powers above and the origin of things: 'the seeds from which nature creates all things', how they increase and multiply, and how they are resolved into their elements after they have run their course. These 'things' are called matter, the life-motes, or the seeds of things; or, since a name is needed for them, they could be called 'firstlings', since everything follows from these beginnings:

> Nam tibi de summa caeli ratione deumque
> disserere incipiam et rerum primordia pandam
> unde omnis natura creet res auctet alatque
> quove eadem rursum natura perempta resolvat,
> quae nos materiem et genitalia corpora rebus
> reddunda in ratione vocare et semina rerum
> appellare suĕmus et haec eadem usurpare
> corpora prima, quod ex illis sunt omnia primis.
> (Bk. I, 55-61)

In Rolfe Humphries' version:

> … I shall begin
> With a discussion of the scheme of things
> As it regards the heaven and powers above,
> Then I shall state the origin of things,
> The seeds from which nature creates all things,
> Bids them increase and multiply; in turn,
> How she resolves them to their elements
> After their course is run. These things we call
> Matter, the life-motes, or seeds of things,
> (If we must find, in schools, a name for them),
> Firstlings, we well might say, since every thing
> Follows from these beginnings.

The principle of principles, if one can so put it, is clearly that nothing can come from nothing. The implication of this principle is that nothing can begin. In an absolute sense, something always derives from something else. The task of the first two books is to talk about the 'everything', and that everything is nature, *to pan or summarum summa*. By talking about the nature of things one is only talking about nature, as there is nothing other than particular material existents and what happens to them, things and events 'are' nature. The poem's overriding aim is to establish that there is nothing but nature; there is no transcendental or supernatural realm. The *naturae species ratioque* can also be rendered as the 'sufficient reason of things' as Leibniz does, but it refers to the rational unity of the whole as that which exists literally in a bulk or tenuous physical sense.

The notion of materialism – which is not a term from antiquity but from the seventeenth century – thus returns to pre-Socratic philosophy, in that it cannot entrain the notion of an intelligible realm of ideas or forms that is 'no-where'. This refuses the irrational for nature, it refuses the supernatural, and it refuses a transcendental realm. There is only nature, and this nature is not itself a thing; it is aleatory, and infinite of all things and all events.

There are further consequences that derive from the principle of nothing coming from nothing, which distinguishes the 'corporalism' of the Stoics from a radical version of atomism, and thus a materialism in which thought and extension are not separated, where thoughts and movement and speed of thinking are atomistic in the way of all other existent beings. What is radical is that one must not only abandon the lures of transcendence and the supernatural, of gods and of religion, but also the notion that nature is some kind of living being; in other words, the lures of vitalism, finalism or pantheism. Life, according to Lucretius and his interpretation of

Epicurus, is an 'accident' of inanimate nature.

Lucretius establishes that nothing can arise from nothing, but that everything comes from a particular something, and for a reason, and out of specific material elements. The very evidence of growth, the coming into being, the birthing of things, disproves the possibility of the contrary being true, and again throughout lines 151-158 and 188-198 of Bk. I, Lucretius makes use of paradox and logical refutation to establish his leading principle. The various invocations to Venus and Voluptas set against Mars and strife do not mask the fact that they are also joined according to mythic tales. Lucretius stresses the idea of generative and dynamic becoming – that from which things start – as an event, due to its temporal character. Only the atoms and the void retain an immutable character, and from the inanimate come the whole seed, breed and generation of things and human history. Atoms and the void are eternal, and this differs from our notion of physics. It is here that Bergson finds the most sensitive point with regard to his own release from Herbert Spenser's impact on his thinking at the École Normale Supérieure: how to hold within the concept of an eternal void and the eternity of atoms, a non-mechanistic explanation of what is patently visible regarding change and movement. Lucretius sets it out tersely:

> ergo si solida ac sine inani corpora prima
> sunt ita uti docui, sint haec aeterna necessest
> (Bk I, 537-39)

> (If, as I have taught, the first bodies
> are solid and without void, they must be everlasting)

Part of the greatest difficulty is distinguishing how Lucretius differs and separates himself from Stoical notions of the corporeal, and, ultimately, from the divinity attributed by the Stoics to the cosmos and stars.

For Bergson, it is only by grasping what the primordial things are that one can comprehend that it is because they are atoms that sound and heat result from their simple vibrations, which can ultimately be taken as a universal vibration, like the tremor on a spider's web, where everything is dynamically interconnected and in communication. Bergson disposes of any difficulties with regard to indivisible, tasteless, odourless atoms (a kind of negative physics where one can only say what atoms are not) by indicating that it is the cause of the sensation that is material, not the sensation itself. Causality is material.

In considering the problem of the void and the weight of atoms, Bergson shows that in Lucretius, the real distinction is on what can be touched or what cannot be touched. In the final analysis, then, a body is the simple property of atoms or groups of atoms. Thus for Lucretius all reality is material. There are bodies and there is void. This gives to Lucretius a double, per se existent ontology.

We may ask with what and how we can characterise Bergson's emphasis and interpretations with regard to Lucretius and atomism, and also the problems it created for his own research in the following years as he worked on a minor and major thesis for his doctorate at the Sorbonne.[12]

I offer the following as a somewhat truncated and elliptical conclusion, given that almost all the detailed discussion of Bergson's work on ancient philosophy at this time, especially his work on Leibniz, needs to be fully reconsidered in the light of newly available material published since 2010. The point can be made that Bergson sees in the work on Lucretius an achievement within ancient philosophy that allows a double without dualism, and a resolution to what had been taken as the cleavage between, for example, a philosophy of becoming and a philosophy of being, which is characterised as a fundamental divide.

Indeed, the expression of a radical materialism is to say that there are innumerable bodies in an infinite void and nothing else. Values and thinking exist as secondary activities caused by us, and these values and thoughts are determined not by the body, but by the situation of physics itself; the situation of *natura* is that it does not think or have value. Value and consciousness are created because we 'live', which acknowledges our emergence from the structure of what is inanimate and based on complexity and hazard.

There is no reduction to the elements since they are not alive. The matter/void double retains its identity even in emergence, because it is clear that atoms have no secondary qualities, they are without smell, taste, noise, temperature, and they are without sensitive life or spirit; they have only a form, a mass, a force which moves them and a movement. They are infinite. The universe is thus infinite. Being infinite, atoms have neither a centre nor a limit, which is the source of 'freedom' for nature. Atoms are without any subject or end that could govern them, and the freedom of nature is that it is, to conclude, *summarum summa*. If gods exist they form part of this 'all', but they cannot govern its destiny.

But nature cannot create, as we think to do with our human inventions. In Bk. II, 292-293, the consequences of the situation of the atom/void disjunction remains free because it has neither end nor subject, and what prevents the mind from being necessary within it, even as a secondary emergence from the infinite of atoms and void, is that the mind is not mastered or forced to endure because of the 'minute swerving of the first beginnings at no fixed place and at no fixed time'.

   id facit exiguum clinamen principiorum
   nec regione loci certa nec tempore certo.

This is a unique usage of *clinamen* in Latin, and it inevitably echoes the subversion which Democritus makes of the Parmenidean One, since here, it is not that 'being' can be said in many ways, but rather it multiplies, or, more accurately, it is multiple – even infinitely multiple. Monism and pluralism are one and the same. As Comte-Sponville remarks: 'Tel est le coup de force, ou le coup de génie, de l'atomisme.'[13]

What Bk. II broaches is the dynamic and cinematic movement of atoms, which is perpetual and sempiternal, without beginning or end. The succinct argument can be found at lines 83-102 of that section. The truth of being is movement not rest, and the analogy of the dust-motes, which can also be found in Democritus and Aristotle, helps one picture the situation (lines 114-122). To closely paraphrase: 'where one is said to see dancing motes or dust beams, as the sun streams into shuttered rooms, yes, like a little army in manoeuvre, with squadrons charging, retreating, joining, parting'. From this one can infer that on a nanoscale, there is similar turbulence and/or whirling. And there is more to say: these dust particles tell us that there is motion in what seems solid and durable, and this restlessness, which one sees in their coming and going every which way, indicates the inner atomic restlessness, at first moved by its own inner impulses. Motion comes from first beginnings and grows until we can see the process just as we see dancing motes in sunlight.

However, we cannot see the 'urge' that pushes this, nor really appreciate the speed. Again, only analogy can help, and analogy already presupposes too much understanding. There is no first mover, the weight and shocks of atoms themselves constitute dynamic and movement; 'above' and 'below' are not in relation to a place, but a direction, and the explanation given is the *clinamen*. The whole of the difficult section of Bk. II can be cited from lines 217-93, and the complexity of the arguments requires, and happily has, a meticulous

commentary by Don Fowler, cited above at note 8.

What is one to make of the deviation, the *parenklisis*? Does it introduce chance and chaos as the source of the multiple or is the multiple directed, as if by a kind of spiritual 'free will', through such a deviation? One can, it seems, view the *clinamen* as the power of the event, which the eternity of atoms could not produce themselves. In one sense, the swerve is anti-fatalist; it is that which creates the possibility of the event arriving, something new that comes into time as a present. It arrives; it is where the eternal present of nature makes time as event.

The notion that a causality must take place somewhere, in a linear way, is not required by the theory of the void and matter. In a logical sense, it is the *clinamen* that gives the eruption of the new as time and place. We can speak of a discontinuous causality, because the swerve allows the event of time. This is the primacy of the actual over the virtual, since it is the event which makes time. The *clinamen* is an atemporal condition of time, and it allows beginning without itself having a starting point. Because of its relation to the indetermination of the atoms/void, it breaks the chain of succession, and necessity must then act in time, which breaks its absolute power of determination. This is how necessity becomes simultaneously multiplied and partialised by the constraint of the infinite accordance with the order of time. The *clinamen* is a permanent power of the accidental, which ruptures necessity as it temporalises the eternal present of matter/void as the event. By its own perpetual creation of the new, instant by instant, nature is *natura creatrix*, and this takes place *ipsa sua per se sponte*; that is to say, spontaneously and from itself. There are no gods, no constraints, no impositions. Nature is 'free'.[14]

One concluding remark is in order, namely to point out how close Bergson's concerns in this work are to some reflections of English and Anglo-Irish scientists, a matter which has only recently been discussed in Professor Daniel Brown's 2013 Cambridge publication, *The Poetry of Victorian Scientists*, where again one sees a reading of Lucretius that moves in the same direction as that adduced by Bergson. Moreover, Brown argues that in the work of the scientist Maxwell, and in Deleuze's reflections, there is a response to Lucretius that recognises a dynamic pluralism in thought and nature which does not surrender them to entropic randomness and meaningless empty nonsense.

Notes

1. Henri Bergson, *Extraits de Lucrèce* (Paris: Delagrave, 1884).
2. For the English citations of Lucretius I have for the most part used the translations of W.H.D. Rouse in: Lucretius, *De Rerum Natura* (London: Heinemann, 1953).
3. <http://archive.org/details/extraitsdelucr00lucr> [accessed 07 April 2014]. For biographical information on this period of Bergson's life in France, see Philippe Soulez and Frédéric Worms, *Bergson* (Paris: PUF, 2002), cf. pp. 49-50 for comments on the *Extraits*.
4. *Écrits philosophiques* (Paris: PUF, 2011). Here, general principles of the edition are discussed at pp. 11-15.
5. *The Cambridge Companion to Lucretius*, ed. by Stuart Gillespie (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).
6. The substantial *Rezeptionsgeschichte* on Bergson in the Cambridge Companion traces philosophical responses up to the current period, but ignores *de facto* the important and persistent French work in the publications of Deleuze, Foucault, Serres, Bruno Latour and, most recently, Badiou. For this, one should turn to Jonathan Goldberg, *The Seed of Things* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2009). Goldberg's main interest is the reading of Lucretius in Foucault and Deleuze. He has taken little account of the work of Marcel Conche and André Comte-Sponville, and the note on Bergson is cursory; however, it is still a

very rich source for understanding modern French philosophical engagement with Lucretius and an indispensable addition to the Cambridge Companion to Lucretius published in the same year.

7. André Comte-Sponville, *Le Miel et l'Absinthe* (Paris: Hermann Éditeurs, 2008), contains valuable meditations, which can be seen as a response to Bergson's reading and which also emphasise both the aspect of 'tragic' knowledge in Lucretius and the closeness to Pascal, Schopenhauer and existential philosophy.

8. For the Augustan situation with regard to shrines and religious cults, see Jennifer A. Rea, *Legendary Rome* (London: Bristol Classical Press, 2007), pp. 65-85; Philipe Hardie, *Lucretian Receptions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009). See also the comments in the massive, exegetical work of Don Fowler, *Lucretius on Atomic Motion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), and the note on line 44 Bk. II, pp. 123-24, which deals with *religi*o, *religiones*.

9. This is the system of Democritus as presented in the extracts, shorn of any argumentative refinements. Bergson delivers to his students concise and direct statements without much exemplification. For his more detailed accounts from this period one has to have recourse to the lectures he gave on Greek philosophy, and indeed his entire course on pre-Socratic philosophy, which have re-surfaced from student notes and been published only fully in recent years. For this, see the bibliography in Écrits philosophiques, *ut. supra*, pp.1027-ff.

10. See Bk. III, 830-869; Bk. V, pp. 1169-1197.

11. See Bk. I, p. 112.

12. Professor Deborah Hauptmann and I have prepared a translation, complete with a full introduction, of the minor thesis *Quid Aristoteles de loco senserit*, in which Bergson's later development is charted. It is hoped that this will see publication in the not too distant future.

13. Comte-Sponville, *op cit.*, p.154.

14. For Althusser, this is the *matérialisme de l'aléatoire*. See Louis Althusser, *Sur la philosophie* (Paris: Gallimard, 1994), p.344.

Biography

After completion of studies in Philosophy and later Sociology and Near Eastern Languages, Pontifical University Maynooth, University College Dublin, Patrick Healy has been engaged in writing, research and teaching, mainly in the area of aesthetics and contemporary art. His recent publications include works on aesthetics, the philosophy of science and artists biographies, including a broad range of other activities associated with his work as Professor of Interdisciplinary research for the Free International University, Amsterdam, appointed 1997. He works as a Senior Researcher and tutor in the Architecture Theory Section, and provides lecture series in aesthetics and the Philosophy of Science.

How to Think Constructivism?
Ruskin, Spuybroek and Deleuze on Gothic Architecture
Piotrek Swiatkowski

The abstract if not lifeless characteristics of classicist and modern architecture have been frequently noted and criticised by various romantic philosophers and theoreticians of architecture. According to Lars Spuybroek, Rotterdam-based architect and theoretician, those styles have, in fact, greatly contributed to the destruction of our relationship with the things surrounding us.[1] We live among boring inorganic spaces, in empty boxes, buildings with scarce ornamentation and plastic cladding used to superficially veil the bare, industrially produced construction. He sees humanity reduced to a naked and uncreative production force. Humans have become an industrial by-product. Spuybroek's ambitious aim is to search for an alternative to this lifeless world. We have to start to live differently and restore a once-existent relationship with matter. Architects and designers must reconstruct their procedures from scratch. Abstract ideas about beauty and general semiotic rules must be abandoned. What we call asignifying semiotics must come into being.[2]

The theoretical inspirations for this new procedure are found in the works of William James and Henri Bergson, but especially in John Ruskin's analysis of Gothic architecture.[3] In the work of this nineteenth-century English social activist and aesthetician, Spuybroek discovers a vitalist Gothic ontology which could replace modernist and classicist frameworks in thinking about architecture. One of the key elements of Gothic constructivism can be found in a particular relation between ornamentation and structure. Gothic ornamentation does not

merely serve as a veil to cover a monotonous and geometrically sound structure: it is the true living force of any Gothic building. It generates structures.

The analysis of Ruskin's account of the Gothic leads Spuybroek to a critique of the philosophy of Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari. These French philosophers are portrayed as philosophers of the sublime, conceptually unable to consider the construction of vitalist beauty and the stepwise emergence of structures out of ornamentation. Deleuze's resistance to structuralism and signifying semiotics is too excessive and leads his philosophy to an affirmation of chaos. As such, it becomes useless for the conceptualisation of vitalist constructivism. In my paper, I will demonstrate that Spuybroek partially misrepresents the thoughts of Deleuze and Guattari. I will also show that his use of Ruskin in fact lacks concepts necessary for a full comprehension of the Gothic. For Deleuze and Guattari, the stepwise process of construction and working with matter can only be a starting point for vitalist constructivism. Construction requires as its focal point a phantasm developed on the surface of sense. It always implies a certain kind of spiritual becoming. This analysis leads to certain consequences for understanding contemporary architecture. Unlike Spuybroek, Deleuze is not unconditionally forced to dismiss different kinds of architecture. For him, modernism and baroque can equally engage in the construction of phantasms or of various spiritual becomings. The search for a digital Gothic – a new and much-needed vitalist design practice – does not have to

lead to a general dismissal of the various styles of contemporary architecture. To develop my argument I will first discuss some of the characteristics of the Gothic process of construction as described by Ruskin. Secondly, I will consider Spuybroek's critique of Deleuze. In the final part, I will indicate which concepts developed by Deleuze are lacking in Spuybroek's analysis of the Gothic ontology.

The Nature of Gothic

The Rotterdam-based architect Lars Spuybroek is known for his attempts to develop radical and vitalist architecture.[4] He has constructed moving, dynamic buildings and installations that respond to their surroundings; they are animalistic, express an inner force, and at the same time fully engage with contemporary technology. The project he submitted to the competition for the reconstruction of the World Trade Center site furnishes an example. Spuybroek presented an animalistic, amorphous and lively creature that could have dominated New York unlike any other modern or postmodern construction. The design expresses a vitalist force absent from the old modernist buildings and from what is left of the deconstructivist design of Libeskind. Spuybroek's work cannot be portrayed as postmodern. To him, the creativity and playfulness of deconstructivist or postmodern architecture constitute merely an empty and boring game of signifiers. In this respect he fully agrees with Felix Guattari's critique of this postmodern style of architecture.[5] Postmodernism does not offer the promised explosion of new creativity. Spectacular buildings by architects such as Gehry, buildings without symmetry, or which introduce bizarre forms or surprising elements, do not yet construct a new vitalist space. Postmodern architecture develops yet another mould, yet another signifying semiotics, repetitively applied to each construction. Just like modernism, postmodernism also generates empty boxes, now veiled by colourful cladding. According to Spuybroek, design practice has not been sufficiently amended by contemporary attempts to develop architectural

craftsmanship. The use of handmade sketches, which characterise the design process of architects such as Renzo Piano, merely leads to an illusion of a proper engagement with matter. For Spuybroek, both Gehry and Piano offer a quasi-variation; they are unable to engage the physicality of building material in a proper manner.[6]

What kinds of concepts and procedures can provide an escape from the deadlock of classical, modernist and postmodernist architecture? Spuybroek finds these in the work of John Ruskin, particularly in his extensive analysis of the Gothic. Ruskin's analysis differs from the casual representation of the Gothic developed in the Renaissance, or by contemporary theoreticians of art and architecture such as Ernst Gombrich. For Ruskin, Gothic architecture was not the first step on the road from the dark and primitive Middle Ages towards the glory of the Renaissance. Gothic is not a rather primitive, early discovery of Ancient Greek architecture and art, with its admiration of the natural beauty of humanity and of nature.[7] Ruskin does not portray the Gothic cathedrals as revealing divine perfection, or as impressive vessels that spread ascetic Christian values to the people. Unlike his Marxist contemporaries, Ruskin is little interested in the processes of exploitation proper to the feudal mode of production that enabled the building of those enormous structures. Gothic cathedrals are not presented as part of a superstructure, and neither did they only serve to legitimate the position of aristocracy and clergy in medieval society. For Ruskin, the construction of Gothic cathedrals presents an alternative to the industrial process of production. His analysis of the Gothic allows him to offer a vision of a different society. In the words of William Morris: 'John Ruskin the teacher of morals and politics, has done serious and solid work towards that new birth of Society, without which genuine art, the expression of man's pleasure in his handiwork, must inevitably cease altogether, and with it the hopes of the happiness of mankind.'[8]

What are these characteristics of the Gothic to which Ruskin pays attention? He is not primarily interested in the visible characteristics of this style: its pointed arches, the vaulted roofs, the flying buttresses or grotesque sculptures.[9] Rather, he is interested in the Gothic mindset and provides us with its several characteristics. I will schematically mention some of these below.

The first apparent characteristic of the Gothic is its savageness. Gothic cathedrals have not been constructed by civilised inhabitants of Southern Europe but by the inhabitants of Northern Europe, the 'savage' Northerners,[10] who face different living conditions from those experienced by the builders of classic architecture. The members of the guilds responsible for processing stone frequently travelled from one construction site to the other, processing the stone in cold climates. They continually encountered snow, mud and rain, harsh conditions rarely occurring in sunny Greece or Rome. They frequently made mistakes. Sometimes the craftsmen corrected them, but more frequently they just let them be. Such mistakes, in fact, did not have a negative impact on the beauty of the constructions. To Ruskin, these mistakes are even a central aspect of the beauty of the cathedrals. The Gothic builders did not have to accomplish a materialisation of abstract and universal mathematical or organic beauty. They were also honest about their own limitations, about their human incapacity to produce abstract and perfectly executed finished elements. For Ruskin, organic beauty can only emerge as an end result of an honest process that is full of mistakes. It is not established in advance.[11]

The second distinguishing characteristic of the Gothic identified by Ruskin – the one Spuybroek most emphasises – is the flexibility or variety allowed for during the construction process.[12] Variety is the starting point for construction. It reappears at all its stages. Ruskin notices, for example, that subsequent cathedral architects lacked any kind of regard

for the style of their predecessors and almost always added their own elements to the emerging structures. Hence the second towers of many cathedrals were very frequently raised in completely different styles.[13] Gothic employs variation, too, because it allows for a continual combination of variable and flexible sub-elements. This is evident in the case of ornamentation, when an initial arbitrary choice of the length of one decorative element necessitates subsequent choices. Spuybroek explains the point made by Ruskin in the following way:

> Crucial in the concept of changefulness is that the variation of the individual figure is linked to the possible configurations that can be formed of multiple figures. In short, the line is active and shows *behaviour*. It can stretch and contract, not merely changing in scale but altering while still remaining itself; in short, it can be modulated. It can be a J-figure with a long or short shaft, including a wide or narrow arch, making up one half of an ogive; or a C-figure with various sizes of opening, which together form the familiar cusps of the trefoil; or an S-figure, which we know in the arch of the ogee – a curve that can be flattened but can also appear as a deep wave, such as we encounter in many traceries.[14]

Similar behaviour was also characteristic in the construction of the whole building. A limited number of elements were freely combined in a variety of manners. The final design of the cathedral did not exist in advance and emerged during the long process of construction. The random choice of one of the elements could have far-reaching consequences for the way the rest of the building was built.

The third characteristic of the Gothic style is its naturalism. The medieval craftsmen were fascinated by nature. They express an intense affection for living foliage, as Ruskin states. Gothic craftsmen were nevertheless not imitating nature. They did not want to provide its perfect image but drew abstract

and noble lines that imitated the objects only second-arily. They attempted to express the vitality of the living matter with all its strengths and weaknesses.[15] The immense number of details and sub-elements expresses the fullness and wealth of the material universe. Gothic buildings are an expression of sheer force. As Ruskin states: 'Egyptian and Greek buildings stand, for the most part, by their own weight and mass, one stone passively incumbent on another; but in the Gothic vaults & traceries there is a stiffness analogous to that of the bones of a limb, or fibres of a tree; an elastic tension and communi-cation of force from part to part, & also a studious expression of this throughout every visible line of the building.'[16] Additional material is not added on top of a pre-established structure, as is the case with baroque. The true elements of construction are not the abstract geometrical entities but rather the organic forces of matter. These forces are not wild and forever escaping structure: a Gothic archi-tect worked with forces from the very beginning, he allowed for their expression. For Spuybroek, this is visible in the case of a column. Rather than the manufacture of a preselected model, a column is first of all an expression of a vital force. The Gothic builders used a mould to produce a column, but its use was of secondary importance. As Spuybroek says: 'When a twelfth-century architect designs a column, he will take on the morphology of a column and nothing else, but therein lies his freedom, because he takes the column for granted, since it will not materialise as such anyway; he is merely interested in an expression of the building.'[17]

The overabundance of matter visible in the Gothic cathedral does not mean that the construction sinks into chaos. There is active rigidity in place.[18] Various levels of organisation emerge during the subsequent steps of construction. The forces eventually solidify into a given structure. Nevertheless, the procedure characterising Gothic architecture always involves risks. It frequently leads to grotesque results. Some cathedrals are 'over the top'. The walls are covered

with too many figures. Patterns of ornamentation frequently become too complicated. Many buildings, as for example the famous cathedral of Chartres, become asymmetric. Geometrical perfection is, in fact, reached only occasionally. For Ruskin, this grotesque aspect is nevertheless fundamental. It shows the true freedom of the Gothic. Nor is the overabundance of ornamentation the expression of a base will to accumulate and display wealth. For Ruskin, something entirely different is at stake here. As he states: 'There are, however, far nobler inter-ests mingling, in the Gothic heart, with the rude love of decorative accumulation: a magnificent enthu-siasm which feels as if it never could do enough to reach the fullness of its ideal; an unselfishness of sacrifice, which would rather cast fruitless labour before the altar than stand idle in the market; and finally, a profound sympathy with the fullness & wealth of the material universe.'[19]

In his analysis of Ruskin, Spuybroek seems to be most interested in the Gothic as a process of the gradual emergence of subsequent elements of a structure rather than in its spiritual mindset. He defines Gothic ontology as follows:

> That is *Gothic ontology:* there is plenty of accident, yes, but accident leading to substance, and there are huge amounts of flexibility, but flexibility leading to rigidity. Things do not miraculously meet in a single moment either through magical emergence or magical intervention; rather, they settle step by step, in a process that takes on more direction the more it progresses, trading the initial vagueness for increased determination.[20]

This reading is justified by Spuybroek's own quest for a new architectural practice. Gothic ontology is presented as a guideline for contemporary design that hardly needs craftsmanship. It must allow for variety and profoundly accept change and mistakes. Spuybroek is aware that in the age of computers and large-scale constructions, the use of bare

hands in working with materials is hardly possible. Contemporary machinery, abundant in every kind of design process, cannot be eliminated. The skilfulness of an artisan must therefore be combined with digital technology. Machines can allow for accidents, variation and flexibility due to their operational use of generative codes. In this way, design can take into account the emergence of various scenarios. Especially in the initial stages of design it can play with chance.[21] Only given such conditions will vitalist design cease to imitate nature by means of predetermined animalistic forms as seen in the work of Niemeyer or Calatrava. It must work with imperfections but never as a predetermined idea. Savageness and vitality can only emerge as a consequence of the rightly set process. Organic beauty can only appear at the end of construction.

Spuybroek and Deleuze.

Engagement with the work of Ruskin, but also with that of Bergson, leads Spuybroek to a critique of the philosophy of Gilles Deleuze. He considers Deleuze to be a typical postmodern philosopher, conceptually unable to satisfactorily understand the procedures proper to the Gothic. Deleuze is mainly interested in the sublime. Instead of conceptualising the progressive emergence of solidified structures out of overabundant matter, Deleuze continually stresses the importance of continuous change. His concepts do not allow him to understand the emergence of beauty out of organic elements. For Deleuze each construction must always be undermined by continuous deterritorialisations.[22] For Spuybroek, the emphasis placed on the non-organic processes of deterritorialisation leads to a misunderstanding of the process of order emerging out of chaos. Deleuze is conceptually unable to understand that ornamentation can produce a structure. This point is visible in his interest in baroque. For Spuybroek the details and ornamentation of this style, which despite being violent and fluid, are merely a veil that distorts and covers up the structure instead of producing it.[23] Ornamentation fulfils the same

role as the figures in baroque paintings, which, no matter how expressive, are executing a well-defined role within a pre-established religious narrative. The damned descend and suffer. The blessed ascend and are overwhelmed by the possibilities revealed by the proximity of God. Their character does not shatter the pre-established vertical hierarchy. To use a Marxist vocabulary (not employed by Spuybroek) in the analysis by Deleuze, ornamentation fulfils merely the role of a fetish or false consciousness. It never challenges the signifying structure in a sufficient manner. Deleuze adds what Slavoj Žižek would call a 'Coca-Cola light' option to the existing structure. The vertical hierarchy remains unchallenged. Nothing new is envisaged. For Spuybroek, deconstructive architecture functions in a manner that is similar to baroque. It does not pose any challenge to the lifeless architecture of the empty box. It merely offers a superficial veil and does not reverse the modern separation of space from life. Deleuze's focus on the necessity of movement does not allow him to think of the emergence of organisation. Movement as conceptualised by Deleuze must exhaust itself, 'like a primordial soup never coming to life'.[24] The Gothic is far more intelligent, he states. It uses movement not to break away from form or structure, but to create it.

Spuybroek's understanding of the structural role of the processes of deterritorialisation in the thought of Deleuze and Guattari must nevertheless be critically examined. For both philosophers, deterritorialisation, when exercised correctly, is not obliged to become a movement of destruction. It cannot be reduced to an unproductive escapism. To be able to respond to Spuybroek – but also to other critiques of the work of Deleuze and Guattari by Badiou, Hallward or Žižek[25] – we have to understand Deleuze's specific ideas about the process of the construction of sense, or his version of asignifying semiotics. In that way we will see that a concept such as deterritorialisation is necessary for a proper understanding of constructivism.

For Deleuze, the process of construction does not consist in engagement with matter alone. Various levels of organisation – in this case, the successive stages of constructing a cathedral – do not solely emerge out of interactions with matter alone, as Spuybroek suggests. The movement of construction is always guided by an orientation towards a third inorganic or spiritual instance. This instance must be placed at the level of what Deleuze calls the virtual, or the surface of sense. Deleuze thinks of the process of construction outside the framework of the philosophy of representation and the systems of signification it presupposes. This third instance must also be thought of in that way. It belongs to a dimension that is not rigidly organised. We should be precise about how to understand the workings of this dimension. The distinction between the two dimensions is discussed, for example, in his analysis of the emergence of sense in *The Logic of Sense*. In this book, Deleuze clearly distinguishes between the depth of the physical bodies and the surface of sense, frequently called the spiritual or metaphysical surface.[26] Depth has all the characteristics of the matter discussed by Spuybroek and, to a lesser degree, by Ruskin. Depth is itself full of change and variation. It is the realm of the superabundant bodies directly interacting with each other, without the mediation of external structures. In order to define the characteristics of the semiotic system proper to this depth, Deleuze uses the concept of simulacra, which allows him to challenge the primacy of the Platonic differentiation between copies and Ideas.[27] For Deleuze, Ideas are by no means primary with respect to the imperfect world of copies. Copies are not their inferior actualisation. Nevertheless, the challenge posed to the Platonic worldview is not posed by the reversal of the relationship between copies and Ideas but, instead, by emphasising the primacy of simulacra. The simulacra are not a bad copy of a perfect Idea. They simulate and allow for the emergence of new entities: they generate ideas. One such idea, discussed by Deleuze, is beauty, which can never be achieved in advance. It is a construction and is generated out of the direct interaction of bodies. Hence, a Greek sculpture of a God is not an inferior copy of an abstract Idea of a perfect body. For Deleuze, beauty emerges during the process of sculpting. It is a creation that emerges out of the interaction between the sculptor, the stone and the spectators. Beauty and the idea of perfection emerge within given circumstances. They are a solution, a manner in which the spectators can construct themselves as imperfect and ugly, as striving towards perfection.

Simulacra of the depth are nevertheless not the only focus point in Deleuze's analysis of construction in *The Logic of Sense*. Materialism is in need of an ontological dimension that separates it from the direct physical materiality of the actual.[28] This dimension transcends the directness of matter found in the depths. In *The Logic of Sense*, this dimension is called the surface of sense. It allows for the expression of matter and consists of a multiplicity of events, which can be related to one another in an infinite number of ways. Sense is produced on this surface and retroactively influences matter itself. When the simulacrum of beauty emerges in the depths, it can become expressed on the surface of sense. However, in that case, the simulacrum engages with a problematic field and becomes a phantasm. It contributes to the emerging sense and becomes a solution.[29] The phantasm is a synthesis of various events into one scenario. It allows a subject to act.[30] Beauty can hence become a solution to a problematic field. It can reach a distance with respect to the depths and express events on the surface of sense. As such, it can introduce a rupture in the material causal chain and surpass the laws of causality. As a phantasm, it becomes spiritual in nature while at the same time remaining entirely independent of the already existing system of signification.

Events can therefore be represented by phantasms that synthesise them into a unity. They can become quasi-causes.[31] In *The Logic of Sense*,

Deleuze mentions several examples of phantasms proper to the surface of sense. According to him, to understand the work of Lewis Carroll we have to surpass the direct materiality of his prose and poetry and uncover a deeper-lying phantasm that is guiding his work.[32] For Deleuze, Carroll's work is characterised by a certain kind of perversion, by his extreme fascination with the figure of a little girl who is still unable to properly function in the world of adults. In the terminology of Deleuze and Guattari, the phantasm of Carroll is characterised by a becoming-woman. Without the emergence of this phantasm Carroll's work would never reach the same state of perfection. The various stories would lack a binding element. They would lack a quasi-cause, a unifying spiritual principle that could be actualised in each of them. The bizarre activity of Captain Ahab in the book *Moby Dick* – his violent search for a white whale that leads to the complete destruction of his ship – is discussed by Deleuze and Guattari in *A Thousand Plateaus*, and can also be characterised as having been guided by a spiritual instance proper to the surface of sense. Ahab is not living within the depths of over-abundant matter. He is, for instance, not carefully constructing a certain unity by means of making little movements. Ahab is acting the way he does because from the very beginning he is driven by the phantasm of a white whale. He is fascinated by the relationship between the whale and the sea. This phantasm emerges out of a synthesis of various events and is full of different scenarios. It allows Ahab to relate to and break away from the physical world of an industrial whale hunt. This phantasm is not an expression of the destructive urges of a mad captain. His deterritorialisation is not a rejection of the industrial whale hunters' way of life. The phantasm is a particular construction that expresses the material problems of his existence and allows him to relate to them: it is the construction of a new spiritual territory. Ahab can now live by his own rules and keep the ones provided by the whale hunting industry at a distance. He can now guide his crew

in a manner that has not been foreseen before. For Deleuze and Guattari, a true construction process first of all needs such a virtual instance.

The analysis of Gothic architecture in *A Thousand Plateaus* adopts a similar structure. Deleuze and Guattari distinguish between the two previously mentioned ontological levels and search for a phantasm guiding the nomadic constructors of the Gothic cathedrals.[33] At first glance they seem to stress only their destructive tendencies. Indeed, they seem to be interested only in the idea of the sublime and the disruption of order. Nomads operate outside the procedures and ideology of what Deleuze and Guattari call 'state science'. They seem not to build according to the pre-established and abstract rules of a religious order attempting to establish the hegemony of ascetic spirituality. Nevertheless, for Deleuze and Guattari, a simple kind of opposition to state science, which also characterises a part of postmodern architecture, is not the guiding spiritual principle of these craftsmen. Basing their argument on the work of Worringer, Deleuze and Guattari emphasise the emergence of a particular phantasm proper to the Gothic. This architecture reaches a certain spiritual delirium. It is characterised by a particular will, visible when Gothic cathedrals are compared with Romanesque churches. Nomadic scientists construct buildings that must be as long and as tall as possible. However, the differences do not primarily concern the scale of such constructions. For Deleuze and Guattari, the Gothic conquers what they call a 'smooth space' and surpasses the rules and limitations imposed on the builders by the striated space, the predefined rules of construction. As they state, the difference between both styles is marked by a qualitative change:

> […] The static relation, form-matter, tends to fade into the background in favour of a dynamic relation, material-forces. It is the cutting of the stone that turns it into material capable of holding and coordinating forces of thrust, and of constructing ever higher and longer

vaults. The vault is no longer a form but the line of continuous variation of the stones. It is as if Gothic conquered a smooth space, while Romanesque remained partially within a striated space (in which the vault depends on the juxtaposition of parallel pillars).[34]

Gothic cathedrals express a will to break away from the limitations of the heavy load of stone. They are a challenge to the limitations of the physical experience. Worringer calls this will to break away from the earthly limitations, this will to reach the sky, the northern or the Gothic line.[35] The Gothic line is present at each step of the construction, whether it is the construction of small ornaments or a subsequent distribution of pillars in a church. Deleuze and Guattari follow Worringer, who notes that the Gothic line is not solely made possible by the advancement of technology. Contrary to modernism, Gothic arrived at its own expressive power not by means of the material and technology but in spite of it.[36] Gothic builders battled against the weight of the stone. This resistance was only possible because of the spiritual will to overcome materiality. It was guided by a phantasm proper to the surface of sense, one that is absent in modernism, where the struggle with the limitations of materials, the will to overcome limitations, is of lesser importance. For Worringer, the modern builders of skyscrapers lack an opponent. They do not have to win. They are trapped by the possibilities offered to them by current technology. To state this in our terminology, they do not seem to find a hidden phantasm that could guide their constructions, but only actualise the rules of the existing state science.

As with Ruskin and Worringer, Deleuze and Guattari do not consider the Gothic builders to be religious men who are exercising the will of state science. They are not interested in the construction of an ascetic religious space or in the glorification and legitimation of the institutional power of the church, but neither do they stand in radical opposition to this structure. The northern nomadic constructors and craftsmen, working in the cold and mud, engage with different forces from the ones they are asked to express by the church. We could say that the constructors are in the process of becoming animal. Their construction is made possible by a spiritual belief in their own internal animal powers. It is precisely this phantasm that the church and the state are unable to structure for promoting their ascetic values. The nomadic builders construct their own plane of consistency, different from the plane of organisation. The phantasm of the Gothic line allows them to overcome the limitations of matter and reveals their secret power, their will to resist the natural circumstances.

According to Deleuze and Guattari, it is impossible to deny the strong influence of state science on the construction of Gothic cathedrals. The smooth space can never fully replace the striated one. Both are fully intertwined. The Gothic builders are working for the church and operate within the restrictions imposed upon them by its ideology. It is impossible to claim complete independence from this influence.[37] The smooth space is constructed within certain limitations. The church also appropriates the discoveries and will of the Gothic builders for its own profit. The cathedrals are immense and impress the ordinary people. But this appropriation has its limits. The striated space is continually transformed into the smooth space. The limits imposed by state science are continually transgressed. The Christian ascetic ideals and the will to dominate the population are directly challenged by the physical liveliness of the cathedrals. Ascetic ideals are challenged by the Gothic line in the very place in which they are supposed to be exercised with fullest force.

The phantasm emerging at the surface of sense is consequently not directly submitted to the signifying semiotics provided by state science. For Deleuze and Guattari, this interaction can emerge in various circumstances. Every space, even one submitted to the highest degree of organisation

and striation, allows for the emergence of smooth spaces.[38] Distance from the striated space is always possible. The smooth space is not merely a superficial veil that covers the existing striated space, it directly influences the latter. Deleuze and Guattari continue to express a plea to strive towards a nomad absolute, one that differs from that of the state. They remark as follows about this absolute:

> There exists a proper nomad absolute that is distinguished from the state one. There exists a nomadic absolute, as a local integration moving from part to part and constituting smooth space in an infinite succession of linkages and changes in direction. It is an absolute that is one with becoming itself, with process. It is the absolute of passage, which in nomad art merges with its manifestation. Here the absolute is local, precisely because place is not delimited.[39]

We are now in a position to understand this statement. Contrary to the claims of Spuybroek, the nomad science discussed by Deleuze and Guattari does not aim at a radical destruction of state science, nor believe in movement for the sake of movement. The nomad absolute can guide at all times locally. It relates to a problematic field and transforms the material circumstances from which it emerges.

Conclusion

An analysis of the process of construction discussed by Deleuze and Guattari constitutes an alternative to the one developed by Spuybroek. It is also less dismissive of architecture's different styles. Baroque and modernist procedures are indeed different from the Gothic. Nevertheless, the phantasms or space these styles of architecture construct do not have to differ much. Modernism and baroque can open themselves up towards other becomings. They might also discover the capacity to express vitalist forces that are found in the Gothic. The overabundance of organic or extremely expressive elements in baroque might suggest the existence of a phantasm that is similar to the Gothic one. The use of

sharp forms or of materials such as concrete by modernist or brutalist architects might equally point towards a possibility within the space in which corporate architecture is the norm. For Deleuze and Guattari, a becoming that cannot be captured by the striated space is always possible. This becoming is not an escape but rather a construction of a new field of possibilities. Modernism, with its hatred of ornament, should not be as recklessly dismissed as Spuybroek does. We could state that it is characterised by a 'becoming minoritarian', a resistance to the hegemony of bourgeois ideology and its forms of representation. Modernism is, in this sense, an answer to the age of neo-Gothic, where matter – glorified by Ruskin – has turned into an expression of the bourgeois ideology of overabundance. It is exactly the soberness of modernism that was a tool in the combat against architecture that facilitated and legitimated the feudal economic differences between human beings. The empty boxes of modernism, despised by Spuybroek, helped to construct new spaces of equality.

The search for a new design practice might benefit from the asignifying semiotics of Deleuze and Guattari. The process of construction presupposes a spiritual becoming. Matter is an important factor in construction but always needs an instance that transcends it. Construction needs the surface of sense and a phantasm that transcends given material circumstances and any technically defined design procedure. Construction must always engage in a search for an expressive will. Only a practice that succeeds in this search can be truly called the digital Gothic.

Notes

1. Lars Spuybroek, *The Sympathy of Things: Ruskin and the Ecology of Design* (Rotterdam: V2 Publishing, 2011).
2. Spuybroek himself does not use this term. His work has nevertheless been analysed by theoreticians

interested in the thought of Gilles Deleuze. For a recent analysis of the work of Spuybroek, see Rick Dolphijn (2011), 'Mapping the Crystals of Life. The Radical Picturesque in Lars Spuybroek's The Sympathy of Things: Ruskin and the Ecology of Design', *Esthetica* (2012), and Deborah Hauptmann and Andrej Radman 'Northern Line', in *Deleuze and Architecture* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013).

3. John Ruskin, *The Nature of Gothic: A Chapter of The Stones of Venice* (1892), Research Library, The Getty Research Institute.

4. Spuybroek has gained wide international acknowledgement for his work. The list of works can be found on the site <http://www.nox-art-architecture.com> [Accessed 07 April 2014]. His studio participated, for example, in a 'non-standard architectures' exhibition in 2003 at the Centre Pompidou in Paris. However, frustration with daily architectural practice has recently led him to stop designing and to devote himself to writing about architecture.

5. Félix Guattari, 'Postmodern Deadlock and Post-Media Transition', in *Soft Subversions* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2009), p. 292. See also Spuybroek, *The Sympathy of Things*, p. 54.

6. 'Gehry's designs consist of large, handmade models of curved surfaces, which are digitally scanned three-dimensionally by a free-moving robot arm. All these warped planes are smashed blindly into each other on every corner of the volume, light-years away from Gothic grace and coordination.' Spuybroek, *The Sympathy of Things,* p. 54.

7. Ernst Hans Gombrich, 'Chapter X', in *The Story of Art* (London: Phaidon, 1950).

8. William Morris in John Ruskin, p. V.

9. Ruskin, *The Nature of Gothic*, p. 3.

10. Ibid*.,* p. 7. See also Spuybroek, *The Sympathy of Things*, p. 13.

11. And it is, perhaps, the principal admirableness of the Gothic schools of architecture, that they thus receive the results of the labour of inferior minds; and out of fragments full of imperfection, and betraying that imperfection in every touch, indulgently raise up a stately and unaccusable whole.' (Ruskin, p. 15). He adds: 'The demand for perfection is always a sign of a misunderstanding of the ends of art.' (p. 31).

12. With respect to the pointed arch, Ruskin observes: 'The pointed arch was not merely a bold variation from the round, but it admitted of millions of variations in itself; for the proportions of a pointed arch are changeable to infinity, while a circular arch is always the same.' (p. 39).

13. Ruskin, *The Nature of Gothic,* p. 45.

14. Spuybroek, *The Sympathy of Things*, p. 21.

15. Ruskin puts this as follows: 'Both Greek and Roman used conventional foliage in their ornaments, passing into something that was not foliage at all, knotting itself into strange cuplike buds or clusters, and growing out of lifeless rods instead of stems; the Gothic sculptor received these types, at first, as things that ought to be, just as we have a second time received them; but he could not rest in them. He saw there was no veracity in them, no knowledge, no vitality.' (p. 71). Further on he adds: 'But to the Gothic workman the living foliage became a subject of intense affection, and he struggled to render all its characters with as much accuracy as was compatible with the laws of his design and the nature of his material, not infrequently tempted in his enthusiasm to transgress the one and disguise the other.' (p. 76).

16. Ruskin, *The Nature of Gothic,* p. 82.

17. Spuybroek, *The Sympathy of Things,* p. 30.

18. Ibid*.,* p. 26.

19. Ruskin, *The Nature of Gothic,* p. 88.

20. Spuybroek, *The Sympathy of Things,* p. 67.

21. As he remarks: 'Changefulness, savageness and imperfection evolve during the design stage.' (Spuybroek, p. 58). This procedure has been used, for example, during the design of the form of the D-tower, an installation in the city of Doetinchem in the East Netherlands.

22. Spuybroek emphasises Deleuze's wrong reading of the Gothic in the following passage: 'Gilles Deleuze, who is known as a vitalist, was the last proponent of the Gothic, but in a barely recognisable manner, never giving it serious historical attention save for making

a repeated reference to Worringer's Gothic line and borrowing from him the concept of nonorganic life, in which free, proliferating curves are equated with deterritorialising barbarians, nomads and vagabonds breaking away from the state, whether Greek or Egyptian.' (p. 12).

23. Spuybroek describes this as follows: 'The flexibility of the elements in the Gothic is radically opposed to that found in the Baroque; there structure comes first, and *then* movement is added. […] The Baroque is merely distorted classicism […]. In the Gothic, ornament acts like a structure and structure acts like ornament.' (p. 44).

24. Spuybroek, *The Sympathy of Things,* p. 32.

25. Peter Hallward, *Out of this World* (London: Continuum, 2005), and Slavoj Žižek, *Organs without Bodies* (London: Routledge, 2004).

26. Gilles Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*, trans. by Daniel W. Smith (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990). For an analysis of this distinction, see Piotrek Swiatkowski (forthcoming), 'Dynamic Genesis of Sense: Deleuze's Analysis of Desire', in *The Logic of Sense* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2014). See also Bowden, *Priority of Events* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011).

27. Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*, pp. 187, 253.

28. Žižek, *Organs without Bodies*, p. 32.

29. Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense,* p. 193.

30. Ibid*.,* p. 6.

31. Ibid., p. 210. In his analysis of the phantasm, Deleuze is influenced by the work of Klossowski. See Daniel Smith, *Essays on Deleuze* (London: Continuum, 2012), pp. 325-39.

32. Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense,* p. 238.

33. In *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari underscore the existence of the twofold nature of constructivism by means of a distinction between two kinds of planes. They speak first of all of a plane of projection which limits the construction and offers the material possibilities for the emergence of a structure. Spuybroek seems to refer to this plane when he discusses the Gothic process of construction. Construction, however, also needs the 'successive approximations' of the smooth space (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, p. 364). This smooth space is not a destruction of order but, just like the surface of sense, is characterised by events that are represented by a phantasm.

34. Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, trans. by Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), p. 364.

35. Worringer argues that in the Gothic cathedral we 'lose the feeling of our earthly limitations, we are absorbed into an infinite movement that obliterates all consciousness of the finite'. Wilhelm Worringer, *Form Problem of the Gothic* (New York: G.E. Stechert, 1918), p. 87.

36. Worringer, *Form Problem of the Gothic*, p. 88.

37. Deleuze and Guattari state this as follows: 'No sooner do we note a simple opposition between the two kinds of space than we must indicate a much more complex difference by virtue of which the successive terms of the oppositions fail to coincide entirely. And no sooner have we done that than we must remind ourselves that the two spaces in fact exist only in mixture: smooth space is constantly being translated, transversed into a striated space; striated space is constantly being reversed, returned to a smooth space.' (p. 494).

38. 'What interests us in operations of striation and smoothing are precisely the passages or combinations: how the forces at work within space continually striate it, and how in the course of its striation it develops other forces and emits new smooth spaces. Even the most striated city gives rise to smooth spaces: to live in the city as a nomad, or as a cave dweller. Movements, speed and slowness, are sometimes enough to reconstruct a smooth space. Of course, smooth spaces are not in themselves liberatory. But the struggle is changed or displaced in them, and life reconstitutes its stakes, confronts new obstacles, invents new paces, switches adversaries. Never believe that a smooth space will suffice to save us.' (p. 500).

39. Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus,* p. 494.

Biography

Piotrek Swiatkowski is associated researcher at the Centre for Contemporary European Philosophy of the Radboud University Nijmegen and lecturer of philosophy and Corporate Social Responsibility at various universities in the Netherlands. His book on the Dynamic genesis of Sense will be published at the end of 2014 by Leuven University Press.

Video Assemblages: 'Machinic Animism' and 'Asignifying Semiotics' in the Work of Melitopoulos and Lazzarato

Jay Hetrick

We never step outside the flux of participation
or of assemblages.
(Isabelle Stengers)[1]

Assemblages

Assemblages (2010) is an hour-long, three channel audio-visual 'documentary' installation about the French psychoanalyst Félix Guattari, co-created by the artist Angela Melitopoulos and the political philosopher Maurizio Lazzarato. It should be understood as both a work of video art in the tradition of Nam June Paik and Bill Viola as well as, the artists claim, a 'visual research project'. It was created for an exhibition entitled *Animism*, which explored, through various works of art, the boundaries between matter and life within the belief systems of several Western and non-Western cultures. In this context, it has been shown at Kunsthalle Bern and Extra City Kunsthal Antwerpen (2010), the Generali Foundation in Vienna (2011), and the House of World Cultures in Berlin (2012). As a whole, the exhibition has been praised for 'brilliantly succeeding in opening a new perspective' in which the concept of 'animism appears a deeply realistic worldview of everything that surrounds human beings, but in no way as some kind of mystical or exotic magic'.[2] *Assemblages* is conceived as a video installation constructed with footage from radio interviews, conversations with several friends, colleagues, and Guattari scholars (for example, Brazilian anthropologist Eduardo Viveiros de Castro, French philosopher Éric Alliez, French psychoanalyst Jean-Claude Polack, French

anthropologist Barbara Glowczewski, Brazilian philosopher Peter Pál Pelbart, and French artist Jean-Jacques Lebel); it contains archival footage from Guattari's clinic La Borde, and from institutional psychotherapy documentaries by Fernand Deligny, Renaud Victor and François Pain, as well as new material produced by Melitopoulos and Lazzarato in Brazil during the course of their research. The brilliance of the work lies not only in its value as a documentary about Guattari's life and practice, but also in the various ways that so many sensorial, medial, cultural, political and conceptual levels are compounded and confounded simultaneously. In this essay, I briefly analyse the video aesthetically and formally before offering some clues that may help in unpacking the incredibly dense conceptual landscape it inhabits, thereby opening up one possible avenue for its reception: that of 'unnatural participation'. To this end, I focus upon Lazzarato's appropriation of Guattari and Deleuze's concepts of 'machinic animism' and 'asignifying semiotics', which strongly underlie *Assemblages* on several registers.

The video unfolds through an abstract non-linear interweaving of sound, image and text in a way that is similar to Melitopoulos's work of the past decade. These works are multi-channel videos that combine elements somewhat reminiscent of the way in which the films of Marguerite Duras and Trinh Minh-ha employ the disjunction and abstraction of sound, image and text in response to the quite different types of disjunctions and

abstractions inherent in cross-cultural displacement. For example, Melitopoulos's *Passing Drama* (1999) is a video essay inspired by the oral recollections of political refugees, including members of Melitopoulos's own family, who were deported from Asia Minor to northern Greece in 1923. The lacunas of remembering, forgetting and recitation are rendered through the experimental montage of image, text and sound to create a highly rhythmic, abstract, and hauntingly beautiful work concerning various layers of collective and individual memory, border crossing, trauma, the construction of perpetually migrating and minoritarian identities, and the impossibility of representing them politically or aesthetically. Maurizio Lazzarato has claimed that the abstraction in this work sometimes reaches a level that alludes to the type of amodal, pre-verbal, and 'dehumanised' transubjectivity described by the psychoanalyst Bracha Ettinger as a 'matrixial borderspace'.[3] It is therefore no surprise that Lazzarato has stated elsewhere that his concept of *videophilosophy*, which I will discuss below, is 'the result of my encounter with Angela Melitopoulos's work. Her method of filming, editing and contemplating the relationship between the image and the world inspired me to write an "ontology" of video. […] In Angela Melitopoulos's video *Passing Drama* you can "see" this ontology instead of laboriously reading about it'.[4]

Assemblages is aesthetically quite similar to *Passing Drama*, with the added qualification by the artists that both the logic of montage employed and the formal layout should be understood through Deleuze and Guattari's concept of *assemblage*, which is, of course, the main theme of the work as well. The installation is presented as a triptych of differently sized screens that are stacked vertically. Each screen is meant to highlight a different modality of reception: seeing, hearing and reading. This verticality takes its cue, the artists maintain, from the cartographic element of animistic art, as well as from the visual structure of East Asian art.

More generally, it 'alludes to a "movement of sense" falling downward from above and rising upward from below. […] The interplay between the three projections enables the images and sounds to coincide or fall apart; it triggers a direction of movement of the gaze that, as a vectorial force of sense, addresses different modes of perception'.[5] They conceive of the installation as an assemblage in the technical sense that it is a diversely constructed 'diagonal cross section' of the source material. It presents this material by way of a unique form of indexing that is not chronological, historical, technical nor grammatical. To construct such a diagonal cross section of material means, for Melitopoulos and Lazzarato, 'to think now in the vertical plane (layering and accumulation of the material, acoustic space), now in the horizontal one (sequencing, narrative)'. The horizontal axis of sequencing is further articulated by the artists through the psychoanalyst François Tosquelles's concepts of geopsychiatry and psychomotricity – concepts essential to the development of Guattari's own schizoanalytic cartography – in which the category of movement is understood as migration and vagabondage, and is intimately linked to the dynamisms, rhythms, and physicality of the voice more than to its linguistic or purely narrative content. All of these features make the work an assemblage, which is defined – precisely along horizontal and vertical axes by Deleuze and Guattari – as a multiplicity of objects, affects, expressions, and (de)territorialisations that come together for an indefinite period of time, in order to enable a new productive or machinic function. 'Assemblage' is the usual English rendering of the French *agencement*, which refers to the processes of arranging and organising heterogeneous elements.

At the level of content, *Assemblages* presents Guattari's own migrations to Brazil and Japan in the 1980s. He firmly believed that in order to 'decolonise' our habitual ways of thinking and perceiving, the West needed 'to go back to […] an animist

Assemblages, installation view. Haus der Kulturen der Welt, Berlin, 2012. © 2010 Angela Melitopoulos and Maurizio Lazzarato

conception of subjectivity', which should be understood as completely distinct from 'a simple return to irrationalism'.[6] That is, the West needs to break open the neurotic, post-Enlightenment tradition which compulsively separates subject and object, nature and culture, man and animal, matter and soul, individual and collective, as well as a whole host of other dualisms that lie at the root of most of the political, ecological, scientific, and aesthetic problems of our contemporary moment. Guattari looked specifically to Brazil and Japan as model cultures that, in different ways, have held on to their pre-modern, animist cosmologies while maintaining a forward-looking relation to development and technology. He further argued that, as such, these two cultures have provided unique conditions for developing 'prototypical models of new capitalist subjectivities'.[7]

> Traveling in Japan, he saw how the attempt to think animist traditions in conjunction with hypermodern technologies enabled the emergence of new and complex models of subjectification. In a world defined by standardization and homogenization, animist cosmologies in Brazil present forms of resistance against capitalist subjectification. […] Guattari spoke of the emergence of these resistances; associated with alternative lifestyles, they come into being in particular where postcolonial systems are retreating. A decentered, animist subjectivity that positions the 'other, i.e., things, animals, plants, planets, etc., as a vehicle of dimensions of shared subjectivity' – examples exist in 'psychosis, religious rituals, or aesthetic phenomena' – does not share the view that our psyche is structured like human language. Subjectivity, Guattari argued, is 'distributed in different degrees across nature, machines, the cosmos, the social, or the economy'.[8]

Guattari traveled to Brazil and Japan numerous times and extensively studied the various types of cultural, artistic, psychiatric and political practices that were taking place there in order to translate and incorporate some of them into his own critical and clinical milieu at La Borde. Additionally, this appropriation of certain elements from Brazilian and Japanese cultures should be seen as strongly informing Guattari's intellectual trajectory during the 1980s, leading up to his final statements on ecology (*The Three Ecologies*, 1989); philosophy (*What is Philosophy?,1991,* with Gilles Deleuze), and especially what he called the 'ethico-aesthetic paradigm' (*Chaosmosis*, 1992) of constructing new forms of subjectivity in the age of immaterial labour and semiocapitalism.

Machinic animism
For Deleuze and Guattari, an assemblage consists of heterogeneous elements of all kinds that relate by 'contagion' or 'unnatural participation', which come together neither as an organic totality – in which parts are described as forming seamless wholes (Hegel) or structures (Lacan) – nor as a lifeless, extensive set (Badiou). Instead, an assemblage is qualified as 'machinic' in a very special sense. First, it is defined by its functional or pragmatic capacity to affect or be affected by other assemblages rather than any 'truth' value. This aspect of the machinic quality of assemblages is clearly illustrated through a now familiar example used by Deleuze and Guattari:

> A racehorse is more different from a workhorse than a workhorse is from an ox. […] It is not a member of a species but an element or individual in a machinic assemblage […] defined by a list of active and passive affects…. These affects circulate and are transformed within the assemblage: what a horse 'can do'.[9]

Second, an assemblage should be understood not as an axiomatic set but, following the radical empiricism of William James, as a kind of temporary collection of 'plural facts' as well as the 'conjunctive and disjunctive relations' between them, including facts and relations that might normally be occluded from everyday perception but are nonetheless

experienced in altered states of consciousness.[10] Deleuze and Guattari even take the principles of radical empiricism one step further. While James levels the playing field between elements and their relations – in an attempt to correct the overly pessimistic disconnection of discrete elements in Humean empiricism – Deleuze and Guattari *elevate* relations above elements. So, while they do agree with James's move beyond Hume – 'Substitute the AND for IS. A *and* B. The AND is not even a specific relation or conjunction, it is that which subtends all relations […] empiricism has never had another secret'[11] – they also move beyond James to the degree that, in an assemblage, 'what counts are not the terms or the elements, but what there is "between" a set of relations which are not separate from each other'.[12] That is, the machinic quality of assemblages forces us to favour relations – and thus the capacities to affect and be affected that they enable – above individual elements. This allows us to comprehend an assemblage in its differential emergence, or becoming, rather than as a set of given objects that themselves determine their relations in space-time. 'The machine has something more than structure […] in that it does not limit itself to a game of interactions which develop in space and time between its component parts.'[13] This second aspect of the machinic quality of assemblages – that relations are external to their elements, a logic that ensures continual emergence, becoming, and (de)territorialisation – is illustrated by another example frequently employed by Deleuze and Guattari:

> A becoming is always in the middle; one can only get it by the middle. A becoming is neither one nor two […] it constitutes a zone of proximity and indiscernibility […] a nonlocalizable *relation* sweeping up the two distant or contiguous points, carrying one into the proximity of the other. […] The line or block of becoming that unites the wasp and the orchid produces a shared deterritorialization: of the wasp, in that it becomes a liberated piece of the orchid's reproductive system, but also of the orchid, in that it becomes the object of an orgasm in the wasp, also liberated from its own reproduction.[14]

Another important aspect of machinic assemblages is that there is an intimate imbrication between material and semiotic registers, a 'new relation between content and expression'.[15] That is, a machine is simultaneously an 'assemblage of bodies, of actions and passions, an intermingling of bodies reacting to one another' and an 'assemblage of enunciation, of acts and statements, of incorporeal transformations attributed to bodies'.[16] This imbrication between bodies and signs is understood through an entirely unique theory of semiotics, which I will come back to at length in the next section. For now, it is enough to say that what Deleuze and Guattari call the 'horizontal axis' of machinic assemblages – precisely this imbrication of the material and the semiotic – might be best described as a kind of onto-aesthetic plane, so long as the term aesthetic is understood, following Guattari's reading of Mikhail Bakhtin, as referring to material signs of all sorts, including, especially, 'asignifying' particles of sensible affects. The 'vertical axis' of machinic assemblages – where we find the movements of de- and re-territorialisation or, more generally, the capacity to create the new – consists, at the macro-level, in what Guattari calls in his last writings the 'ethico-aesthetic', a category which helps us grasp the necessarily ethical and ultimately political aspect of machinic assemblages. Ethics in this context refers first of all to practices of subjectification, which might be broadly characterised by thinking about Foucault's idea of the care of the self through the logic of (de)territorialisation practices which Guattari himself qualifies as 'ethico*political*'.[17] Taken together, these two axes – which of course cannot be so easily demarcated – present a clear picture of the 'permanent renewal of the assemblage, a verification of its capacity to welcome asignifying singularities […] and a constant readjustment of its transversalist opening onto the outside world'.[18] The concept of machinic assemblages is thus a powerful

one that is central to Deleuze and Guattari's thought since it gives consistency to their views on ontology, aesthetics, semiotics, ethics, and politics.

Before moving on to animism, I should further explain the logic of the machine. It should be acknowledged at the outset that well before Bernard Stiegler published the first volume of his important *Technics and Time* series, Guattari's concept of the machine already sought to displace the false boundary between nature and artifice. Just before his untimely death, Guattari wrote a short but important essay on this concept where he states that technological machines – 'the mechanist vision of the machine' – are but one instance of the machine, which should be understood as a much broader category.[19] He also mentions social, economic, aesthetic, linguistic, biological, cosmic and ecological machines, as well as the type of abstract machine he conceptualised with Gilles Deleuze some twenty years earlier. His main argument is that in the face of new ecological challenges brought on by late capitalist development, perhaps a new definition of the machine is needed in order to 'break down the iron wall' between nature and technology by constructing a transversal relation between them. And here we can see that the idea of animism already appears:

> We are currently at an unavoidable crossroads, where the machine is treated as anathema, and where there prevails the idea that technology is leading us to a situation of inhumanity and of rupture with any kind of ethical project. Moreover, contemporary history actually reinforces this view of the machine as catastrophic, causing ecological damage and so on. We might therefore be tempted to look backwards as a reaction to the machinic age, so as to begin again from who knows what kind of primitive territoriality. […] In order to overcome this fascination with technology and the deathly dimension it sometimes takes, we have to re-apprehend and re-conceptualize the machine in a different way. […] I am not advocating that we go

> back to an animistic way of thinking, but nevertheless, I would propose that we attempt to consider that in the machine, and at the machinic interface, there exists something that would not quite be of the order of the soul, human or animal, *anima,* but of the order of a proto-subjectivity.[20]

What Guattari is attempting to do here is nothing less than replace the philosophical concept of *techne*, which Heidegger appropriated from the Greeks, with that of the more abstract and encompassing one of the machine.

> The problem of *techne* 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 therefore be broadened to that of *machinic assemblages*.[21]

Here, the concept of the machine points to a logic of the continuous deterritorisation of elements at the service of particular functions and relations of alterity. It can be understood as 'machinic' in the sense that an assemblage can unplug from a particular arrangement of elements – whether linguistic, political, aesthetic, or technical – and plug into another, more appropriate one, depending upon the needs of a given problem. Importantly, a machine can readily connect to different orders of being by cutting across the artificial dualities, at least in Guattari's view, between nature and artifice, object and subject. This is because, again, 'the machine is defined by an *ensemble of interrelations* […] independently of the components themselves'.[22] Guattari relies upon two thinkers in order to think through the concept of the machine: Gottfried Leibniz and Francisco Varela.

First, he alludes to Leibniz's distinction between natural and artificial machines adding the remark that the former – also described by Leibniz as organisms

or 'infinitely articulated machines' – would 'qualify today as fractal' since these natural machines plug into 'other machines which are themselves made up of infinite machinic elements'.[23] Of course, Deleuze and Guattari's extended critiques of the organism must be recalled here as should Deleuze's own uses of Leibniz and calculus. In *Difference and Repetition* and elsewhere, Deleuze employs calculus to help articulate a logic of disjunctive differentiation where differential relations (for example, *dx/dy*) 'no longer depend on their terms', which in this case are the infinitesimal quantities *dx* and *dy*.[24] Although this topic is well beyond the scope of the present essay, one important thing to note about Deleuze's investment in calculus is that he uses it in a way that pre-emptively dodges Alain Badiou's largely misguided critique of Deleuze, even as it pre-emptively dismisses Badiou's own ontology of axiomatic sets. For Deleuze, the ontology of mathematics cannot be reducible to axiomatics alone, but must be understood much more broadly in terms of a tension between axiomatics and what he calls problematics, which, as he clearly demonstrates, in the history of mathematics has tended to focus on the infinitesimal. This has direct political consequences since, as we shall see, Deleuze and Guattari claim that capitalism itself functions on the basis of axiomatisation and, more generally, of 'capturing' much more recalcitrant problematics. In his essay on machines, Guattari also says that he prefers an affective, pre-signifying mode of thought rather than one 'which claims to give a scientific, axiomatic description'.[25] Here we should note that in Lazzarato's own article on 'The Machine' he argues, after Deleuze and Guattari, that 'capitalism is neither a mode of production nor a system' but rather 'a series of devices for machinic enslavement' that operates by 'mobilizing and modulating pre-individual, pre-cognitive, and pre-verbal components of subjectivity, forcing affects, percepts, and unindividuated sensations […] to function like the cogs and components in a machine'.[26] We will come back to this point. In addition, while Deleuze

refers to the 'inorganic' logic of calculus in order to problematise his supposed relation to vitalism, Guattari, in his solo work, does almost the reverse. Instead of talking at length about organisms, or even fractal Leibnizian machines, Guattari injects Francisco Varela's theory of biological autopoiesis into machinic nature itself. That is, the theory of autopoiesis – or the spontaneous and continually self-productive ontogenesis of living beings – is liberated from the biological domain and is used to help illustrate the character of any type of machine whatsoever. He explains that Varela

> opposes *autopoiesis,* which he essentially attributes to living biological beings, to *allopoiesis* in which the machine will search for its components outside of itself. Within this concept of *allopoiesis*, Varela arranges social systems, technical machines and, finally, all machinic systems which are not living systems. This concept of *autopoiesis* to me seems both interesting and fruitful. However, I think that we should go beyond Varela's position and establish a relation between allo- and autopoietic machines. Since allopoietic machines are always to be found adjacent to autopoietic ones, we should therefore attempt to take into account the assemblages which make them live together. […] This machinic core, which in some respects can be qualified as proto-subjective and proto-biological, possesses characteristics Varela has not completely taken into account.[27]

For Guattari, it is precisely this autopoietic quality of machines that differentiates them from structures or closed sets. Coherent structures imply feedback loops that give rise to interiorisation and totalisation. With the machine, however, emergence 'is doubled with breakdown, catastrophe'. A machine 'always depends on exterior elements in order to be able to exist as such […] it is itself in a relation of alterity with other virtual or actual machines'.[28] Guattari finishes his short essay on machines by drawing out the linguistic, aesthetic, and ethico-political consequences of the logic of machinic assemblages,

especially through the concepts of 'pre-signifying or symbolic semiologies' and 'pathic relationships', concepts to which I will turn in the next section.[29] For now, it is important to note that Guattari does so by continually referring to 'archaic' and 'animist' societies.[30]

The idea of animism – which figures heavily in Lazzarato and Melitopoulos's video – can be found scattered across Guattari's later work, especially in the context of his 'ethico-aesthetic paradigm', in which he discusses the need to construct alternate forms of subjectivity in the face of the particularly rampant and rabid type of contemporary political economy he calls Integrated World Capitalism. And although he developed a new conception of the machine to displace the worn-out philosophical idea of *techne*, the question concerning technology itself is still a pertinent one in this regard. The 'exponential development of the technico-scientific dimension' of contemporary semio-capitalism – which Lazzarato has famously qualified with the term 'immaterial labor' – is equally culpable for the apparent attenuation of modes of subjectification. It is within this framework that the imperative for a critical 'return' to animism reaches a crescendo:

> It seems essential to understand how subjectivity can participate in the invariants of scale. In other words, how can it be simultaneously singular, singularizing an individual, a group of individuals, but also supported by the assemblages of space, architectural and plastic assemblages, and all other cosmic assemblages? […] I am more inclined to propose a model of the unconscious akin to that of a Mexican Cuandero or of a Bororo, starting with the idea that spirits populate things, landscapes, groups, and that there are all sorts of becomings, of *haecceities* everywhere and thus, a sort of objective subjectivity, if I may, which finds itself bundled together, broken apart, and shuffled at the whims of assemblages. The best unveiling among them would be found, obviously, in archaic thought.[31]

But this idea of animist subjectivity should not be understood as historically or anthropologically specific; that is, it would be incorrect to dismiss Guattari as some kind of Romantic or Orientalist. Rather, and especially through his clinical experience with psychotics, he claims to have demonstrated that although animism may indeed characterise 'primitive' societies without a state, we can find traces of it in 'developed' capitalistic societies as well: 'aspects of this kind of polysemic, animistic, transindividual subjectivity can equally be found in the worlds of infancy, madness, amorous passion, and artistic creation'.[32] It should be clear that what Guattari means by animism is not some kind of pantheistic cult religion but rather something that points to an elaborate ontology, which is the logical conclusion of his conception of machinic assemblages. Animism points to a world populated not by magical spirits, but by proto-subjective, autopoietic *haecceities* of all kinds that transversally interact with each other across the artificial divides between nature and culture, subject and object. In one of the interviews shown in Lazzarato and Melitopoulos's *Assemblages*, French psychoanalyst Jean-Claude Polack describes the world of schizophrenics in which there is a 'daily commerce with particles of the self or perhaps with non-living bodies, of bodies outside the self, which does not pose a problem at all. It's like a natural exercise. And if you don't understand it, a schizophrenic might think of you as a moron. […] There is a certain very particular "animist" sensibility that one could call delirium.'[33] This is how we should understand Deleuze and Guattari's repeated, and seemingly naive appeals to not only schizophrenia but also the 'semiotics of primitive peoples'.[34] The ethico-aesthetic imperative is not to become mad or to become a dancing hippy in the forest, but to experiment with different forms of subjectivity, through different technologies of the self, in order to attempt to plug into this machinic world of animist, asignifying 'particles,' which escape the axiomatisation of contemporary

capitalism. Guattari firmly believed that 'the serial production and massive exportation of the white, conscious, male adult subject has always been correlated with the disciplining of intensive multiplicities that essentially escape from all centralization, from all signifying arborescence'.[35] This is how we can contextualise the Brazilian anthropologist Eduardo Viveiros de Castro's provocative claim, in the final interview of *Assemblages*, that 'animism is the ontology of societies against the state'.[36] This is obviously a reference to the work of Pierre Clastres, who Deleuze and Guattari rely upon in their conception of the war *machine* against the State.[37] Nonetheless, it is important to emphasise here – as Isabelle Stengers does in an article written for the *Animism* exhibition – that the word animism 'can hardly be disentangled from pejorative colonialist associations'.[38] What she calls 'reclaiming animism' therefore means not *returning* to a more authentic or 'true' state of being before the advent of modern technology, but rather *reactivating*, in a pragmatic manner, the potentiality of a 'more than human world'. This is quite simply, Stengers argues with a nod to William James, the 'capacity to honor experience'. Furthermore, she suggests that 'such a recovery […] can be helped […] by the Deleuzo-Guattarian idea of "assemblage"', since this idea allows us to think transversally beyond the reductive and outdated concepts of the 'natural' and the 'symbolic'.[39] Finally, she seems to be saying something similar to Viveiros de Castro when she claims that, understood in this way, the assemblage is a concept of 'ecological anarchy':[40]

> One is never animist 'in general,' but always in the terms of an assemblage that produces or enhances metamorphic transformation in our capacity to affect and be affected – that is also to feel, think, and imagine. Animism may, however, be a name for reclaiming these assemblages because it lures us into feeling that their efficacy is not ours to claim. Against the insistent poisoned passion of dismembering

and demystifying, it affirms what they require us to acknowledge in order not to devour ourselves: that we are not alone in the world.[41]

Asignifying semiotics

There can be no romantic return to an original nature because nature is itself populated by a motley anarchy of machinic assemblages in which 'objectivities-subjectivities are led to work for themselves, to incarnate themselves as an animist nucleus; they overlap each other and invade each other to become collective entities: half-thing half-soul, half-man half-beast, machine and flux, matter and sign'.[42] There can only be a continual, future-oriented, machinic participation in and with these assemblages. This point cannot be overemphasised: the concept of the machine in Deleuze and Guattari disallows any recourse to a naively 'vitalist' conception of nature. The theory of machinic assemblages is more concerned with the pragmatic matter of what affective and enunciative capacities they bear. 'For every type of machine we will pose a question, not about its vital autonomy – it's not an animal – but about its singular power of enunciation.'[43] Every machinic assemblage is a slice of 'signaletic matter' for which being and expression are intimately intertwined.[44] Assemblages are 'proto-subjective' *haecceities* or singularities in precisely this sense and not because they exhibit qualities that can be defined as either strictly vitalist, strictly biological, or strictly human. Angela Melitopoulos and Maurizio Lazzarato rightly note that such a move has important consequences that challenge the assumptions of the entire Western philosophical tradition since Aristotle, in which only humans exhibit the propensity for semiotic enunciation. One of Guattari's most original contributions to the history of thought was to develop a new system of semiotics that takes into account a much broader range of possible expressions than those delineated by the Saussurean system, which not only separates the human from the non-human, but also encourages the hierarchisation of different sorts of

human expression itself. His interest in animism was motivated by the fact that, through it, such hierarchisation seems to break down. As Lazzarato and Melitopoulos argue, 'trans-individual polysemic animist subjectivity uncovers the possibility of producing and enriching […] semiotic symbols of the body, dance, postures, and gestures […] as well as asignifying semiotics such as rhythms, music, and so on'.[45]

In his interview for *Assemblages*, the French philosopher Éric Alliez argues that the enigmatic idea of an 'asignifying semiotics' is 'surely *the* fundamental category of Félix Guattari', a category which plunges us 'literally into an animist world'.[46] As we have seen, the 'horizontal axis' of assemblages is defined by the imbrication of the material and the semiotic. This idea can be traced back to Deleuze's early work the *Logic of Sense* as well as Guattari's interest in the semiotic system of Louis Hjelmslev. In fact, Alliez argues that it is precisely with the appropriation of Hjelmslev's idea that there is 'no real distinction between content and expression' – giving rise to 'a semiotics of intensities' – that we enter the animist world in which the 'fluctuation of signs is like the fluctuation of material things'.[47] As Deleuze and Guattari repeatedly argue, Saussurean semiotics is not abstract enough. In their system, on the contrary, there is a primacy of machinic enunciation over language and words, which only appear as the thinnest surface layer of a vast and complex machine that incorporates many different types of signs. It should be noted that here 'abstract' doesn't mean less reified since, in fact, it is only with the representational semiotics of everyday linguistics that signs become cut off from their direct connection to matter. For the sake of convenience, Lazzarato names four main semiotic registers in the Deleuzo-Guattarian system: natural asemiotic encodings like DNA or crystalline structures; symbolic (or pre-signifying) semiologies that include bodily gestures and the rituals of archaic societies; the representational, signifying semiology

of Saussure, and asignifying (or post-signifying) semiologies, which include mathematical formulas, stock quotes, and computer languages, but also the rhythms, durations, and intensities of music, art, and film.[48] Already in this short description we can begin to see the importance of asignifying semiotics, especially in the era of what Lazzarato calls immaterial labour. Indeed, this register of machinic enunciation seems to be *the* field upon and through which a critical contemporary battle is waged: art against empire.[49] Because asignifying signs plug in directly to material flows without mediation through signification, denotation, or representation – and because they indeed *are* simultaneously both material and semiotic – they are the elements of an assemblage that we can most confidently qualify as machinic.

Lazzarato also broadly conflates the categories of signifying and asignifying semiotics with Deleuze's differentiation between the respective logics of 'disciplinary' and 'control' societies. He does this by reading these logics through Guattari's idea that capitalism operates not simply on the economic register, but is in fact a 'semantic operator' that fundamentally informs all levels of production and power. Briefly, signifying semiotics operate through everyday discourse, representation, and the production of meaning in order to give rise to the speaking subject by implicating it into the *molar* categories of identity, gender, nationality, and class. This process is what Guattari calls 'social subjection' and, Lazzarato argues, it corresponds to Foucault's disciplinary 'concept of government by individualisation'.[50] On the contrary, asignifying semiotics operate through 'machinic enslavement', a much more insidious, *molecular* process that captures and activates the pre-subjective and trans-subjective elements of percepts and affects in order to force them to 'function like components or cogs in the semiotic machine of capital'.[51] This asignifying, molecular level should be understood as being inhabited by pre-discursive rhythms, intensities,

Assemblages, installation view. Museum van Hedendaagse Kunst, Antwerp, 2010. © 2010 Angela Melitopoulos and Maurizio Lazzarato

colours and sounds that shape the very *conditions* of image, word, and therefore of subjectivity itself. As such Lazzarato calls it, following William James, a 'world of "pure experience"'.[52] This is the source of its power and potential. And indeed Guattari refers to the elements of asignifying semiotics – recalling in the same sentence artistic, religious, and shamanic practices – as 'power signs'.[53] These signs are understood as material particles that do not pass through linguistic chains, but rather plug into the body directly through pre-conscious affects, perceptions, desires and emotions. They don't produce signification, they don't speak, but function machinically through 'a direct, unmediated impact on the real', which triggers 'an action, a reaction, a behavior, an attitude, a posture'.[54] Lazzarato argues that the importance of asignifying semiotics – which he notes is one of the most fundamental and original contributions by Deleuze and Guattari – for the analysis of contemporary capitalism cannot be overemphasised. Although it is ignored by:

> most linguistic and political theories, it constitutes the pivotal point of new forms of capitalist government. […] Linguistic theories and analytical philosophy fail to understand the existence of these semiotics and how they operate; they assume that the production and circulation of signs and words is an essentially human affair, one of semiotic 'exchange' between humans. They employ a logocentric conception of enunciation whereas a growing proportion of enunciations and circulating signs are being produced and shaped by machinic devices (television, cinema, radio, internet, etc.).[55]

This last parenthesis is more important than it first seems since Lazzarato has developed an entire *videophilosophy* in order to work through these issues. Building upon the ideas of Deleuze, Guattari and Benjamin on cinema, he focuses upon video, which he refers to as a 'machine that crystalizes time'. His main thesis is that video art grants us access to the ontology – precisely the

onto-aesthetics of asignifying semiotics – inherent to 'the new nature of capitalism'.[56] His wager is that we can therefore utilise this technology to somehow help us escape the clutches of contemporary control society and develop new 'practices of freedom and processes of individual and collective subjectification'.[57] By way of conclusion, I would like to briefly explore Lazzarato's ideas about videophilosophy before offering a suggestion on how we might, in light of *Assemblages*, make theoretical and pragmatic sense of this seemingly romantic claim.

Unnatural participation

Lazzarato roughly follows Deleuze's Bergsonian film-philosophy by arguing that cinema reveals the world as a flow of images. But he claims that video technology enables a further deterritorialisation of these flows by expressing not only images in movement, but also the very conditions of the image itself, the 'time-matter' of electromagnetic waves that lie at the heart of both the video image as well as the physical world itself: 'Video technology is a mechanical assemblage that establishes a relationship between asignifying flows (waves) and signifying flows (images). It is the first technical means of producing images that reflects the general decoding of the flows.'[58] The genetic element of cinema is still the photograph. And while montage adds a temporal element, 'it does not yet employ the endless variety of asignifying signs'.[59] Instead of words or even symbols, video acts as a kind of 'electronic paintbrush' in order to create and express 'point-signs' beyond signification, which are themselves the genetic conditions of images, sounds, and words.

> Rather than capturing images, the video camera captures waves that constitute those images, composing and decomposing them by means of modulation. The production and transmission of an image is in reality the result of a modulation of vibrations, of electric waves, of "visual dust," to use Bergson's beautiful image.[60]

Although film does not express the 'endless variety' of asignifying signs associated with the electronic deconstruction of the image – the visual dust of video – it is still a complex assemblage since it offers the possibility to commune with multiple semiotic registers simultaneously – 'images, sounds, words spoken and written (subtitling), movements, postures, colors, rhythms' – in 'much the same way that "mana" circulates in animistic societies'.[61] Here Lazzarato presents an entire taxonomy of signs that we encounter in video art, which should be understood as adding to the intrinsic qualities of cinema: spoken language (signifying), sound and music (asignifying), pure visuality (symbolic and asignifying), human gestures (symbolic), the rhythms and durations of montage (asemiotic intensities). While the film industry has, of course, learned to manipulate and capitalise on this motley assemblage of different signs, Lazzarato, following Guattari, believes that ultimately, these signs cannot be completely policed and overcoded. Some non-recuperable excess remains, which can help 'produce desubjectification and disindividuation effects, much like drugs, dreaming, passionate feeling, creation, or delirium; and it can strip the subject of his identity and social functions'.[62] Herein lies the ethico-aesthetic power of cinema and especially video, which again is immediately connected to the themes of animism and ecological anarchy:

> As in archaic societies, images (symbolic semiotics) and intensities, movements, intervals, temporalities, speeds (asignifying semiotics) reintroduce some indistinctness, some uncertainty, some wavering in denotation and signification. Expression once again becomes polyvocal, multidimensional and multireferential. [Quoting Guattari:] 'The semiotic components of film keep shifting in relation to one another, never settling or stabilizing in some deep syntax of latent contents, or in transformational systems that yield manifest contents back on the surface.'[63]

Finally, I would like to suggest that Guattari's

ethico-aesthetic paradigm – especially when we consider more specifically the supporting concepts of machinic animism and asignifying semiotics – opens up the possibility for new forms of participation with individual artworks like *Assemblages*, forms of participation that go beyond the 'relational aesthetics' of Nicolas Bourriaud. Bourriaud in fact concludes his book *Relational Aesthetics* with a long section on Guattari, which should be read as nothing more than a gross misappropriation that brings Guattari's radical and *dissensual* micropolitics back into the fold of trendy neo-liberal museum speak. Éric Alliez has stated quite forcefully that, in this book, Guattari's 'schizo-ontology, defined as a politics of being or a machinics of being, whose proto-aesthetic heart beats […] in the process of non-discursive or asignifying semiotization' is reduced to 'an aesthetic marked by the category of consensus, restoring the lost meaning of a common world by replacing the fissures in the social bond […] revisiting the spaces of conviviality, groping about for forms of sustainable development and consumption'.[64] With the concepts of machinic animism and asignifying semiotics, Guattari seems to completely pre-empt such a move by Bourriaud. Participation – in animist societies or at a good film – happens not simply through the clear, politically correct language of pre-formed subjects but rather circulates affectively 'through contagion not cognition'.[65] As Guattari says, 'we go to the movies to suspend our usual modes of communication for a while'.[66] This mode of pre-personal and asignifying participation is sometimes described by Guattari, using the language of psychoanalysis, as 'pathic transference',[67] and in this regard it can be productively compared, as Lazzarato himself does, with Bracha Ettinger's concept of the transferential borderspace of an artwork.[68] But Deleuze and Guattari also appropriate the language of anthropologist Lucien Lévy-Bruhl when they talk about 'unnatural participation' as the 'circulation of affects within the machinic assemblage'.[69] This is the level at which a kind of affective glue

connects us – through the animist *mana* of asignifying semiotics – to ourselves, to each other, and to nature, which all come together disjunctively in an ecological anarchy of machinic assemblages. For Lazzarato, such unnatural participation, however vague it first appears, is ultimately one of the most appropriate types of *political* action to be developed in our era of immaterial labour, since asignifying semiotics both plays 'a central and decisive role in contemporary capitalism and creates the conditions for its political critique'.[70]

> These behaviors appear and disappear in public space following logics that escape the rules of 'representation'. […] Their objectives are not representations or the seizure of power, but rather the transversal and molecular constitution of new social relations and new sensibilities.[71]

The aesthetic and formal arrangement of *Assemblages*, as described in the first section of this essay, may itself help us learn how to tune into these new asignifying, machinic relations and sensibilities by coaxing us to participate with its various images, sounds, and textures 'unnaturally'.

Notes

1. Isabelle Stengers, 'Reclaiming Animism' in *Animism: Modernity through the Looking Glass*, ed. by Anselm Franke (Vienna: Generali Foundation, 2011), p. 191.

2. Burkhard Meltzer, 'Animism', *Frieze* 134 (October 2010), p. 248.

3. Maurizio Lazzarato, 'Digitale Montage und das Weben: Eine Ökologie des Gehirns für Maschinen Subjektivitäten', in *Private Affairs* (Dresden: Kunsthaus Dresden, 2002), no pagination.

4. Maurizio Lazzarato, 'Video, Flows, and Real Time', in *Art and the Moving Image*, ed. by Tanya Leighton (London: Tate, 2008), p. 283.

5. Angela Melitopoulos and Maurizio Lazzarato, 'Assemblages', in *Animism: Modernity through the Looking Glass*, ed. by Anselm Franke (Vienna: Generali Foundation, 2011), p. 141.

6. Guattari quoted in Angela Melitopoulos and Maurizio Lazzarato, 'Machinic Animism', *Deleuze Studies* 6.2 (May 2012), p. 240.

7. Félix Guattari, 'Regimes, Pathways, Subjects' trans. by Brian Massumi in *The Guattari Reader*, ed. by Gary Genosko (London: Blackwell, 1996), p. 105.

8. Melitopoulos and Lazzarato, 'Assemblages', pp. 137–38.

9. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, trans. by Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1987), p. 257.

10. William James, *Essays in Radical Empiricism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1976), pp. 22-3.

11. Gilles Deleuze and Claire Parnet, *Dialogues II,* trans. by Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), p. 57.

12. Deleuze and Parnet, *Dialogues II,* p. viii.

13. Félix Guattari, 'On Machines,' *Journal of Philosophy and the Visual Arts* 6 (1995), p. 10.

14. Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, p. 293.

15. Ibid., p. 504.

16. Ibid., p. 88.

17. Guattari, 'Regimes, Pathways, Subjects', p. 104.

18. Félix Guattari, *Chaosmosis: An Ethico-Aesthetic Paradigm*, trans. by Paul Bains and Julian Pefanis (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995), p. 71.

19. Guattari, 'On Machines', p. 9.

20. Ibid., p. 8.

21. Ibid., p. 9.

22. Ibid., p. 9.

23. Ibid., p. 9.

24. Gilles Deleuze, 'Les Cours de Gilles Deleuze: Spinoza 17/02/1981' <http://www.webdeleuze.com/php/texte.php?cle=38&groupe=Spinoza&langue=2> [Accessed 07 April 2014].

25. Guattari, 'On Machines', p. 8.

26. Maurizio Lazzarato, 'The Machine', trans. by Mary O'Neill <http://eipcp.net/transversal/1106/lazzarato/en> [Accessed 07 April 2014].

27. Guattari, 'On Machines', p. 10.

28. Guattari, *Chaosmosis,* p. 37.

29. Guattari, 'On Machines', p. 11.

30. Ibid., pp. 11-12.

31. Guattari quoted in Melitopoulos and Lazzarato, 'Machinic Animism', p. 240.

32. Guattari, *Chaosmosis,* p. 101. The connection between the affective worlds of the infant and the artist has been made by the psychoanalyst Daniel Stern, whose work Guattari often cites. See, for example, Raymond Bellour, 'Going to the Cinema with Félix Guattari and Daniel Stern', trans. by Paul Fileri and Adrian Martin, in *The Guattari Effect*, ed. by Éric Alliez and Andrew Goffey (London: Continuum, 2011), pp. 220–34.

33. Jean-Claude Polack in Angela Melitopoulos and Maurizio Lazzarato, *Assemblages,* 2010 (video).

34. Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, p. 188.

35. Félix Guattari, *The Machinic Unconscious*, trans. by Taylor Adkins (New York: Semiotext(e), 2010), p. 157. Or again: 'Archaic societies are better equipped than white, male, capitalistic subjectivities to produce a cartography of this multivalence of alterity.' Guattari, *Chaosmosis*, p. 45.

36. Eduardo Viveiros de Castro in Angela Melitopoulos and Maurizio Lazzarato, *Assemblages,* 2010 (video).

37. The war machine is *machinic* precisely because it is characterised by relations of exteriority. as well as by continuous deterritorialisation in a 'smooth' space it creates itself through differential movement that defies axiomatisation. It therefore refers to whatever escapes the state's capture.

38. Stengers, 'Reclaiming Animism', p. 183.

39. Ibid., pp. 189-90.

40. Ibid., p. 185.

41. Ibid., p. 192.

42. Guattari, *Chaosmosis,* p. 102.

43. Ibid., p. 34.

44. Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 2: The Time-Image*, trans. by Hugh Tomlinson and Robert Galeta (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989), p. 33.

45. Melitopoulos and Lazzarato, 'Machinic Animism', p. 246.

46. Éric Alliez in Angela Melitopoulos and Maurizio Lazzarato, *Assemblages,* 2010 (video).

47. Ibid.

48. Maurizio Lazzarato, 'Existing Language, Semiotic Systems, and the Production of Subjectivity in Félix Guattari', in *Cognitive Architecture. From Bio-politics to Noo-politics*, ed. by Deborah Hauptmann and Warren Neidich (Rotterdam: 010 Publishers, 2010), p. 512.

49. See Alberto Toscano, 'Art Against Empire: On Alliez and Negri's "Peace and War"', *Theory, Culture & Society* 20, 2 (2003), pp. 103-08.

50. Maurizio Lazzarato, 'Semiotic Pluralism and the New Government of Signs: Homage to Félix Guattari', trans. by Mary O'Neill <http://eipcp.net/transversal/0107/lazzarato/en> [Accessed 07 April 2014].

51. Lazzarato, 'Semiotic Pluralism'.

52. Ibid.

53. Félix Guattari, *Molecular Revolution: Psychiatry and Politics*, trans. by Rosemary Sheed (London: Penguin, 1984), p. 127.

54. Lazzarato, 'Semiotic Pluralism'.

55. Ibid.

56. Maurizio Lazzarato, *Videophilosophie* (unpublished French manuscript), p. 11.

57. Lazzarato, 'Semiotic Pluralism'.

58. Lazzarato, 'Video, Flows, and Real Time', p. 283. Translation modified.

59. Ibid.

60. Lazzarato, 'Semiotic Pluralism.' Again, this reference to Bergson is primarily mediated by Deleuze. But Guattari also conflates the non-discursive, intensive world of affect with 'the Bergsonian concept of duration'. Félix Guattari, 'Ritornellos and Existential Affects', trans. by Juliana Schiesari and Georges van den Abbeele in *The Guattari Reader*, ed. by Gary Genosko (London: Blackwell, 1996), p. 159.

61. Lazzarato, 'Existing Language', p. 515.

62. Ibid., p. 519.

63. Ibid., p. 519.

64. Éric Alliez, 'Capitalism and Schizophrenia and Consensus: On Relational Aesthetics' in *Deleuze and Contemporary Art*, ed. by Stephen Zepke and Simon O'Sullivan (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010), pp. 92, 88.

65. Lazzarato, 'Existing Language', p. 515.

66. Guattari quoted in Lazzarato, 'Existing Language', p. 518.

67. Guattari, *Chaosmosis,* p. 14.

68. Bracha Ettinger, *The Matrixial Borderspace* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006).

69. Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, p. 260.

70. Lazzarato, 'Existing Language,' p. 512.

71. Maurizio Lazzarato, 'What Possibilities Presently Exist in the Public Sphere?' trans. by Nate Holdren <http://www.generation-online.org/p/fplazzarato4.htm> [Accessed 07 April 2014].

Biography

Jay Hetrick is an Assistant Professor of Cultural Studies at the American University in Dubai. He has published in the fields of 20th century art, continental aesthetics, and critical theory. He has edited and translated, with Gary Genosko, a book entitled *Machinic Eros: Félix Guattari's Writings on Japan*. He is currently preparing his PhD thesis - entitled *Cine-aesthetics: A Critique of Judgment after Deleuze and Michaux* - for publication and is translating Maurizio Lazzarato's book *Videophilosophy* into English.

Medium Affect Desire: Hybridising Real Virtual and the Actualised through Affective Medium Ecology

Marc Boumeester

Yen

Amongst the most difficult words to translate into English are the Portuguese word *Saudade* and the German word *Sehnsucht,* which – to a certain extent – cover the same lemma. Deeply rooted in romanticism, they both express a resilient and intense longing for something or someone, which comes with the admonition that this state does not necessarily require an actual object of desire: yearning for yearning's sake is an independent, auto-referential condition. The English expression, *yen*, dates from the era of the passionate consumption of opium, and indicates the intensity with which the 'prolonged unfulfilled desire or need' would have been felt, although the reference to physical addiction does not include all its capacities.

It is exactly this unfulfilled-ness which French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan[1] calls *Spaltung,* an equation involving two prosaic human drives (appetite and demand), leaving a definitional gap for desire, which is not (able) to be satisfied.[2] It is in this part of reality – the part that is not materialised, the part we call the virtual – that we find another vector field moving towards the one containing our mundane tendencies. Political theorist Jane Bennett calls it the *vitality* of (nonhuman) bodies, by which she means 'the capacity of things – edibles, commodities, storms, metals – not only to impede or block the will and designs of humans, but also to act as quasi agents or forces with trajectories, propensities or tendencies of their own'.[3] This exposes a mayhem of non-anthropocentric desires,

creating an arena of strange attractors and other topological vector fields in which our own unconscious drive is as effective as that of the steel ball in a pinball machine. How, then, can we isolate the intrinsic drive of the medium from its subservient position in the aesthetic, freeing its desire from the anthropocentric dominion?

The point of departure lies in the concept of meta-media, which is not to be mistaken for cross-media, trans-media or multi-media. In all of the latter categories, the particular media specifics are combined, connected and transposed to achieve a higher goal, to create a stronger expression of communication. A specific denotation of meta-media is found in the reversal of media-philosopher Marshall McLuhan's conception[4] of meta-media, referred to as 'the totalizing effect of media'. Media theorist Lev Manovich[5] expounded this concept by referring to it as a field of new interactions between form and content in the field of emerging media, and the convergence of technology and medium.

Elaborating specifically on a particular part of the meta-media system is the state that occurs when a certain concept, belief, or idea is heavily present, or cultivated to such an extent that it dominates all other potential notions. This state of the 'real virtual'[6] – as opposed to virtual reality – saturates the mental-medium (the concept is therefore often referred to in terms of highly volatile media, like air or ether) to such an extent that the mere expression of it can only be demanded by a particular medium.

Information is the pivoting point between the actual and the virtual, in this case the virtual is overflowing with concept, leaving no option than to crystallise in some type of medium. This crystallisation is contingently obligatory for the emersion of expression. From the non-anthropocentric point of view, the question is, what does the medium do? What does it want? What does it *yen* for?

For this expedition we have to distinguish a multitude of layers within the definition of medium. If it were still possible to search for the smallest signifying part within a tangible medium, the question arises whether that systematic would fail when going digital. Moreover, since the medium operates on the verge of the physical and the virtual, we need more abstract points of reference: the medium as the extension of man (effect), the medium as substrate (capacities), the medium as crystallised sensation (real virtual), and the medium as entity (desire). All of these are parameters for examining the overarching quality of the medium: the affective capacity of the medium (affect). Therefore we need to identify a medium-message system that excerpts itself from the realm of representation and signification: the asignifying sign.

Simulacra

The asignifying sign is not reducible to any other sign, yet neither it is a simulacrum in the Baudrillardian sense[7] since it only simulates itself in relation to itself (and not to anything it is not): it is auto-referential by nature. In the Lacanian tripartite division it would be named the 'real';[8] it would escape from philosopher C.S. Peirces *infinite semiosis.*[9] The asignifying sign would be the ultimate instrument for examining its affective effect without 'pollution' from any semiotic systematic. Logic would dictate a search for an image which contained no meaning at all. For this, the asignifying sign should be stripped of any meta-language, narrative, context or symbolism, refusing any instruments of analysis. The main criticism of Baudrillard's four-stroke layering would be the failure to include this auto-referentiality. Social theorist and philosopher Brian Massumi's critique on Baudrillard focuses mainly on the reversal of signification – the substitution of signs *of* the real *for* the real. In Baudrillard's state of hyper-reality, signs would no longer represent or refer to an external model, but only stand for themselves and refer to other signs. In the words of Massumi:

> In the absence of any gravitational pull to ground them, images accelerate and tend to run together. They become interchangeable. Any term can be substituted for any other: utter indetermination. Faced with this homogeneous surface of syntagmatic slippage, we are left speechless. We can only gape in fascination.[10]

Besides that, the logic of this reduction hinges again on the structuralist premise that there would be one type of systematic, with only one type of classification – regardless of which classification is used – that probably largely disregards the perspective of the beholder. Yet it would be unwise to approach this mechanism of the asignifying sign through a phenomenological or existentialist gateway. According to Deleuze and Guattari, the concept of art lies in its potentiality: it is not what it is, it is what it creates in percepts and affects. Percepts are not perceptions and affects are not affections. In the words of cultural theorist Claire Colebrook, 'A percept is that which *would be perceived*, and an affect is that which *would be felt*.'[11]

How, then, to prevent structuralism without becoming rudderless, how to get to the middle ground, not too close, yet not too far either? First we need to exit the realm of representation. In order to do that, philosopher Gilles Deleuze proposes overthrowing Platonism, which in his words means:

> […] to raise up simulacra, to assert their rights over icons or copies. The problem no longer concerns the distinction Essence/Appearance or Model/ Copy. This whole distinction operates in the world

of representation. The goal is the subversion of this world, 'the twilight of the idols.' The simulacrum is not degraded copy, rather it contains a positive power which negates *both original and copy, both model and reproduction*. Of the least two divergent series interiorized in the simulacrum, neither can be assigned as original or as copy.[12]

The danger in this reasoning is to assume that images start with their 'physical' appearance; it is rather the consumption that proves their existence. If an individual regards an image as an image, than that individual is already primed[13] to see an image. Psychotherapist and philosopher Felix Guattari suggests 'It is simply quite wrong to regard action on the psyche, the socius, and the environment as separate.'[14] And as it is impossible to prevent *Deutung* at any level. It is wise to define simulacra in a detached and abstract way (as opposed to the concrete and direct Baudrillardian approach). At this point, Deleuze's definition of simulacra seems to suit best: 'those systems in which different relates to different by means of difference itself. What is essential is that we find in these systems no prior identity, no internal resemblance'.[15]

'Eye' of the beholder

Secondly, to reattach the human to the aesthetics would also demand a search for the middle ground (the excluded middle),[16] and for this it would be helpful to consider philosopher and artist Manuel DeLanda's position on reductionism.[17] DeLanda distinguishes what he calls 'macro-reductionism' whereby the existence of individual persons is acknowledged, yet the assumption is made that they would have completely co-opted the values of a higher social order or class to which they supposedly belong (individuals are products of society, *pars pro toto*). He refers to the work of Durkheim, Marx and Parsons in this respect. Unsurprisingly, the opposite position would be that of 'micro-reductionism', which states that 'society as a whole' does exist, but only by the grace of being the surplus of

the aggregation of its parts (its individuals).

A third position could arise from the recognition of (medium) large, non-human entities that do not possess a social nature by default, but which form the true agency of society from which both social structure and individual activity emerge; this so-called 'meso-reductionism' could be attached to scholars such as Giddens. But this is not what we are looking for. DeLanda elaborates on Deleuze's *assemblage* theory (he calls this a 'neo-assemblage theory' or 'assemblage theory 2.0'). The key component of this theory is the acknowledgement of *entirety as the relations of exteriority.* This means that any assemblage consists only of the relations between its components, and these relations are determined by the capacity of the components to interact. These capacities might be offered by the components' properties, but they can never be reduced simply to that. After all, the capacities are also dependent on the interaction within the assemblage. On the other hand, any component is always part of many assemblages, so therefore its properties can never explain the relations that are exterior to its body, let alone explain anything about it as a whole. This whole does not exist out of the connections of its components in a formally logic way, that would make the component a logically necessary part of that totality (and assuming a predeterministic position, the whole is then supposed *to be* prior to its own existence). Rather, these relations are 'only' contingently obligatory in order to create the whole.

In addition to this, DeLanda defines the concept of assemblage along two dimensions: 'One dimension or axis defines the variable roles which an assemblage's components may play: from a purely *material* role at one extreme of the axis, to a purely *expressive* role at the other.'[18] The second measurement defines 'variable processes in which these components become involved and that either stabilize the identity of an assemblage […] or destabilize it'.[19] The stabilising processes are referred to as

territorialisation, and the destabilising processes as *deterritorialisation*. Thus, to prevent any (post-) structuralism, it will always be essential to include 'The "Eye" of the Beholder' (EotB) – note that eye is already a metaphor – which indicates the absoluteness of actuality and psychological temporal conditions of the *author casu quo* the *interpretant*, and his or her existence in the assemblage (Ironically we need a sign to indicate this: Ⓑ).

Now this is where it becomes very interesting in terms of the asignifying sign. Following painter Francis Bacon, the sign has a very brutal quality, it can bypass our consciousness, prevent any interference by the brain whatsoever, and go straight to our nervous system. This occurs before recognition, automation and classification. At the very moment it acts in this way, it *deterritorialises* the system to which it also belongs (a semiotic system for example) to such an extent that it will not be able to hold its position in the assemblage; it has become a *free radical*.[20] This is the 'moment' before causality kicks in – without causality there is no chronology – it is a state of non-chronological time.[21] This is when the Eye of the Beholder Ⓑ is not yet assured; or to be more precise, it is in fact ruptured (Deleuze calls this the 'fissure'). The fissure of EotB Ⓑ can be understood as the birthplace of the crystal image.[22] It is the *ratio cognoscendi* of time. How to understand could not exist without those who understand. Obviously the asignifying sign can only exist very briefly, its own appearance creates a point of reference and changes the field in which it appears. But since the *Dynamic Interpretant*[23] is born every split second, these instances of existence appear unconnectedly continuative, at best categorised by their capacity to affect (affordance). Should an asignifying sign survive its own appearance, the moment it shows, it will act self-referentially.

Virtual and sublime

The third and final element to consider is how the asignifying sign relates to the realm of the virtual and the sublime. As Deleuze points out:

> Aesthetics suffers from an agonizing dualism. On the one hand it designates a theory of feeling as the form of possible experience; on the other, it marks out a theory of art as the reflection of real experience. In order for these two meanings to join, the conditions of experience in general must become the conditions of real experience.[24]

But how does this work when the experience is not yet experienced, if it is still in the pre-conscious phase? To approach this topic we return briefly to philosophy scholar Daniel W. Smith[25] as he summarises Deleuze's theory of Sensation:

> In the 'Analytic of the Sublime', the faculty of the imagination is forced to confront its own limit, its own maximum: fated with an immense object […] or a powerful object […], the imagination strives to comprehend these sensations in their totality, but is unable to do so. It reaches the limits of its power, and finds itself reduced to impotency. This failure gives rise to a pain, a cleavage in the subject between what can be imagined and what can be thought, between the imagination and reason.[26]

This gap, this yearning, can well be understood in a natural context or in a context of growth and experience; to engage in such systems even seems unavoidable, just for the purpose of learning itself. But when we look at a system in which the exposure to a body of the sublime is not incidental; i.e., manmade and deliberately frequented, then something else must be at work, since it is evident that the yearning is not felt because it occurs as part of the experiencing of the sublime, but more likely because of the sensation of the yearning itself. The yearning is not meant to be stopped – it is the yearning that we yearn for. To a great extent

one might wonder if this system is fundamentally different from the system of desire.

Lacan distinguishes desire from need and demand. Desire is the excess produced by the enunciation of need in demand. '[D]esire is neither the appetite for satisfaction nor the demand for love, but the difference that results from the subtraction of the first from the second, the very phenomenon of their splitting' (*Spaltung*).[27] Hence desire can never be satisfied, or as sociologist and philosopher Slavoj Žižek[28] puts it: 'desire's raison d'être is not to realize its goal, to find full satisfaction, but to reproduce itself as desire'. Can we boldly replace that desire with our yearning, or vice versa? That would imply that the yearning for the sublime equals the demand for love minus the experience itself.[29] If we regard the sublime as a proto-theory of singularity[30] and widen the definition of desire to 'a process of production without reference to any exterior agency, whether it be a lack that hollows it out or a pleasure that fills it'[31] then it would make a perfect fit. According to Deleuze, the work of art is first and foremost a machine that produces a sensation:

> By means of the material, the aim of art is to wrest the percept from perception of objects and the states of a perceiving subject, to wrest the affect from affections as the transition from one state to another: to extract a bloc of sensations, a pure being of sensation.[32]

This is the quest at this moment: the appearance of the asignifying sign, also known as the *punctum*[33] (or to be more precise; the *pre-punctum* without the *studium*), also known as the singularity, formerly known as the sublime, is the precise topic of this paper.

Natures of pervasion as sets of relations

The central premise in this experiment is that the asignifying sign is most likely to exist in an environment which is highly charged with (visual) information, probably containing a multitude of (symbolic) narratives, various (visual) semiotic and semantic systems, and many denotative and connotative layers. The logic in this comes from the proposition that any constructed image has no representational value at all, representation does not exist, returning here to the real virtuality through the work of psychologist J. J. Gibson: '*Images are neither necessary for thought nor for perception!*' As a consequence of this, there would be no fundamental difference between the empty canvas or the saturated photograph, the image itself does not provide the modes of perception. Besides this, the canvas would never be empty to start with (as Deleuze puts it, we always start in the middle; thought has no beginning, just an outside to which it is connected). To steer away from any over- or misinterpretation, or actually, from any interpretation at all (the asignifying sign operates on the pre-conscious level), it would seem preferable to forcefully, perhaps even violently, attack our modes of perception. The empty canvas leaves too much room for interpretation; the abstract image makes it even worse. It becomes really serious if the artist starts to believe in the independent state of *Deutung*[34] as the genesis of the deeper. Painter Kasimir Malevich wrote after a visit from his friend, the poet Velimir Khlebnikov,[35] who was heavily involved in calculating laws of causality:

> The numbers that Khlebnikov has discovered [*in my paintings red.*] suggest that something powerful lies within 'Supremus'; an inherent law governs this sphere, perhaps the very same law that has guided world creativity. Through me passes that same force, that same mutual harmony of creative laws that governs everything. Whatever existed heretofore just wasn't the real thing.[36]

This raises several questions since Malevich's suprematism was oriented towards the circumvention of the system of *sense-making*, as he adequately stated:

Under Suprematism I understand the primacy of pure feeling in creative art. To the Suprematist, the visual phenomena of the objective world are, in themselves, meaningless; the significant thing is feeling, as such, quite apart from the environment in which it is called forth.[37]

This apparent conflict between sensation and sense-making, suggests that we need to start at the other end; we need to overwhelm our capacities with information, overload our circuits. To stack meaning upon meaning, sign upon sign, semiotic on semiotic and convention on convention beyond the point at which the system collapses, to the point where we simply can't make any sense out of it. That is the precise *moment* the asignifying sign appears. However, this *moment* has nothing to do with duration of time, it is the moment *chronos* (in its appearance as one of the avatars of kairos) stops unfolding out of *aion*. It is the *moment* before the causality of logic, consciousness and sense-making sets time in motion, before the transgression from the static universal to the dynamic individual. This is the moment of the fissure in The Eye of the Beholder Ⓑ. The asignifying sign is not only a sign, it is a conditionality which seems more likely to be composed in a highly saturated environment rather than in a low saturated field. The descriptions used here are mere *reflections* of the progression of time from the moment it transgressed from aion to chronos. Any shape of kairos stands to chronos, as an Euclidean space stands to a topological space. It is the trace the snake leaves in the sand after it moves through it, it is the shadow cast on the wall. Therefore we can never totalise all kairos into one chronos.

When Deleuze writes that 'the crystal reveals a direct time-image, and no longer an indirect image of time deriving from movement. It does not abstract time; it does better: it reverses its subordination in relation to movement',[38] he is expressing that exact moment when aion is addressed solely on its very existence. It is when time is only expressible as a singularity, which, in the words of architectural theorist Sanford Kwinter, can be understood as 'those critical points or moments within a system when its qualities and not just its quantities undergo a fundamental change'.[39] The asignifying sign is a singularity *par excellence*. Bear in mind that this discussion has no relation to the transition of time in mediated form. Any mediated distortion of time solely indicates the transition of the temporal and spatial conditions of object/subject; namely, the artificial conversion of the *here* and *now*, into the *everywhere* and *always*.

Media

Media theorist Thomas Mitchell[40] goes straight to the heart of the discourse when he claims: 'Images are like living organisms; living organisms are best described as things that have desires (for example, appetites, needs, demands, drives); therefore, the question of what pictures want is inevitable.' Yet according to the initial premises, this argument lacks two essential elements; firstly, the issue of representation. Following Bennett, we would not need any comparison to a living body to deal with the question of the desire of matter, even without short-circuiting the matter-image in the Bergsonian sense. Building on the work of sociologist Zygmunt Bauman,[41] we could claim that under the social conditions of liquid modernity, a mediated state of affairs is the closest, if not the only, perceivable shape of veracity. Leaving the notion of pure trueness on a conceptual sheet, we could adopt media theorist Mark Deuze's[42] concept of a life lived not through, but *in* the media. In that condition, the alterity of all the physical is *owned* by our individual perception and subjective representation of neutrality, and the closest 'moment of objectivity' is only generated by the accumulation of all mediated notions. Presupposing that non-human bodies would have desires, then the question would not be, 'What desires do they have?' but, 'What desires do they have under which conditions?' Or, to be even

more precise: 'I never desire something all by itself, I don't desire an aggregate either, I desire from within an aggregate,' as Deleuze explains.[43] The definition of the aggregate (assemblage) should also come from within the assemblage itself.

Amidst the techno-social avalanche in which media transforms into an amorphous, ubiquitous entity, it is not surprising that the cry for reconnection with the non-mediated generates a revitalisation of a desire for the lived incident. Incorporating strategies such as *dérive*[44] seems to have a potential in facilitating this aspiration, but given that the relation between the lived and the represented has a dichotomous character in this context, it would not appear to be possible to translate such techniques directly into an exploration and mapping tool for socio-aesthetic conditions if we want to include the use of *any* medium. Yet it would be unwise to classify this failing attempt as an unjustifiable exercise. As much as the *dérive* was not about finding reality, Kino-Pravda[45] was not about finding truth. Both strategies are basically games with only one player. The mere fact that this player entered the game created a fundamental gap between player and game board, leaving all notions of objectivity behind. The creation of a third way, a dismantling of the *artistic Tower of Babel*[46] as filmmaker Dziga Vertov suggested, seemed appropriate in making way for the omnipresent distances between the investigator and the investigated, whether it be the heroic cameraman, or the *flâneur* versus the old city. To incorporate the *drift* merely as an objectified instrument for socio-urban exploration without connecting to its ideology or translating its socio-political objectives into one's own aspirations, would completely denounce its original intentions and, ironically, transform the event into a spectacle. Besides, the *drift* requires an 'un-mediated' level of participation, and therefore it seems impossible to incorporate any medium during the act itself. Only in hindsight could one reflect using transferal intermediates. But this is not about embodiment, nor is it about representation.

Although Deleuze is obviously referring to media as part of a much bigger system than what is being directly dealt with here, it cannot be denied that the structural changes in society with respect to the role of the media will affect our efforts to incorporate the role of the media from the times of Guy Debord. With the acknowledgement of this impossible unification, by amplifying one's own (political) vision, the discussion shifts from what is true to: 'is this particular truth more valuable than that general notion of truth?' By adopting the above-mentioned notion of fragmentation as the creation of a whole by the collection of its fragments, we – the present – can enter the field of games and still produce very valuable truths to prevent us from becoming mindless spectators. Guy Debord asserts:

> The spectacle presents itself simultaneously as all of society, as part of society, and as instrument of unification. As a part of society it is specifically the sector which concentrates all gazing and all consciousness. Due to the very fact that this sector is separate, it is the common ground of the deceived gaze and of false consciousness, and the unification it achieves is nothing but an official language of generalized separation.[47]

The effects of exposure, the endurance of the spectator, and the seemingly distant state of the events, create a different mindset, a different mental model. A result of spectatorship in the Debordian sense could have been that the passive-participant felt confirmation in the fact that all problems could be solved in ninety minutes, that cars did not need gasoline, heroes did not use the bathroom and dark alleys were always dangerous. These notions were not mental models when they were initially presented, but became so when they became part of a view that was reflected in the organisation of a social covenant such as modernity. By constantly reinforcing comparable notions in a society, obviously

such notions take hold, regardless of their origin – if there ever was an original. We need to reassess our relation to the media in the same way we need to reassess the relationship between the individual and the social: the media has become part of our environment. To assume that one can still maintain a certain distance and have some degree of control over the media's influence is rather dangerous: awareness of the socio-political implications is not a topic *of* the media, the media *is* the topic. According to Felix Guattari:

> The decisive factor, it seems to me, is the general inflexibility of social and psychological praxes – their failure to adapt – as well as a widespread incapacity to perceive the erroneousness of partitioning off the real into a number of separate fields. It is quite simply wrong to regard action on the psyche, the socius, and the environment as separate. Indeed, if we continue – as the media would have us do – to refuse squarely to confront the simultaneous degradation of these three areas, we will in effect be acquiescing in a general infantilization of opinion, a destruction and neutralization of democracy.[48]

Conclusion

This article does not strive to reach a conclusion; that is, the answer to its central question: what does the medium want? 'Medium' can be seen as sets of relations, an interplay of thresholds that use information, blocks of sensation, to hybridise the virtual (as in real virtual) and the actualised. Medium is always a conditional ecology of (non-) human capacities and desires, and therefore it is already plural from the start. It is the yearning that is the central force of interaction – the true interaction between medium and man works not through narrative or representation, it emanates through the asignifying and the affective. In order to be able to move towards an understanding of its workings one has to become part of that same system, since only from within the action comes the action. It would only make sense to classify a medium on the basis

of its affective quality; a comparison could be made with an iso-affective[49] argument that would link to the initial argument of the relative efficiency of the medium, seen from the perspective of drive (and the inherent relation with the affective facets of events). It is unmanageable to distinguish anything but scale in these systems; it is impossible to pinpoint the exact moment of affection. The Portuguese claim that only a Portuguese can understand the full meaning of *Saudade*, and even then there would be a semantic gap, since it is precisely the unnameable unfulfillable which holds the key. This gap is not meant to be filled, since it is the yearning we yearn for. The asignifying sign cannot be isolated, it is neither here nor there, yet it is conditionally omnipresent, it inhibits the gap, its desire is to affect. To end with the legendary words of Dziga Vertov:

> I am kino-eye. I am a builder. I have placed you, whom I've created today, in an extraordinary room which did not exist until just now when I also created it. In this room there are twelve walls shot by me in various parts of the world […] From one person I take the hands, the strongest and most dexterous; from another I take the legs, the swiftest and most shapely; from a third, the most beautiful and expressive head - and through montage I create a new, perfect man.[50]

Notes

1. Jacques Lacan, *Écrits* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2006), pp. 575-85.
2. Slavoj Žižek, *How to read Lacan?,* (London: Granta Books, 2006).
3. Jane Bennett, *Vibrant Matter*, (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2010).
4. Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* (New York: New American Library, 1964).
5. Lev Manovich, *The Language of New Media* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2001).
6. Slavoj Žižek, *The Parallax View* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2009).

7. French sociologist and philosopher Jean Beaudrillard distinguishes four types of simulacra:

    (i) it is the reflection of a basic reality.

    (ii) it masks and perverts a basic reality.

    (iii) it masks the absence of a basic reality.

    (iv) it bears no relation to any reality whatever: it is its own pure simulacrum.

8. Lacan distinguishes the imaginary, the symbolic and the real. In the words of Amanda Loos: 'In the Lacanian arena, the symbolic-real-imaginary forms a trio of intrapsychic realms which comprise the various levels of psychic phenomena. They serve to situate subjectivity within a system of perception and a dialogue with the external world.' Jacques Lacan, *Écrits*.

9. Lev Manovich suggests: 'We can say that a hyperlinked image, and hypermedia in general, 'externalizes' Pierce's idea of infinite semiosis and Derrida's concept of infinite deferral of meaning – although this does not mean that this 'externalization' automatically legitimizes these concepts.' Lev Manovich, *The Language of New Media* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2001), p. 290.

10. Brian Massumi, 'REALER THAN REAL, The Simulacrum According to Deleuze and Guattari', *Copyright*, 1 (1987), pp. 90-7.

11. Claire Colebrook, *Blake, Deleuzian Aesthetics, and the Digital* (London and New York: Continuum, 2010), pp. vii –xxxvii. Emphasis added.

12. Gilles Deleuze, 'Plato and the Simulacrum', trans. by Rosalind Krauss, *October*, 27, 1983, (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1996), pp. 45-56.

13. Priming is an implicit memory effect in which exposure to a stimulus influences a response to a later stimulus.

14. Felix Guattari, 'The Three Ecologies', trans. by Chris Turner, *new formations*, 8 (Summer 1989).

15. Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition* (London: Continuum, 2012). p. 299.

16. James Williams, *Gilles Deleuze's Logic of Sense: A Critical Introduction and Guide* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2008) p. 72.

17. Manuel DeLanda, *A New Philosophy of Society: Assemblage Theory And Social Complexity* (London and New York: Continuum, 2006).

18. DeLanda, *A New Philosophy of Society*, p 12.

19. Ibid.

20. This is a parable: free radicals are atoms, molecules or ions with unpaired electrons or an open shell configuration. Free radicals may have a positive, negative or zero charge. The analogy lies in a body willing and able to (re)act, cooperatively or forcefully.

21. '[W]e constitute a continuum with fragments of different ages; we make use of transformations which take place between two sheets to constitute a sheet of transformation. For instance, in a dream, there is no longer one recollection-image which embodies one particular point of a given sheet; there are a number of images which are embodied within each other, each referring to a different point of the sheet. Perhaps, when we read a book, watch a show, or look at a painting, and especially when we are ourselves the author, an analogous process can be triggered: we constitute a sheet of transformation which invents a kind of transverse continuity or communication between several sheets, and weaves a network of non-localizable relations between them. In this way we extract non-chronological time.' Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 2* (London: Continuum, 1989), p.119.

22. Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 2*.

23. Peirces describes three types of interpretant: the immediate interpretant, the dynamic interpretant and the final interpretant: 'The [Dynamic] Interpretant is whatever interpretation any mind actually makes of a sign. […] The Final Interpretant does not consist in the way in which any mind does act but in the way in which every mind would act. That is, it consists in a truth which might be expressed in a conditional proposition of this type: "If so and so were to happen to any mind this sign would determine that mind to such and such conduct." […] The Immediate Interpretant consists in the Quality of the Impression that a sign is fit to produce, not to any actual reaction.' *The Collected Papers of Charles Sanders Peirce*, ed. by Arthur W. Burks (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1958), p.1909.

24. Gilles Deleuze, 'Plato and the Simulacrum', p. 51.

25. Daniel W Smith, 'Deleuze's Theory of Sensation:

Overcoming the Kantian Duality', in *Deleuze: A Critical Reader*, ed. by P. Patton (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1996), pp. 29-34.

26. Ibid.

27. Jacques Lacan, *Écrits*, pp. 575-85.

28. Slavoj Žižek, *How to read Lacan?*.

29. Maurizio Bolognini's work has been considered relevant to the theory of the technological sublime and the aesthetics of flux (as opposed to the aesthetics of form).

30. Singularity definition: '[T]hose critical points or moments within a system when its qualities and not just its quantities undergo a fundamental change.' From Sanford Kwinter, *Architectures of Time: Toward a Theory of the Event in Modernist Culture* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2001), p.13.

31. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus* (New York: Continuum, 1987), p.170.

32. Gilles Deleuze, *Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation* (London and New York: Continuum, 2003), p.167.

33. Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida* (London: Vintage, 1993), p. 27.

34. Deutung bezeichnet den Prozess des Erkennens oder Konstruierens einer Bedeutung. Dabei ist es unerheblich, ob es sich um einen tatsächlichen oder vermeintlichen Erkenntnisprozess handelt.

35. Velimir Khlebnikov was a poet and central figure in the Russian Futurist movement.

36. Kazimir Malevich, Letter to M. Matiushin (4 April 1916) in *Malevich*, trans. by Marc Schreurs (Moscow: Ministry of Culture USSR, 1989), p.158.

37. Kazimir Malevich, *The Non-Objective World: The Manifesto of Suprematism* (Mineola: Dover Publications, 2003).

38. Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 2*, p.95. 'The crystal is like a ratio cognoscendii of time, while time, conversely, is ratio essendiii. What the crystal reveals or makes visible is the hidden ground of time, that is, its differentiation into two flows, that of presents which pass and that of pasts which are preserved. Time simultaneously makes the present pass and preserves the past in itself. There are, therefore, already, to possible time-images, one grounded in the past, the other in the present. Each is complex and is valid for time as a whole.'

i the ground of knowledge: something through or by means of which a thing is known.

ii the cause or ground of the existence of a thing.

39. Sanford Kwinter, *Architectures of Time*, p. 13.

40. Thomas Mitchell, *What do pictures want?: The Lives and Loves of Images* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2005), p.11.

41. Zygmunt Bauman, *Liquid Modernity* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2000).

42. Mark Deuze, Media Work (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007).

43. Gilles Deleuze interviewed by Claire Parnet, in *L'Abécédaire de Gilles Deleuze*, 1992 <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wdSyuqlkVCA> [accessed 09 July 2013].

44. Marxist theorist and co-founder of the Situationist International organisation, Guy Debord offered *dérive* (drift) as 'a mode of experimental behavior linked to the conditions of urban society: a technique of rapid passage through varied ambiances'.

45. *Kino-Pravda* was a newsreel series by Dziga Vertov. Its main goal was to capture parts of actuality which showed a deeper truth that could not be seen without the aid of the camera and various montage techniques.

46. In Vertov's view, 'art's tower of Babel' was the dominance of narrative over cinematic technique – in film theory also known as the Institutional Mode of Representation – which he saw as a direct threat for the construction of true cinema.

47. Guy Debord, *Society of the Spectacle* (Cambridge: Zone Books, 2000).

48. Felix Guattari, 'The Three Ecologies'.

49. 'Iso-affective': being of the same affective effectiveness.

50. Dziga Vertov, *Kino-Eye: The Writings of Dziga Vertov*, trans. by Kevin O'Brien (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), p. 17. Dziga Vertov is a pseudonym for David Kaufman.

Biography

Marc Boumeester worked for various major television- and film-producing companies and actualized dozens of audiovisuals in a range from commercials to feature films. He is appointed as researcher and lecturer at the Delft University of Technology, theory section at the faculty of Architecture and he has co-founded (and leads) the department of Interactive / Media / Design at the Royal Academy of Art in The Hague. He lectures in the field of media philosophy and design theory. His research focuses on the liaison between affect, socio-architectural conditions and unstable media, in particular cinema.

Moiré Effect: Index and the Digital Image

Stella Baraklianou

Mystery has always surrounded the life of the Swiss photographer Ernst Moiré (1857-1929). Not least, because though frequently photographed throughout his life, it is almost impossible to see him. Indeed, the blurry photographs of Moiré possibly point to the origin of (and certainly exemplify) the technological problem of two dot matrixes misaligning during printing and resulting in a flawed reproduction, now commonly known as the 'moiré effect'.[1]

In Lytle Shaw's novel, a writer follows the mysterious life of Ernst Moiré, a speculative photographer who lived between 1857-1929 and was apparently known for the accidental misaligned printing technique that took his name. The real origin of the word moiré comes from the French, and refers to a special treatment for silk in which two layers of fabric are pressed together to give it the effect of rippled water. More widely, moiré refers to the optical illusion created when two grid, mesh or dot patterned formations are superimposed. Depending on the variation or degree of misalignment, different moiré patterns are formed.[2] [fig. 1]

In the instance of digital photographs, the appearance of moiré patterning in specific areas of the image is disruptive to the overall subject matter and confuses the human eye. Depending on a variety of factors, such as distance of lens from object, the angle of the camera, and, primarily, the photographed subject matter, these areas appear as aberrations or mistakes. Moiré patterning emerges especially when a photograph contains a fine pattern of fabric, texture, or even repetitive lines, such as in architecture. Instead of reproducing the original grid pattern, the misalignment occurs due to the frequency of the photographed pattern coinciding with the frequency of the capturing chip. Areas within the image appear to have a blue or red hue, causing a ghosting of the image in concentric circles. Interference, here, functions as an actual sign, albeit a sign appearing asymptomatically and registering a blurring of boundaries between the apparatus, the depicted subject matter and its translatability.

Moire patterning and monochromatic light diffraction were noted by the inventor of photography, Henry Fox Talbot, as early as 1836. Talbot's 'fractal carpets' are observed when a light beam is diffracted through measured out slates or gratings, creating patterned sequences of the same image at varying distances. The 'Talbot effect', as it is otherwise known, is one of the optical phenomena that involve the extreme coherent interference of waves. In theory, quantum carpets can produce the same image in a discontinuous patterning array. Belonging to the limits of physics and number theory, these phenomena have only recently been revisited, not least because of their importance in quantum physics.[3]

At the intersection of a happy accident or natural occurrence, moiré phenomena also have a wide range of applications within science and technology, including document authentication and

anti-counterfeiting. As a theory of super-positioned patterns and grids, moiré further points to an occurrence whereby representation of an indexical nature (the actual thing photographed: a textured fabric) is caught between the actuality of the designated thing itself and a second doubling up. How can this phenomenon help us to seek an alternative understanding of the indexical signifier? Something that corresponds to its original signifier has, in its actualisation, slipped into a grey area outside meaning or culturally assigned values of meaning. To what structure or syntagmatic paradigm does this phenomena belong, if not merely a failure of asyntagmatic mechanical transcript? How does this coding allow for an alternative understanding of traditional hierarchical values, and where is it generated?

Photography has been theorised and understood primarily through an ontological relation – something has to exist in front of the camera lens in order for it be recorded – giving photography from the outset a unique relationship with reality, time and light. Otherwise also understood as a trace, or a mark, this relation in semiotic discourse belongs to the category of signs operating within the field of the index. Expanded from C. S. Pierce's classic taxonomy in the field of signification, the index is a type of sign that produces meaning through an existential or phenomenological relation between signifier and signified, literally meaning that there is direct correspondence: 'A genuine index and its object must be existent individuals, (whether things or facts), and its immediate interpretant must be of the same character.'[4] For example, the person sitting in front of the camera bears a true (direct) resemblance to his or her photographic portrait. The trace of light as it bounces off the subject over a determined period of time (the length of time imposed by the shutter speed and aperture of the camera in order to obtain a satisfactory image) is the existential link ascribing the photographic record with a unique resemblance.

This 'emanation of the referent'[5] or indexical nature of the photograph, which corresponds point by point to a real object that at some point in time was in front of the camera lens, has been intrinsic to the photograph's identity. 'I call photographic referent not the optionally real thing to which an image or a sign refers but the necessarily real thing which has been placed in front of the lens, without which there would have been no photograph.'[6] Especially in analogue practice, light and chemistry combine to capture the here and now in front of the camera, thus constituting this relationship through time and duration. Based on chemistry and the function of silver halide crystals, which are extremely sensitive to light, analogue photography has relied on the ability to achieve an 'original', negative permanent record, from which multiple identical copies can be obtained.

The superseding of analogue photographic practices by digital ones has left a momentary gap in tracing the relationship of the referent or indexical nature of the photograph back to (if any) idea of an original. With the advent of digital technology, another layer has emerged in what some call the shift from 'analogue indexicality to digital virtuality'.[7] In other words, what most authors acknowledge is that the change in material support, or the move to new technologies, becomes central in the configuration of new structures or powers of hierarchy that will govern our perception of images and photographs from now on.

In the case of classic semiotic discourse related to visual imagery, meaning is assigned via the correspondence of the representational matter of images produced. The codes produced here are attributed via a structuralist reading within the confines of culture and through the utterances of language.[8] Therefore, in the field of semiotics, the photograph has been dependent on a reading governed by hierarchies of power and structures of language, where the subject's position is one of an invested viewer,
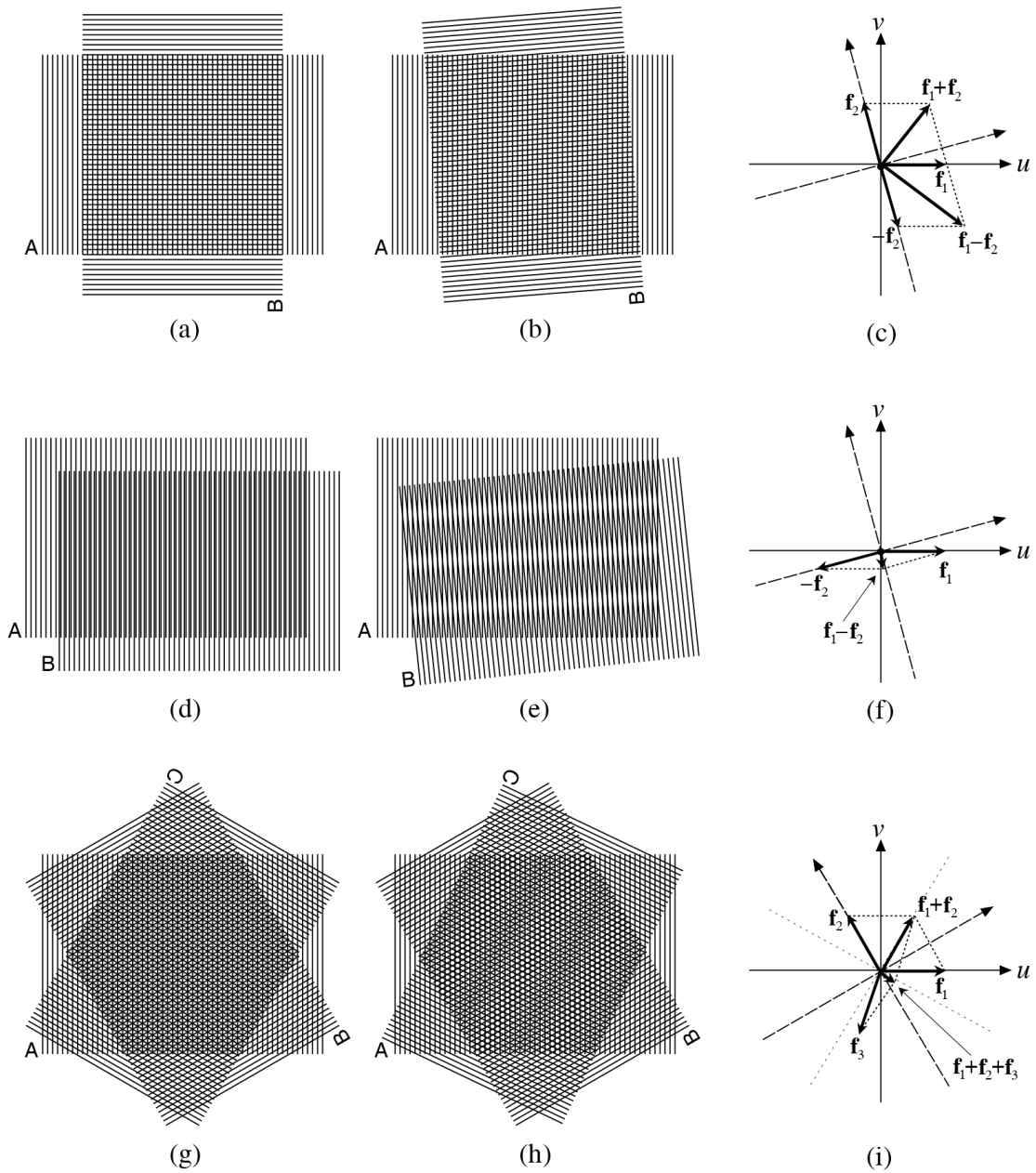
(a)　　　　　　(b)　　　　　　(c)

(d)　　　　　　(e)　　　　　　(f)

(g)　　　　　　(h)　　　　　　(i)

Fig. 1: Moiré formations, Isaac Amidror, *The theory of the moiré phenomenon. Periodic layers,* 2nd edition, (London; Springer, 2009), p. 36.

usually constructed through the binary oppositions of enunciation and significance: male/female, white/Other. 'Photography is one signifying system among others in society which produces the ideological subject in the same movement in which they communicate their ostensible contents.'[9] Histories of art and visual culture have relied on the subject's role as dominant surveyor, ascribing this role in an a-priori presupposition based on a fundamental split between subject/object, subject/apparatus, subject/machine, subject/image. Extensively, what is present in front of the camera lens extends the hypothesis of an all-encompassing vantage point, central to the classic perspectival systems from the fifteenth century onwards.

Yet the emergence of photography (1839), and later film, was soon followed by the philosophy of Henri Bergson and his seminal 1896 *Matter and Memory*, in which he developed the concepts of the virtual and actual, placing the importance of movement and perception within the flow of images. The world is to be understood as a flow of images which act upon each other, the subject being merely one of the centres of indetermination through which images pass or filter through. The virtual, in fact, being co-present with the actual.[10] The human body acts as a centre of indetermination, an image in the aggregate of other images, of action or reaction, that through the force of perception contracts the parts in continuous pulsations or vibrations of time (duration). Virtual and actual collide and contaminate, not as something exterior to the subject, but rather as intrinsic qualities of perception, memory and movement. There is no externally supposed 'real' that lends itself to representation, but only pure perception and images, because the world is already a flow of images. In Bergson's terms:

> [T]here are external images, then my body, and lastly, the changes brought about by my body in the surrounding images. I see plainly how external images influence the image that I call my body: they transmit movement to it. And I also see how this body influences external images: it gives back movement to them. My body is, then, in the aggregate of the material world, an image which acts like other images [...] my body, an object destined to move other objects, is, then, a center of action; it cannot give birth to a representation.[11]

Contained within the flow of images, subject and object are caught in the movement of pure perception and memory as duration. In short, the *dispositifs* or apparatuses of time intervene as motors endowed with a relative autonomy from man. Technology, here, is to be understood as part of a wider mechanics, like language or other concepts in society that 'simultaneously fix becoming and allow access to duration; simultaneously neutralizing the actual/virtual circuit in an eternal present'.[12]

Since its inception, photography has been tied to the mechanics of a photographic apparatus (*dispositif*) and the reproducibility of multiple copies. The trace of the original, through the imprint of light rays, is achieved through the intervention of the *dispositif* or apparatus, suspending time by means of this process of capture. Technological advancements from the 1960s onwards have allowed an image to be obtained from a silicon chip, converting photon energy into a current. Light from a scene captured through a photographic lens is now formed onto a sensor that contains millions of photosensitive sites or photosites, converting electrical signals into a two-dimensional spatial array of information. At the level of the smallest possible signifier, a digital image is composed by pixels, a sample encoded in a set of binary code. Each individual pixel can only register spatial characteristics, for example, location within a grid (x, y) and, initially, tonal range. The body of the photograph becomes a flux of information contained in binary code.

Effectively, through a series of algorithms, the digital image, the photograph, can be assigned

another layer of signification beyond the purely representational. This purely automated process of assigning value through a code perhaps raises the question of the index or signification being designated on the grounds of a relational process: an algebraic code does not correspond point by point to nature; in fact, it is merely an encoding. This correspondence or resemblance becomes contaminated from the inside by all the signs that should point to or represent real life. So the resemblance, rather than corresponding point by point to nature (index) can also operate as a site of transference, as an inter-moment, lacking a paradigmatic or syntagmatic signification.

This site of transference belongs neither purely to the subject nor to the representation it bears. In an interstice of formation and appearance, like the moiré effect, time becomes pure duration, and perception rather than representation governs attention. Enveloped and surrounded in the flow of images, the subject is essentially in a state of 'free fall'. Compared with the hierarchies of an ocular-centric system, this subject, as Hito Steyerl sees it, cannot be constituted through the classical conditions of a ground and horizon line linear perspective. 'With the loss of horizon also comes the departure of a stable paradigm of orientation, which has situated concepts of subject and object, of space and time, throughout modernity. In falling, the lines of the horizon shatter, twirl around, and superimpose.'[13]

In a similar vein, Parisi and Terranova's argument stands at the crossroads between cultural theory and digital new media, where the body or bodies, whether male/female, subject/object become part of the re-enactment within the flux of images and 'their desire is to take over the real, to overwhelm us to the point where we will no longer be able to discriminate between referent and sign'.[14] In their account, not only stemming from Bergson, but as far back as Lucretius, another history of images is possible, without the mediation of questions pertaining

to representation and reality. Sensory, material images are part of an affective understanding that place the subject in a relational framework of time, duration and movement. To quote Bergson and Deleuze, 'an affective approach to images requires a close understanding of the different layers through which a body operates as *an image amongst other images.*'[15]

If the operation of the image is to be understood as a body, then in an immanent reading of Walter Benjamin's classic text 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction', the question of technological reproducibility, or the question of a copy and its original, can be placed within an equally relational framework of how and why a work of art operates in an aesthetic trajectory of operative value. Benjamin states that photography and film have been able to put the 'copy of the original into situations which would be out of reach for the original itself, enabling the original and the beholder to meet halfway'.[16] With the advent of photography primarily, but also film, which are dependent on *dispositifs* or mechanical apparatus, the radical shift occurs not only in terms of their reproducibility, but also where and how an artwork is viewed or experienced. As Eduardo Cadava argues, the questioning of aesthetics and tradition in relation to film and photography points back to Benjamin's early work on the *Origins of the German Drama* or *Trauerspiel*, where distinctions between allegory and art traced the importance of baroque allegory in German drama. 'What is meant by Origin is not the becoming of something that has sprung forth, but rather what springs forth out of coming to be and passing away […]. The original is never revealed in the bare and manifest existence of the factual.'[17] Similar to the fragmentation and dislocation of the phenomenal world in baroque allegory, the photograph appears in flashes, giving away only clues within the 'entangled darkness of allegory'.[18]

It is also argued that Benjamin's notion of

mechanical is not synonymous with technical repro-duction. If viewed through this prism, the often ambiguous and difficult to translate German term *Reproduzierbarkeit* alludes to a certain distinction between a structural attribute and an empirical fact. In other words, there will have always been tech-nological reproducibility.[19] What Benjamin brings forth, beyond the dialectics of Marxism, are the structural possibilities within the work of art itself, reproducibility affirming to a progressive accelera-tion of similar modes (lithography, printing etc.), with photography and filming ultimately incorporating, in this acceleration, reproducibility as a mode of being. Indeed, origin, here, becomes the means through which reproducibility can become infinite, in a state of immanence, from within itself. And Benjamin's genius is that he is one of the first to foresee the link between the operations of the camera and the rela-tions constituted by this for the individual. It is not, therefore, the primacy of the original, but the infinite possibilities of transformation and mutability offered through the reproductive capacities of the camera.

For Benjamin, photography transforms the entire notion of art. In photography and the camera he sees the very operation of production or mode of existence as this is seized in timeframes and flashes of lightning. 'The dialectic image flashes. The past must be held like an image flashing in the now of recognisability.'[20] This flashing image is in part rupture, in part continuity. Like a copy of the same image from a single negative, it is capable of infinitely reproducing itself, yet never exactly from the same place. It is an image in perpetual motion.

Thinking of the image or photograph in this sense is also aligned to Lazzarato's definition of the image as 'pure vibration, shiver', where affect is entan-gled with and operates from within the structure of the image formation.[21] As an expansion of images and bodies, 'electronic and digital technologies are mechanics of the automatic production of the image'.[22]

The camera or *dispositif* is, in this equation, merely another body capturing time within the flow of images, albeit of another quality and order. The moiré pattern flashes within the allegory of disjointed signifiers where human vision becomes momentarily confused. The shiver of this moment allows a glimpse of a representation, a reality, and, at the same time, slightly off-centred, a second doubling up of this reality, entangling the sign in a mere extension of signifiers: a pulsating grid that transforms a patch on the two-dimensional image into a three-dimensional illusion. Beyond the coded meaning of mass reproduction offered by and through digital or analogue technologies, if percep-tions are to be understood as gaps or failures in the circuit systems, it is this understanding that points to an affective state. The purely visual or indexical signifier becomes a gap in perception, an actualised signifier present within a virtually assigned meaning of a circuit failure.

According to Roland Barthes, even in the analysis of images there is a point where signification resists meaning, the index becomes void, and, not unlike psychoanalysis, meaning is produced through the failure of language. From his 1962 short essay 'The Imagination of the Sign'[23] to the later 'The Third Meaning', Barthes's rhetoric has been instrumental in progressing the argument for a poetic or imagina-tive understanding of the function of the sign:

> The paradigmatic consciousness, on the contrary, is a formal imagination: it sees the signifier linked, as if in profile, to several virtual signifiers which it is at once close to and distinct from: it no longer sees the sign in its depth, it sees it in its perspective; thus the dynamics attached to this vision is that of summons […]. The syntagmatic imagination no longer sees the sign in its perspective, it foresees it in its extension: its antecedent or consequent links, the bridges it extends to other signs; this is a stemmatous imagination of the chain of network.[24]

In 'The Third Meaning', where Barthes posits a reading of Eisenstein's film stills from *Ivan the Terrible*, the implication of the obtuse meaning is described as 'a signifier without a signified, hence the difficulty in naming it. My reading remains suspended between the image and its description, between definition and approximation'.[25] There is the first level reading of an image, one that is 'fixed', but then there is also the other or obtuse meaning, and, where the two meet, a certain splitting or disjunction emerges. Later, when adapting it specifically to photography, the obtuse meaning becomes, in *Camera Lucida,* what Barthes constructs as the idea of the *punctum,* the little detail that suddenly goes beyond the field of vision and finds me. The *punctum* has a strange alliance in time, resonating to a strange future-anterior, or the time of 'that-has-been'.[26] Whilst insisting on a peculiar conflation of space and time in the photograph, Barthes posits the *punctum* as rupture, but the photograph overall remains bound to an indexical reading.

Radically moving away from representation to affect, by way of perception, Bergson 'opposes an ontology of the expression of light to the paradigm of the impression of light on a support'.[27] The paradigm of the impression of light onto a support is very familiar in the case of the photograph, and identical to Peirce's notion of the index, or trace, whereby representation points back to a real object that was placed in front of a camera. However, for Bergson, perception is not a recording, it is an operation of selection through action and movement, incorporating the body. It is the work of memory through matter. Extending Barthes's notion of time 'that-has-been', when confronted with a photograph, affective memory allows for, instead, an 'always already there', enveloping past and present, actual and virtual. If in front of me I have an image of a tree, this image contains its actual, designated object of perception as well as its virtual or memory image of it. The two coincide and vibrate, similarly to the rippled patterns of a wave on the surface of the water.

For the American artist Liz Deschenes (1966) moiré becomes a series of constructed analogue photographs that function as photosites. [fig. 2] In her use of analogue techniques, light plays a fundamental role. Employing a technique that roughly resembles the grated slits of the Talbot experiments, she places a sheet of perforated paper in front of a window. This is then photographed on a large format, 8x10 inch black and white negative. The same negative is duplicated and the two are overlaid in the darkroom to create a unique mis-registered and moiréd print. The mechanical reproduction of Deschene's technique (to let nature, or light in this instance, draw its own picture) in conjunction with the rippled effect or patterning created, allows for a unique, almost three-dimensional pattern to emerge. The disconcerting field of photographic vision is literally called off the surface of the print, giving rise to non-image formations. Even though technically it is a photograph, captured by recording a trace of light onto a photographic surface and duplicating it through a photographic enlarger, the *Moiré* series goes beyond the indexical trace. As such, it resists being 'read' in the conventional way one would interpret photographs.

> At close range, Deschenes' large *Moiré* prints overwhelm the visual field – from further away they pulsate like electronic screens transmitting a live current. The optic nerve rapid fires information to the brain as it negotiates the *Moiré's* ceaseless fluctuation between figure and ground. […] As if working against photography's forced function to depict, this general movement activates the in-between space and phenomenologically regenerates something direct to an experience from nature.[28]

In *Moiré 9* [fig. 3] the functionality of the grid pattern is dislocated and the visual field is abruptly pulled

Fig. 2: Liz Deschenes, *Moiré 9,* 2006, unique photographic print, 40 x 30 inches, (101.6 x 76.2 cm) framed, Campoli Presti Gallery, London

Fig. 3: Liz Deschenes, *Moiré 11,* 2007, unique photographic print, 60 x 46 inches (152.4 x 116.8 cm) framed, Miguel Abrieu Gallery, New York

into all sorts of directions. Here, there is no horizon line, no vertical axis, but rather the whole surface of the print seems to plunge into a hallucinatory live frame. The monochrome starts to pulsate to the point where colours emerge, yet effectively there are no colours to be perceived. The frame further oscillates between an actual, real depiction of the trace of light onto film and the references to Talbot's quantum arithmetic carpets. Belonging to the time of a perpetual present, the frame activates a sense of continuous duration. Duration becomes perception and the viewer is simply immersed into the time-space of the intensity of the surface, vision becoming affect, the photograph a site of becoming.

> Vision may ostensibly predominate, but it never occurs alone. Every attentive activity occurs in a synesthetic field of sensation and implicates all the sense modalities in incipient perception, and is itself implicated in self-referential action. Since everything in the field is in incipiency and folding, it is only vaguely felt, or side-perceived, like a fringe around formed perceptions and reflections. A determinate meaning or clear reflection may emerge from vagueness, but it cannot entirely separate itself from it. It remains attached to its conditions of emergence, as by a processual umbilical cord.[29]

In a broader sense, duration, perception and vision are blurred as if in a constant state of interference, the light waves emanating pulsations and refractions of time-particles.

Displayed in the context of the gallery [fig. 4] the *Moiré* series is intended to function as a unique art object. Each print is imbued with the high quality lustre necessary to attract a buyer's attention. Produced through analogue photographic techniques, yet evoking a continual state of interference, the series is seminal in that it bridges traditional analogue practices and concerns with contemporary digital photography. Indeed, it is in gaps or interference that affect emerges and images are governed

through the power, not of index or resemblance, but rather through their 'conditions of emergence'.[30]

The moiré effect can be found in nature just as it can also be optically constructed. In the case of the moiré effect appearing as a ghosting in digital images, the index points to a failure of registration, a failure achieved through the excessive amount of light that the digital receptor has failed to translate correctly. Light formations carry with them the chemical and residual indices of the real. When coupled with digital technologies, such as CCD devices, light waves have the ability to also behave as sites of intensity. The algorithmic translation of light waves into a binary string of code converts any potential indexical sign into a sequenced numerical array. In order for this array to make sense, another process of translation, converting the digital code back into analogue, takes place so that the binary information can be 'read' by the human eye. If, during this process, an error occurs, the final outcome behaves erratically. Ultimately, it is about the translation of a signal and where interference occurs.

In contemporary digital photography, moiré patterning or aliasing has become synonymous with unwanted interference that creates areas of visually distracting patterns in an otherwise typically realistic image. In these conditions of emergence, moiré can be further understood as a misnomer between the camera or computer interface and the translation process involved. More importantly, moiré points to the asignifying symptom of non-image formation and the mathematical formulas of an immanent reading of representation.

In information technology and data theory terms, especially those coined by Shannon and Weaver, any state of noise – interference – is part of the channel of communication. 'In Shannon's communication model, information is not only complicit with noise; it is dependent upon it for elucidation. Without noise, either encoded within the original message or

Fig. 4: Liz Deschenes, Installation view of *Photographs, 2007*, Campoli Presti, London.

present from sources outside the channel, information cannot get through.'[31] At any stage in the typical model of sender through encoder to signal, decoder and receiver, an interruption might occur distorting the clean message. In Shannon's model, noise is not only audible, it is perceived to be anything that disrupts the smooth distribution of the message. Noise can be anything outside of the above linear model of sender-encoder-receiver, but one that enters the encoding causing unpredictable effects. The final output, therefore, can contain an excessive amount of interference; multiplied over and over, the results can actually be beneficial.

In the field of the digital register, moiré phenomena occur almost as naturally as any account of interference. Produced through a mechanical failure as opposed to the analogue photographs encountered above, here, moiré points to the limited capacity of the capturing device.[32] As Rodowick sustains in the *Virtual Life of Film,* there is a qualitative distinction to be made in ascertaining whether or not the causal relations between inputs and outputs are continuous or discontinuous.[33] In the case of the digital image, the fragmented and discontinuous elements that form the whole, namely pixels, point to the separation of the input/output signal. In quantisation, the technical term for converting light waves into digital code, the physical, continuous link that would sustain a direct correlation between the thing photographed and the thing represented is broken because the translation of the signal happens in an asymptomatic non-linear way.

As a virtual signifier at this level, the pixel has no physical existence. It is merely a series of numbers. It functions on a relational set of values and works only in context with the other surrounding pixels. It depicts nothing in particular. As an abstract value (point) within a grid or array of information, it needs a certain set of numerical operations to fulfil its potentiality. The natural condition of the photographic referent, an emanation pointing to a thing in front of the camera lens, becomes a series of numbers.

In the case of aliasing or moiré effects, the behaviour of the individual pixel is crucial because, within the grid or array of information, adjacent pixels interpret the peak of the light frequency as a separate colour addition. The mechanical interference produces visual effects autonomously of the thing photographed. This index of failure indicates the ability of the apparatus to generate sensory information and reproduce this information in the process of an analogue interpretation; for example, when the binary code is translated back into a visually legible pattern, either on a computer screen or in digital print. Manifested in the gaps of a virtual actualisation, the sites of the malfunctioning pixels become sites of intensities, propagating a different kind of visual information pertaining to the original light inscription, yet, at the same time, outside of it. Interference or failure of the mechanical recording renders the visual more real or affective in its state of intensity.

The moiréd cast allows the image to pulsate and vibrate, reaching outside the time span of either a before or an after, neither past nor present; a present enveloping virtual and actual. As a site of mechanical failure it is an open-looped system of emergence, of a non-finite state. In its conditions of emergence, it remains a site of potentiality where static image formation is superimposed with non-image patterning.

In Deleuze and Guattari's evolutionary vocabulary, matter in flux, movement or flow can only be followed. 'The machinic phylum is materiality, natural or artificial, and both simultaneously […] matter as a conveyor of singularities and traits of expression.'[34] In the case of the discontinuous digital image, light waves captured onto a charge-couple device, onto a silicon surface translated into algebraic matter, become abstracted materiality yet always contain their seed or kernel (code) of information.

The moiréd image appears as a flash within the translation process, evoking even more clearly the intermediary dimension of mutability. An area where code superimposes the actual real register and the flow overtakes, indicating an excess of register, an excess of virtual over actual.

In the case of analogue moiré reproduction, as was the case in Liz Deschenes' series, depending on the mathematical angle of misalignment, two identical patterns produce a third image. Conversely, in digital photography, the same pattern produces its own ghost image through the process of sampling or quantisation (spatial frequency). Through varying mathematical and fractal formulations, the moiré image contains infinite sites of becoming and yet resists finality.

According to French philosopher Laruelle, when the photograph signifies, it is always through a failure, albeit a *positive* one. The photograph has the capacity for a reflexive operation to take place. In both *The Concept of Non-Photography* (2011) and also in *Photo-fiction, a Non-Standard Aesthetics* (2012)*,* Laruelle points to a theory of doublets, a coupling of duality and unity, the theory of one-to-one. Through mathematical physics, not unlike perhaps the moiré phenomenon, a productive force will break with the purely mimetic nature of the image. Non-photography is obtained through a series of super-positions, borrowed from the field of quantum arithmetic and physics.[35]

But resisting finality does not point to the infinite. It is a reflexive operation, inherent within the very operation of photography, especially in the digital sequence of a moiré pattern. Photographing turns almost upon itself and around itself, from within its algebraic configurations, each time a productive force, a convergence of optics and science.

The idea of a fractal or mathematical understanding of the photo-site that Laruelle proposes

is based on the onto-vectorial. This philosophy of variables and doublets includes both the 'properties of the lived in algebraic form' through the matrix of origins or generic super-positions. At the heart of this lies an imaginary number, (which is like the square root of -1). The imaginary number gives rise to an image formation from within the existing code, only to remain subordinate to and regulated by the patterns of information surrounding it. Comprised but not reducible to technology, it appears to assimilate a life of its own, a fragmented and opened up existence within the grid of algebraic configuration. Erratic pixels contained within a moiréd area of a digital image will autocorrect through cloning patterns from normal, neighbouring pixels. Therefore the point of departure here is not any indexical, originary inscription of light onto a support, but rather an arithmetical configuration capable of translating wavelength, frequency and spatial arrangement.

Mathematical physics interrupts mimetic relations and a productive force is at hand: 'the world of the photo is now the end of realism via an excess of the real and the absence of reality'.[36] Conceived through the moiré pattern, Laruelle's matrix becomes the excessive account of the same as it doubles, parts from itself, mirrors itself, separates and departs from any direct register of the real, demonstrating the formula of a lived algebraic formulation.

An immanent appearance of the photographic, the matrix, or moiréd image, becomes an indefinite process, one that includes the apparatus and the observer within the very subject of the image. Index may form part, but not the only part of the image. 'It takes quite an effort to render the photographic act immanent, to interiorise it, and to render it real without an external determinism or realism.'[37] An immanent ontological act, the virtual and actual are already co-present in the digital moiré sequence of numbers. Performing under the attribute of an index, yet becoming subject to its very conditions

of emergence, the original inscription supports (clones) and propagates intensities and patterns. Interference becomes a productive and creative index, fixing and unfixing the code of the quantised image.

Interference or failure of register becomes a positive re-enactment, highlighting the affective capacities of the image. There are, of course, certain types of questions that remain to be addressed about the resolution of the digital file image, and whether the format is JPEG, TIFF or RAW. Whether the image is viewed on a screen or on the back of a digital camera in full frame or zoom mode. These are questions of an operative character.

Contrary to Benjamin's dialectic of the 'flash' of history, where flash is the originary inscription of the event, Laruelle proposes a trajectory of the flash already folded in on itself. In a way, the flash is always already there, one does not need to experience it as a demonstration of sudden lightning. Laruelle, instead, proposes a photography with the eyes half-closed, 'a photo-in-One, in-immanence'.[38] The visual register remains at a hallucinatory level, absorbing light waves of the visible spectrum, discontinuous fragments of information that pulsate as sites of intensity, occurring at quantic wavelengths. A perceptual flickering rather than an instantaneous flash, this virtual image remains fixed in its pulsating vibrations.

In the last instance, Laruelle proposes a 'photo-fiction' – whether or not this is to be understood extensively as a literature of photography, it has, of course, its repercussions. In Lytle Shaw's novel *The Moiré Effect*, the mystery surrounding the enigmatic Swiss photographer Ernst Moiré and his early experiments does not become any clearer by the end of the book. Since its inception, photography has been buried in various clouds of ambiguity and has encompassed innovative characters, including the father of the medium, Henry Fox Talbot. Perhaps

it is in his equally intriguing fractal light carpets that not only the moiré image finds its performative element, but also designates the lived index of the intensities of light waves and quantum physics.

Notes

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21. Maurizio Lazzarato, 'Machines to Crystallise Time', pp. 93-122.

22. Ibid.

23. Roland Barthes, 'The Imagination of the Sign', in *A Barthes Reader,* ed. by Susan Sontag (London: Jonathan Cape, 1982), pp. 211-17.

24. Ibid.

25. Roland Barthes, 'The Third Meaning', in *Image, Music, Text,* trans. by Stephen Heath (London: Fontana Press, 1978), pp. 52-68.

26. Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, pp. 85-8.

27. Maurizio Lazzarato, 'Machines to Crystallise Time', pp. 93-122.

28. Press release for *Registration* Liz Deschenes, *Miguel Abrieu Gallery*, 6 April 2007 <http://www.miguelabreugallery.com/images/_LDeschenes/b_PressRelease%20copy.pdf> [accessed 19 May 2013]

29. Brian Massumi, *Parables for the Virtual: Movement, Affect, Sensation* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002), p. 140.

30. Susan Ballard, 'Information, Noise, et al.', in *Error. Glitch, Noise and Jam in New Media Cultures*, ed. by M. Nunes (New York: Continuum, 2011), pp. 59-79.

31. Although moiré phenomenon can also be seen on TV and computer screens, in this instance the argument is focused on photography and the moiré effect present in still photographic images.

32. David Norman Rodowick, *The Virtual Life of Film* (Cambridge, MA; London: Harvard University Press, 2007), p. 117.

33. Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus. Capitalism and Schizophreneia*, p. 409.

35. François Laruelle, *Photo-fiction, a Non-Standard Aesthetics,* trans. by Drew S. Burk (Minneapolis: Univocal Press, 2012), p. 14.

35. Ibid., p. 42.

36. Ibid., p. 21.

37. Ibid., p. 52

39. Ibid., p. 83.

Biography

Stella Baraklianou is a lecturer and photographic artist. Her photographic work has been included in international exhibitions and she has presented her research at international conferences. Most recent publications include a chapter in the edited book *Bergson and the Art of Immanence*, University of Edinburgh Press (2013) and an article on the term Pixel for the journal *Philosophy of Photography*, Intellect Publishing (2013). She currently teaches on the BA Hons Photography programme at the University of Huddersfield, UK.

The Work of Art as Monument: Deleuze and the (After-) Life of Art

Louis Schreel

And death has come, the last cleaning lady.
Death comes. So she does the housework;
for the last time she has swept the floor,
she has put the works in order.
(Charles Péguy)[1]

Introduction

In 1991, at the end of his life, Gilles Deleuze writes together with Félix Guattari *What is Philosophy?*, in which the last chapter 'percept, affect and concept' traces the singularity of art with regard to science and philosophy. They return here to some of the great themes of their art philosophy, among which their critical stance towards phenomenology and their own post-phenomenological concepts of aesthetic experience, such as 'becoming-animal' and 'becoming-imperceptible' – themes which express the assertion that aesthetic experience is a matter not so much of mental (reflective) judgement, but rather of the bodily *participation* in material conditions that exceed the human. In this important essay, the work of art is repeatedly conceptualised as a monument, be it with the paradoxical nuance that it is never something commemorating a past.[2] The work of art, they write, is a composition (*composé*) of sensations that are directed at nothing outside themselves – thus it refers not to an act of creation that preceded it and neither does it narrate or depict histories. Art is not an *alibi* for something that would chronologically or logically precede it, something it would both depict and represent. Rather, it establishes something that becomes *passible* only through the artwork itself, it

exposes inhuman conditions of life in such a way that no other discipline can: 'to make perceptible the imperceptible forces that populate the world, affect us, and make us become'.[3]

In the following paper we will examine Deleuze and Guattari's paradoxical understanding of the work of art as a monument existing 'in the absence of man'. If the work's mode of existence is only 'in itself', if it is, as they put it, 'self-preserving', then this is so because of the 'self-positing' nature of sensations.[4] The first part of our inquiry will therefore look into Deleuze's understanding of sensations as 'affects' and 'percepts'. We will do so by tracing one of its main conceptual sources in the phenomenology of Erwin Straus and Henri Maldiney.[5] Secondly, to further investigate the work of art's 'monumentality', we will turn to an essay of Theodor W. Adorno, 'Valéry Proust Museum', which in contrasting Valéry and Proust's respective views of the museum as a *mausoleum*, will serve as a ground for formulating what might be called the Deleuzian 'afterlife' of art.

The heart of the sensible

> A closed environment, integrally human and made out of signs, where on can never lose oneself, where the hidden *phusis* is no more but the material of insignificant significations, is not the world, and takes from man the resistance of alterity, hurting by that the heart of his plenary humanity.[6]

Deleuze refers us in his conceptualisation of sensation in *What is Philosophy?* to the phenomenologist Erwin Straus who, in his *Vom Sinn der Sinne* (1935) exposes in sensory experience (*le sentir*), a deeper, underlying feeling (*ressentir*), a specifically profound mode of sensing.[7] The latter is not a return of the self to itself; it is neither reflection nor self-affection. Such a return would imply, in fact, a separated self, functioning as a subject opposed to an object that it would be faced with. Certainly, as has been known since Aristotle, sensory experience (*aisthesis*) is always a 'sensing oneself' sense, an aware sensing (*ressentir*); but the subject of sensation, Straus writes, 'is not an isolated and solitary subject which, departing from its own self-consciousness, sketches and conceives a world which it transcends'.[8] Of course, the polarity between subject and object, between a subject that objectifies the world (or the art 'object'), thereby distinguishing itself, cannot be denied; yet this duality is always secondary, and only possible arising from a more 'originary' situation: 'that of sensation'.[9] More rigorously, there aren't two separate worlds, one interior and the other exterior, but only a double polarity of being with or in the world. Perception, hearing and our other senses do not only *render* an apparition of colour, sound and other sensations; they don't merely *offer* us sensible impressions (Kant), but also 'grab' (*saisissent*) us and 'arrange' (*disposent*) us in the order of sensation.[10] Not only do we grasp optic and acoustic phenomena of colours and tones, we are at the same time always also being grasped by them. Straus' logic of the senses refuses to posit a subject in front of an object: sensation is always an event that unfolds in two directions at once, that of the world and that of the self. Whence a key sentence in Straus' *Vom Sinn der Sinne*, which for Maldiney and Deleuze forms the basis for every possible aesthetic:

> In sensory experience there is an unfolding of both – *read*: sensation unfolds itself as *both* – the becoming of the subject and the becoming of the

world. I become, only because something happens, and something happens (to me), because I become.[11]

For Straus, the traditional primacy of consciousness does not suffice to uncover this double-sided unfolding of sensation. Rather, one is in need of a phenomenology of motor induction, as, for example, a temporal acoustic rhythm effectively pushes me to physically move. Its temporal pulsations effectively touch and invade my senses and do not merely bring about a figuration of content. As Straus writes with regard to dance:

> Sensation is linked to a vital movement by means of an *internal* connection […] No kind of *association* links the movement to sound or to rhythm, the movement follows the music in an absolutely *immediate* manner.[12]

Straus calls this primary internal situation the 'pathic' moment of sensation. Henri Maldiney – in an essay on Straus[13] – writes in line with this that every sensation is marked by, on the one side, an emotional, *pathic* moment and, on the other side, a *representational* moment.[14] The latter, which he also calls the *gnostic* or *gnoseological* moment, concerns speculative or pragmatical functions of the subject, such as *perception* and *recognition*. Whereas the pathic is connected to the *how* of being with the world, the representational and reflective turns to the *what* of the world and its objects. Maldiney gives the example of colour sensations. He writes:

> The immediate lyricism of the rosette of a cathedral is independent of the object that is represented. The play of colour induces in the spectator a spiritual and bodily movement that precedes every iconographical lecture of the stained glass window. The pathic moment of a colour sensation is expressed in this musical and rhythmic dimension of colours.[15]

For Straus, our sensibility to colours, forms and sounds is entirely constituted by this pathic moment.

It rises up from the depths of the body, as was the case with Cézanne, who described the colour that gave rise to to *An Old Woman with a Rosary* as a 'big blue red' that fell into his soul.[16] Maldiney sees in Cézanne's colour an existential communication with 'a world still buried, which only his art will bring to light'. Cézanne himself described the initial moment of confronting the world prior to painting as being lost *in* the surrounding, a confrontation with chaos that precedes the act of creation:

> At that moment I am one with my painting (= not the painted canvas, but the world to be painted). We are an iridescent chaos. I arrive in front of my motive, and there I lose myself. […] We grow together. Once the night begins to fall, it seems to me that I shall not paint and that I have never painted.[17]

Maldiney defines Straus' pathic communication – the abovementioned *profound* mode of sensing – by means of three criteria. First, it is a communication taking place on the level of the *aisthèsis* itself. Second, this mode of sensing is always a communication with phenomena themselves. The pathic belongs to the most 'originary level of lived experience'; it is an 'immediately present communication, intuitively-sensible, still pre-conceptual, that we have with phenomena'.[18] Finally, the pathic communication with phenomena follows strict laws which hold for the phenomenality of the entire world: a set of singular sensations can serve as a general category for man's being-in-the-world.[19]

The most important trait for us at this moment is that Maldiney promotes the pathic to the true aesthetic dimension, which already points to a privileged correlation between art and affectivity. Also, it is important to note that both dimensions, pathic and gnostic, do not harmoniously balance each other out: the pathic for Straus and Maldiney is always inevitably *lost* in perception, which must be seen as a first level of a reductive, objectifying process. 'With perception,' Maldiney writes, 'we have already left the order of sensation.'[20] Thus, the *certainty* or *indubitability* (Descartes) of the *aisthèsis* does not have as a higher *telos* the truth of perception. The sensible is not a mere impulse for the mind to ascend towards higher spheres of understanding, but 'has its own truth', its own internal logic that exceeds the sterility of thought and can never be fully recuperated by it. Straus and Maldiney explicitly go against the traditional hierarchy of the senses: not the visible (*gnosis*) but the tactile, not the gaze, but the touch become primary. For them, sensation must not be thought of in terms of the human capacity to intentionally attribute sense or meaning, but rather in terms of the bodily-affective, the horizon of the unexpected (*cette surprise précède toute prise*). Every form of presenting the world to oneself goes back to its presence as event (*événement*), to the pathic as our being-with-the-world, which precedes every opposition between subject and object and, moreover, discloses no intentional structure whatsoever. In line with this, in an interview with Claire Parnet, Deleuze speaks of art as resistance against the constant human 'imprisonment of life':

> Art consists of liberating the life that man has imprisoned. Man doesn't cease to imprison life, to kill life – 'the shame of being a man' […] The artist is the one who liberates a life, a forceful life, a life more than personal, it's not his life![21]

For Deleuze, art cultivates a moment of *immediacy* and *indeterminacy* which precedes any mediation: a *pathos* that always comes unexpectedly, and that as the *epochè* of presence momentarily disarms the subject.[22] Aesthetic experience is about sensing the quality of an event, submitting oneself to the '*it* happens' rather than grasping '*what* happens', to undergo a moment of indeterminacy without the shielding mediation of the discursive or ideal. 'Sensing,' Straus writes, 'is to knowledge what the scream is to the word.'[23] Grasping the event in its singularity demands not a synthesis of the given by the imagination, no associations, but rather the

demise of all syntheses, a radical openness, readiness and receptiveness to that which announces itself.

Reality

> Nothing more can be said, and no more has ever been said: to become worthy of what happens to us, and thus to will and release the event, […] to have one more birth, and to break with one's *carnal* birth […].[24]

To understand what Deleuze and Guattari mean with the paradoxical determination of the work of art as a monument that does not commemorate but is directed only at itself, it is essential to look into their interpretation of the pathic, their own conceptualisation of the *pathos* of art. As noted, the work is literally a *compound* (*composé*), a *composition* of sensations, a *self-sustaining* composite of sensations. As Isabelle Stengers puts it, the term *composition* is explicitly directed against 'any direct link between art and any kind of ineffable revelation, transcending words, demanding meditation and a sense of sacredness akin to negative theology'.[25] Hence, the literal use of the concept of force: the work 'captures' forces at work in the world and renders these sensible. Its effects are above all real and not merely imaginary: the image is not a mental given but a concrete, existing reality.

To further determine this reality of the work of art, Deleuze distinguishes two kinds of sensation, 'percept' and 'affect', which he explicitly opposes to human reading or mediation. Percepts are not perceptions of visible things, but sensations made visible or (in the case of literature) legible in such a way that perceiving them thwarts speculative or pragmatic distancing. Such visions or percepts are what remains when this distance is undone: the coincidence with something material that can only be sensed. *Affects*, on the other hand, are sensations 'in action', so-called non-human 'becomings', as they are contained *in* the work of art. The percept,

Deleuze states, paraphrasing Cézanne, is the landscape in the absence of man, the inhuman nature of the landscape, while the affect unfolds itself as a material zone of indeterminacy (*indétermination*) and indiscernability (*indiscernabilité*); for example, between man and animal. We are referred at this point to Straus' *Vom Sinn der Sinne*:

> The great landscapes have a wholly visionary characteristic. Vision is what of the invisible becomes visible… The landscape is invisible because the more we conquer it, the more we lose ourselves in it. To reach the landscape we must sacrifice as much as we can all temporal, spatial, objective determination; but this abandon does not only attain the objective, it affects us ourselves to the same extent. In the landscape we cease to be historical beings, that is to say, beings who can themselves be objectified. We do not have any memory for the landscape, we no longer have any memory for ourselves in the landscape. We dream in daylight with open eyes. We are hidden to the objective world, but also to ourselves. This is feeling.[26]

The enigma we are confronted with here is that of Cézanne's 'logic of the senses': man absent from, but entirely within the landscape. Cézanne's art, as Merleau-Ponty has also shown (*Le Doute de Cézanne*), consists of *pursuing* reality without leaving sensation, without giving up the sensuous surface. He therefore takes on a more difficult task than the musician, because the *gnostic* (speculative, pragmatic) tends to dominate vision, whereas the *pathic* dominates in hearing: I face the visible, whereas the sonorous surrounds me and always presupposes my participation, my contagion even.[27] To *reach* the landscape and thus for vision to *descend* to the pathic, Cézanne must tear (*arracher*) the percept from perceptions of objects and the state of a perceiving subject. If art, for Deleuze, aims at 'rendering a moment of the world durable in itself, made to exist by itself'[28], then this means it cultivates that moment when subjective perception dissolves

in the perceived, thus elevating an underlying, invisible force of life. Art is that discipline which grounds a moment of the world independent in itself, and which establishes this singular temporality sensible in such a way that its sense does not depend on an intentional act of a sensing subject. For Deleuze, the subject doesn't *have* sensations: in sensing it attains access not to the 'self' (a supposedly given subject), nor to the 'self' of the other (the painter, musician, who is also a presupposed given with his subjectivity), but rather to the form or structure of the self: all that is left is the *reality* of a *temporal relation in itself* insofar as it *forms* a self. Sensation is not a metaphor for the access to the self, but the reality of that access: a singular, material, signifying but *also* asignifying reality.[29]

The affective and non-intentional 'pathic' moment of sensation is for Maldiney, too, the mark of the real as such. It induces, one might say, a 'reality-effect': it opens up the horizon of man in his existential entirety and not the domain of one of his 'faculties'. Maldiney envisages here any kind of transcendental philosophy (most explicitly Kant, Hegel and Husserl) which reduces all action and effective passion to static faculties of doing or receiving, of acting or being affected, always already present, and always grounding, either in the subject or in consciousness. The ordeal (*pathos*) which resonates in the term 'pathic' designates a *crisis* or *unique force*: the radical inversion through which sensation, far from being the affection by a sensible particular or by a punctual, sensible quality, opens me up to the world. The primacy of the *aisthèsis* designates not the perception of an object, but an *affective* communication with 'the depth of the world, from which each thing holds its reality and to which it inversely confers a focal existence before its constitution into an object in perception'.[30]

The fact that the pathic moment *de jure* precedes the gnostic moment does not mean that it excludes it, but rather, it designates it to being (onto)logically

'first': it is the aesthetic (sensible) condition of possibility of all the senses. Yet, how to understand the claim that this subterranean affective condition can *only* be sensed, being irretrievably lost in perception? 'The *aesthèsis* as such,' Maldiney writes, 'is below the question of the real and of truth. Because the coincidence of seeing and seen in a vision (*une vue*) which is both vision (*vision*) and spectacle (*aspectus*) doesn't arrange (*ménage*) any kind of space of play which might serve as a field of truth, a field of appropriation (or alienation) of the other and myself.'[31] What is the invisible reality or 'presence' opened up in the pathic moment of sensation? And in what sense is it more 'originary' than that of the objectifying gaze?

In the latter, in our visual understanding, our encounter with things always presupposes distance. This distance (in its turn ensured by the semantic horizon of language) guarantees the grasp of the intentional, objectifying gaze and prevents the confusion of the coalescence with things. When, however, the gaze itself is grabbed in a kind of distant contact and is, as it were, touched, we descend to an immediate experience of our being *with* and *in* the world, an *immediate* and *unmediated* presence (*Gegenwärtigsein* (Straus)). This presence is a dynamic sensation of *exposure* and *dependency*: the intimacy of the sensation, the coincidence of sensing and sensed, unfolds itself as exposure outside of oneself. Far from being a spherical plenitude or some kind of mystical harmony with the soul of the world, the pathic presence is a being in advance and outside of oneself, torn and in fraction: in line with the Latin etymology of presence, it designates the impossibility of coinciding with oneself. The pathic encounter is, for Maldiney, a *fact of existence* in the way that Kant speaks of a 'fact of reason' with regard to the moral imperative. Yet, the pathic is not a causal beginning, and it certainly does not designate a principle transcending the world. On the contrary, as Jean-Louis Chrétien so nicely phrases it, with the pathic,

Maldiney envisages 'the fundamental fragility of our exposure to the world, which is our only resource, and which is covered and obfuscated by fears and prejudices of all kinds, derisory fortifications which we edify against the lacerations of existence'.[32]

How can philosophy access this primordial experience? Language offers us the being of things (*l'être*), but always through placing us in their absence: language can only narrate the world through negating its apparition, it cannot narrate being but only a relation to being, which is its negation, the obliteration of 'the depth of the world, from which each thing holds its reality'.[33] There is no language which could give us a direct access to being, but neither is there a pure, immediate and unmediated experience of being itself. For Maldiney, human existence must always be thought of as departing from the negation that is in progress in reality through becoming, the temporality which traverses our relations to things.[34] Being cannot be thought of without nothingness (*le rien*), just as presence always arises from absence. Now, by determining the essence of sensation, this pathic moment, as a radically *non-intentional* receptivity, Maldiney aims to think of negativity as a fundamentally *ambiguous* force that can open up the possible, but can *also* arise as *impossibility*; that is to say, as *the being of nothingness*, *the presence of absence*. Sensation does not necessarily have to be a contact with a given object but can just as well be the *ordeal* of nothingness. At the non-intentional 'moment' of sensation, we do not yet fictionally dispose over absent things, we do not yet relate to something possible. Far from it, in fact, since for Maldiney, the essence of sensation consists of a pre-logical, pre-reflexive receptiveness, a non-perceptive mode of sensing. Rather than a 'sensible certainty', the pathic designates a 'sensible uncertainty', a kind of original opacity that is constitutive of sensible consciousness, as envisioned by Cézanne when searching for an expression to describe 'those confused sensations which we carry with us in being born'.[35]

How can a receptivity pushed to such a point of passivity – when strictly speaking *nothing* is intended or even felt – still be called a receptivity? Maldiney uses the term 'transpassibility' to designate this 'pure' mode of sensing, such that nothing can be projected, intended or anticipated in it. 'Transpassibility consists of not being passible to anything that might announce itself as real or possible. It is an opening without intention or drawing (*'une ouverture sans dessein ni dessin'*), one which we are not passible to *a priori*.'[36] Transpassibility is never a relation to a possibility but takes place 'below the question of the real and truth', implying what Renaud Barbaras calls 'a fundamental *impossibilisation*'.[37] However, what we are passible to does not oppose itself to the possible insofar as this relates to reality, which would suggest that it draws us from the possibilities of the subject to the laws of the real. Rather, sensation in the form of the impossible, as envisaged by Maldiney, opposes itself to *both* the possible and to the real. Thus, if we said above that the pathic is the mark of the real 'as such', we should be clear about its sense. It designates reality not as the 'what' of the world, the domain of objects (insofar as this is governed by laws therefore always measurable and predictable), but as the 'how' of being with the world. The veritable sense of the real is, for Maldiney, what is radically received, the correlate of an originary sensation. In this sense, the real is the unpredictable itself, that which never lets itself be announced or predicted, which does not appertain to any kind of legality, and which, in occurring, reflects neither my possibilities nor those of the world as the domain of legality.

No man's land
Following Maurice Blanchot, Deleuze defines the reign of the work of art as a universe or 'chaosmos' (Joyce) where the work:

[…] ceases to be secondary in relation to the model, in which imposture lays claim to truth, and in which, finally, there is no longer any original, but only an eternal scintillation where the absence of origin, in the splendor of diversion and reversion, is dispersed.[38]

The image as 'simulacrum': an originary copy. Its 'origin' lies not outside, but in the very work itself. 'The poet,' writes Blanchot, 'does not survive the creation of the work. He lives by dying in it.'[39] As with Mallarmé's symbolic attempt to achieve the elocutionary disappearance of the poet: 'an experiment at grasping, as though at its source, not that which makes the work real, but the 'impersonified' reality in it: that which makes it be far more or still less than any reality'.[40]

For Deleuze, the artist's greatest difficulty is to make the work of art *stand up on its own*.[41] This means that for sensation to preserve itself and be rendered *durable*, an artist must find a way to efface his own presence. The novelist cannot write only with memories, opinions, travels or fantasies. It is always a matter of eliminating everything that adheres to such personal traits – 'everything that nourishes the mediocre novelist' – and of reaching the percept as 'the sacred source': 'through having seen Life in the living or the Living in the lived, the novelist or painter returns breathless and with bloodshot eyes'.[42] In order to create true 'blocs of sensations', the artist is always obliged to face the chaos of his or her bodily depth, to embody and *will* the senselessness of the wounds which are inflicted on his life. As Deleuze writes with Joe Bousquet: 'My wound existed before me, I was born to embody it.'[43] To 'will' such events does not mean to desire one's wounds, but to will something *in* that which occurs, 'something yet to come which would be consistent with what occurs, in accordance with the laws of an obscure, humorous conformity: the Event'.[44] Bousquet: 'Become the man of your misfortunes; learn to embody their perfection and

brilliance.'[45] The Deleuzian figure of the artist represents an actor who delves into the intensive, chaotic presence of the flesh which he *is*, and who, by selecting in what happens (the accident), the *force* of the pure event (thereby participating in it), *redoubles* the cosmic, physical event into a *pure, intensive becoming; 'a counter-actualization'*.[46]

A clear illustration of such a 'pathic' act of 'purification' can be found in *The Logic of Sensation,* where Deleuze discerns a consistent scheme of three logical moments essential to this Baconesque mode of production.[47] The first moment is that of the 'cliché', which the artist must fight.[48] It stands for the figurative givens, the instituted forms of the object the painter wants to depart from, with their accompanying connotations and conventions. These initial 'lived' givens are representational, narrative and figurative. Bacon, too, began with drawing the body from photos before decomposing it: an ambiguous 'detour' via the world is inevitable and necessary. Because of it, sensation always runs the risk of being reduced to the *sensational,* which Deleuze still finds even in Bacon's crucifixions of suffering flesh – Bacon, whose *cruelty* is nonetheless so far removed from the *misérabilist* cult. The second moment stands for a 'catastrophic', de-representational phase in which the artist confronts himself with chaos: the fusion of sensing and sensed, when all the forms of the world dissolve in that iridescent chaos of sensation evoked by Cézanne (note 16). Deleuze calls this the *diagrammatic* or *de-territorializing* moment, the discovery of a *materiality* that presents itself as a *pure* material presence which is not reducible to an object that can be imagined, recalled or conceived by a subject. Finally, out of this pictorial 'catastrophe', an authentic Figure comes forth, a 'chaosmos' charged with 'blocs of sensation', which each artist attains by means of his own style – in Bacon's case, *figural*. From the death of the form rises the truth of the becoming-flesh, the becoming-imperceptible, the excessive presence of

the body,[49] Proust's *asignifying memory*: to make the illegible force of time legible by draining the intention out of memory's objects.

In each case, there has to be a break in the circuit of usage, a gap, an anomaly that makes the work leave behind any referential relation to the world so that it can become a veritable work of art. The fundamental premise of art's 'life' is the death of the living intention of the work: the formal dimension of the work of art, its identity, that which is 'conserved' in it, does not consist in an intentional scheme that awaits its own incarnation. On the contrary, as Theodor Adorno masterfully puts it, paraphrasing Proust:

> What eats away at the life of the artwork, is also its own life. […] Works of art can only fully embody the *promesse du bonheur* when they have been uprooted from their native soil and have set out along the path to their own destruction.[50]

This unworldly dimension of the work is described by both Deleuze and Blanchot as the abyss of the present, a temporality *without* present, grasp or measure, to which the Ego has no relation and, thus, toward which I am *unable* to project myself. This untraceable region 'forms' a kind of *atopic* and imagined no man's land; an *Erewhon* of images, signifying at once the originary 'nowhere' and the displaced, disguised, modified and always re-created here and now. Perhaps Deleuze has the same region, the same chaosmos in mind when speaking of the sublime in terms of 'the fundamentally open whole (le fondamentalement ouvert) as the immensity of future and past'.[51] This veritable Bergsonian interiority of time as:

> The whole which changes, and which by changing perspective, constantly gives real beings that infinite space which enables them to touch the most distant past and the depths of the future simultaneously, and to participate in the movement of its own 'revolution'.[52]

The transcendental reduction envisaged here is, in the materialist terminology of Maldiney, a reduction to the pathic dimension of sensation, which always takes place *in* and *through* the artwork itself. The singularity of sensation thus lies in its being located in the immanence of an emptiness: it forces us to an *atopic* vision that *a priori* excludes any appropriation and permits only the experience of a temporality that comes from a chaotic reality in which humans have no proper place. As Maldiney writes: 'An event is a rupture in the frame of the world and its appearance is subtracted from the convoy of causes and effects. Likewise, the present of the appearance is a crack (*déchirure*) in the temporal frame.'[53] In Deleuze's terms, the pathic moment of sensation is constituted upon a primary order of intensive, bodily depth (*viande*) that links man to an *independent ontological reality* inherent to *becoming* (*le devenir*) that verges on chaos. This event-ness of the work, which constitutes its solidity and durability, its monumentality, should, however, not solely be defined *negatively* by the absence of possibility and causality (as that which neither we nor the world are capable of), but also *positively* by its power to transform, by the revolution it introduces in our lived reality. In Maldiney's terms: 'As long as man is capable of astonishment, art lives. With it man dies.'[54]

The museum as mausoleum

> For art, dying does not mean to disappear but to survive itself.
> Its death would mean that it no longer equates the reality of our presence in the world and to ourselves.[55]

Adorno writes in this context that museums are like family graves of images to which the observer no longer has a vital relationship and which are in the process of dying. He quotes Valéry's sublime statement: 'dead visions are entombed here.'[56] Museums are mausolea in the sense that they testify to the inevitable neutralisation of culture, the fragility of

the *cosmos* created by the artist. Valéry's appeal is directed against the confusing overabundance of the Louvre. He is not, he writes, overly fond of museums. In the Louvre, Valéry feels confronted with frozen creatures, each of which demands the non-existence of the others – a disorder strangely organised. The more beautiful a picture is, the more it is distinct from all others; it becomes a rare object, unique, and this is counteracted by the over-accumulation of riches in the museum. Art runs the risk of thus becoming solely a matter of education and information. The shock of the museum brings Valéry to a historical-philosophical insight into our destruction of artworks. There, he says, we put the art of the past to death. Valéry grieves over the decontextualisation of the works of art. Painting and sculpture, he says, are like abandoned children:

> Their mother is dead, their mother, architecture. While she lived, she gave them their place, their definition. The freedom to wander was forbidden them. They had their place, their clearly defined lighting, their materials. Proper relations prevailed between them. While she was alive, they knew what they wanted. Farewell, the thought says to me, I will go no further.[57]

Proust's view of the museum opposes Valéry's romantic gesture. Adorno mentions a trip Proust took to the sea resort Balbec. He remarks on the caesura that voyages make in the course of life by 'leading us from one name to another name'.[58] These caesuras are particularly manifest in railway stations, 'these utterly peculiar places […] which, so to speak, are not part of the town and yet contain the essence of its personality as clearly as they bear its name on their signs'. Adorno observes how Proust's memory seems to drain the intention out of its objects, turning the stations into mere historical archetypes. Proust compares the station to a museum: both stand outside the framework of conventional pragmatic activity, and, Adorno adds, both are bearers of a death symbolism. In the case of the museum, this death symbolism is one

associated with the work of art as a new, fragile and finite cosmos the artist has created. Just like Valéry, Proust stresses the mortality of artefacts. 'What seems eternal,' he says, 'contains within itself the impulse of its own destruction.'[59]

This dialectical attitude brings Proust into conflict with Valéry. It makes his perverse tolerance of the museums possible, whereas for Valéry the duration of the individual work is the crucial problem. The criterion of this duration is the here and now, the present moment. For Valéry, art is lost when it has relinquished its place in the immediacy of life, in its functional context. The pure work is for him threatened by reification and neutralisation. And it is exactly this that Valéry recognises in the museum, whence his nostalgic mourning for works as they turn into relics. Proust begins where Valéry stopped – with the afterlife of works of art. For him, works of art are more than their specific, context-bound aesthetic qualities. They are part of the 'Life' (Deleuze) of the observer, they become an element of his consciousness. He thus perceives a level in them very different from that of the formal laws of the work. It is a level, Adorno writes, set free only by the historical development of the work, a level which has as its *premise* the death of the living intention of the work. For Proust the latter produces a new and broader stage of consciousness, a new and broader level of immediacy. His extraordinary sensitivity to changes in modes of experience has, as its paradoxical result, the ability to perceive history as a landscape, a percept if you will. For Proust, the power of history as a process of disintegration is not incompatible with the power of art – on the contrary.

If Valéry understands something of the power of history over the production and apperception of art, Proust knows that even within works of art themselves history rules like a process of disintegration. Valéry takes offense at the chaotic aspect of the museum because it distorts the works' expressive realisation; for Proust this chaos assumes tragic

character. For him it is only the death of the work of art in the museum which brings it to life.

Art, here and now

The procedure which today relegates every work of art to the museum is irreversible. It is not solely reprehensible, however, for it presages a situation in which art, having completed its estrangement from human ends, returns to life. Let us, by means of conclusion, look at what this afterlife of the work may consist in. On the one hand, museums are essentially like mausolea; like family graves of artworks which, having been torn away from their original cultural soil and sentient intentions related to this context, form but 'a tomb of dead visions' (Valéry), a non-animated and unworldly *nowhere* of images. The ritual *neutralising* of images in the museum is an *inevitable* and *necessary* process.

On the other hand, there is for Deleuze a level proper to the work of art underneath this static, cultural context: a non-historical, dynamic event-ness or becoming, if by 'historical' is meant that which leaves durable traces in the collective memory. Art induces a non-intentional, affective mode of sensing the material conditions of our being-in-the-world, a pre-reflexive relation to exteriority. Whereas in its pragmatical and speculative functions, the subject occupies time and the world, mediating the given, sensation, on the contrary, is a de-subjectivising, immediate experience of an unlimited, infinite dimension of time as pure becoming. The pathic dimension of sensation is a dimension towards which we cannot project ourselves but which we can only undergo: a passive dimension essential to sensation, which opens up the unexpected of the real as such. Time and again it unveils (for us) what (in itself) was always already unveiled: the tran-scendental illusion (Kant) of a world that would be more originary than the linguistic, and especially of a language that would be more originary than the visual. It is the repression of this transcendental illusion inherent to the human condition which

'forms' the Deleuzian *pathos* of art *('la honte d'être un homme')*, an unmasking privileged to art, and always to be reanimated by generations to come.

Notes

1. Charles Péguy, *Clio* (Paris: Gallimard, 1932), p. 23: 'Et la mort est venue, la dernière femme de ménage. La mort vient. Elle donc fait le ménage; pour la dernière fois elle a balayé le plancher, elle a mis en ordre les oeuvres.' (My translation)

2. Gilles Deleuze & Félix Guattari, *What is Philosophy?,* trans. by Hugh Tomlinson and Graham Burchell (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), p. 167.

3. Deleuze & Guattari, *What is Philosophy?,* p. 182.

4. Ibid., pp. 163-64. Whereas the English transla-tion reads: 'Art preserves, and it is the only thing in the world that is preserved. It preserves and is preserved in itself (…),' the French original is clearer with regard to the *self*-preserving nature of the work: 'L'art conserve, et c'est la seule chose au monde qui se conserve. Il conserve et se conserve en soi (…).' See Gilles Deleuze & Félix Guattari, *Qu'est ce que la Philosophie?* (Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit, 2005), p.154.

5. For references to Straus and Maldiney see Deleuze & Guattari, *What is Philosophy?*, p. 169 and Gilles Deleuze, *Francis Bacon: the Logic of Sensation*, trans. by Daniel W. Smith (London and New York: Continuum, 2003), p. 35 (note 1).

6. Jean-Louis Chrétien, 'Introduction aux "oeuvres philosophiques"', p. 14, in Henri Maldiney, *Regard Parole Espace* (Paris: les Éditions du Cerf, 2012). (Translation by author)

7. See Erwin Straus, *Du Sens des Sens,* trans. by G. Thines and J. P. Legrand (Grenoble: Milon, 2000), p. 417, and Henri Maldiney, 'Le dévoilement de la dimension esthétique dans la phénoménologie d'Erwin Straus' in: *Regard Parole Espace*, pp. 188-89.

8. Straus, *Du Sens des Sens*, p. 417. (Translation by author) See also: Maldiney, *Regard Parole Espace*, p. 189.

9. Maldiney, *Regard Parole Espace,* p. 189.

10. Pierre Sauvanet, *Le Rythme et la Raison. I. Rythmologies* (Paris: Éditions Kimé, 2000), p. 121.

11. Erwin Straus, *Vom Sinn der Sinne,* transl. by G. Thinès and J. P. Legrand, Berlin, J. Springer, 1989, p. 372. (Translation and emphasis by author). Deleuze cites this proposition at the beginning of chapter 6 of *Francis Bacon. The Logic of Sensation.*

12. Straus, *Du Sens des Sens*, p. 277. (Translation and emphasis by author). Cited by Henri Maldiney in Maldiney, *Regard Parole Espace*, p. 195.

13. Henri Maldiney, 'Le dévoilement de la dimension esthétique dans la phénoménologie d'Erwin Straus', in Maldiney, *Regard Parole Espace*, pp. 175-200.

14. Ibid., p. 45: 'Toute sensation comporte un moment émotionnel, pathique, et un moment représentatif, gnosique.' & p. 190: 'le moment pathique est signifiant – non pas à la manière significative du moment gnosique. […] Elle ne concerne pas un *quoi* mais un *comment*.'

15. Ibid., p. 45. (Translation by author)

16. Ibid., p. 190.

17. Cited in Maldiney, *Regard Parole Espace*, p. 204. (Translation by author).

18. Ibid., p. 190.

19. Straus notes that this expression of 'being-in-the-world' is distinct from Heidegger's usage of the term in *Sein und Zeit.* Straus misses in Heidegger's ontological analytics of *Dasein* a place for life, for the body, for the 'animalia'. For him it is an oversimplification to think that man and nature form a harmonious continuum, which he found in Heidegger's interpretation of nature as ready-at-hand (*vorhanden*). In particular, Heidegger had overlooked man's struggle with nature and hence his being-in-the-world lacked gravity for Straus. See Herbert Spiegelberg, *Phenomenology in Psychology and Psychiatry: A Historical Introduction* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1972) p. 274, and Straus, 2000, p. 418.

20. Maldiney, *Regard Parole Espace*, p. 189. (Translation by author)

21. *L'Abécédaire de Gilles Deleuze*, 'R pour Résistance'. (Translation by author)

22. Deleuze refers in this context to the English writer Virginia Woolf who in her diary points to the importance of eliminating everything that adheres to our current and lived perceptions and of incorporating in the moment nonsense, fact, sordidity, '*but made transparent*'. See Deleuze & Guattari, *What is Philosophy?,* p. 172.

23. Straus, *Du Sens des Sens*, p. 371. (Translation by author)

24. Gilles Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense,* trans. by Mark Lester (London: The Athlone Press, 1990), pp. 149-50. (Emphasis by author)

25. Isabelle Stengers' instructive reading of *What is Philosophy?* <http://www.recalcitrance.com/deleuzelast.htm> [Accessed 07 April 2014].

26. Straus, *Du Sens des Sens*, pp. 382-83. Cited by Deleuze and Guattari in Deleuze & Guattari, *What is Philosophy?*, p. 169.

27. Jean-Luc Nancy, *A l'écoute* (Paris: Galilée, 2002), pp. 32-4. (Translation by author). In this essay devoted to the particular incidence of sound, Nancy also draws on Straus' *Vom Sinn der Sinne* to develop a concept of 'listening' (*l' écoute*) as opposed to 'hearing', the French 'entendre' which apart from hearing means also to comprehend, as in 'hearing a language and understanding its meaning.'

28. Deleuze & Guattari, *What is Philosophy?*, p. 172.

29. Nancy, 2002, p. 30.

30. Maldiney, *Regard Parole Espace,* p. 383. (Translation by author)

31. Ibid., p. 339

32. Chrétien, 'Introduction aux "oeuvres philosophiques"', p. 29.

33. Maldiney, *Regard Parole Espace*, p. 383.

34. I follow here Sarah Brunel's instructive essay 'Entre Un et Rien', p. 38, in *Maldiney. Une singulière présence* (Paris: Éditions les Belles Lettres, 2014).

35. Maldiney, *Regard Parole Espace*, p. 221.

36. Henri Maldiney, *Penser l'homme et la folie* (Grenoble: Millon, 2007), p. 421. (Translation by author)

37. Renaud Barbaras, 'L'essence de la réceptivité', p. 22, in *Maldiney. Une singulière présence* (Paris: Éditions les Belles Lettres, 2014).

38. Maurice Blanchot, 'Le Rire des dieux' (Paris: NRF,

1965), p. 103, cited in Gilles Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*, p. 362.

39. Maurice Blanchot, *L'espace Littéraire* (Paris: Gallimard (folio essais), 2002), p. 302.

40. Ibid., p. 294.

41. Deleuze & Guattari, *What is Philosophy?*, p. 164.

42. Ibid., p. 172.

43. Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*, p. 148.

44. Ibid., p. 149.

45. Ibid.

46. Ibid., p. 150.

47. Mireille Buydens, *Sahara. L'esthétique de Gilles Deleuze* (Paris: Vrin, 2005), pp. 165-68.

48. Deleuze, *Francis Bacon*, pp. 89-92, Deleuze & Guattari, *What is Philosophy?*, p. 170.

49. Deleuze, *Francis Bacon*, p. 55.

50. Theodor W. Adorno, 'Valéry Proust Museum'*,* in *Prisms,* trans. by Samuel and Shierry Weber, (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1981), pp. 183-84.

51. Gilles Deleuze, *The Movement-Image,* trans. by H. Tomlinson and B. Habberjam (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), p. 46.

52. Ibid., pp. 38-9.

53. Maldiney, 2007, p. 419.

54. Maldiney, *Regard Parole Espace*, p. 230.

55. Ibid., p. 175.

56. Adorno, 'Valéry Proust Museum', p. 176.

57. Ibid., pp. 176-77.

58. Ibid., p. 177.

59. Ibid.

Biography

Louis Schreel is doctoral student at the post-graduate school 'Materiality and Production' of the Heinrich-Heine University Düsseldorf where he is preparing a dissertation on the immanent sublime in the aesthetics of Gilles Deleuze. He has studied philosophy at the University of Leuven, focussing mainly on post-Kantian aesthetics.

Affect Theory as Pedagogy of the 'Non-'

Gregory J. Seigworth

I want to explore just the tiniest hinge of a little something. It's a hinge that might open onto an adjacent universe, or maybe it hinges back to this universe as an immersive universe of a whole lot of something else altogether. That's my hope at least. I could be wrong. It wouldn't be the first time.

This essay will take up theories of affect in relation to non-philosophy. An easy enough task for me, as I am – very distinctly – a 'non'-philosopher by way of non-training (my educational background and employment are in communication and cultural studies; I teach in the Communication and Theatre Department at Millersville University, Pennsylvania). But I am a happy interloper into matters of philosophy; I take what I want (ignore what I don't want), I leave, I linger, I bump into things and they bump into me. We are a series of dents: philosophy and I (incidence/coincidence/accidents). Perhaps that is why I have always found something instructive about the entrance to the Philosophy Department at my university. [fig. 1] As you can see, the only way to enter philosophy in my corner of the universe is to simultaneously leave it. The entrance and exit to philosophy operate through the same door. I wouldn't have it any other way. And neither will this essay.

So, I wish to begin this argument (properly now) at the end, at an exit, at the last pages of the last chapter of the last book published by Felix Guattari and Gilles Deleuze: *What is Philosophy?* Indeed, I want to begin with that book's very last footnote. This

final footnote reads as follows: 'Francois Laruelle proposes a comprehension of non-philosophy as the "real (of) science" beyond the object of knowledge [in his book *Philosophy and Non-Philosophy*]. But we do not see why this real of science is not non-science as well.'[1] End of footnote. End of book. What I hope to do here, then, is wander in and out of a few of the spaces, timings and orientations opened up by this invocation of the 'non-' and, then, through this wedge of illumination arising between Laruelle and Deleuze/Guattari, try to understand a little something about how affect intersects with disciplinarity: how every discipline intersects with its own singularising 'non-'. Thus, to cut to the chase, I will argue that to fold affect into or out of any particular disciplinary accounting means, in the first and last instance (and all points in between), to raise pedagogic questions – about the instructively intuitive styles and manners by which any discipline configures and reconfigures its ongoing relationship with its 'non-'.

For his part, and on behalf of his own claims to be doing 'non-philosophy', Francois Laruelle is not especially flattered by this final mention in *What is Philosophy?* nor by an earlier and seemingly complementary footnote from the chapter 'The Plane of Immanence', which reads: 'Francois Laruelle is engaged in one of the most interesting undertakings of contemporary philosophy. He invokes a One-All that he qualifies as "nonphilosophical" and, oddly, as "scientific", on which the "philosophical decision" takes root. This One-All seems to be close to

Spinoza.'[2] Indeed, Laruelle voices his displeasure by publishing a lengthy 'Response to Deleuze', first published in France in 1995.[3] However, with these briefest of coordinates (around immanence, science, and decision), perhaps we can begin to parse some of the key resonances and differences in the concepts and procedures that transpire between a Deleuzian-Guattarian philosophy and a Laruellean non-philosophy, and then use some of these markers to hint at controversies underfoot in the still-emerging disciplinisation(s) of affect.

First, it can be easily noted (and regularly has been) that Laruelle and Deleuze are both self-proclaimed philosophers of immanence. Yet Laruelle's critique of Deleuze – and, yes, it is relatively uncharitable (as we'll soon see, Laruelle also has an elliptical and rather strange 1993 essay entitled 'Fragments of an Anti-Guattari' written in the form of a poem) – is that Deleuze remains, in the end, too tied up with actually trying to philosophise immanence… as if immanence will simply yield to philosophical understanding, or somehow become the subject of 'philosophical decision', and is, thus, something to be readily and transparently shown. Hence, Deleuze and Guattari draw their 'plane of immanence' chapter toward its close by stating: 'Perhaps this is the supreme act of philosophy: not so much to think THE plane of immanence as to show that it is there, unthought in every plane, and to think it in this way as the outside and inside of thought, as the not-external and the not-internal inside – that which cannot be thought and yet must be thought […].'[4] And they finish with one further flourish by rather (in)famously proclaiming Spinoza to be the 'Christ of philosophers', a philosopher of infinite-becoming who draws up and thinks 'the "best" plane of immanence'.[5]

This all drives Laruelle (more than) slightly mad. For him, there is no thinking the outside and/or the inside of the non-thinkable unthought in his version of immanence. There is no reciprocity between

thought and immanence – nothing to give or be given back. No cycle, no circle, no eternal return, no reversibility of desire and the concept… or, as he sarcastically remarks in section 1.5 of his 'Anti-Guattari' poem:

> We have loved these transcendental tautologies
> Stretched out like a temple over our heads
> Worlding world/nullifying Nothingness/speaking
> Speech/desiring Desire
> Merry-go-round spun around by a Leibnizian
> ritournelle.[6]

Laruelle's claim for his non-philosophy is, instead:

> The Enjoyed suspended in its own immanence
> What begins and completes itself with no circle
> Begins there without departing from it
> Completes itself there without return.[7]

In Laruelle, any single entity cul-de-sacs in the densest pitch-black of its own immanence (not at all the infinite gradations of light that Deleuze finds arrayed across the immanence of Spinoza's three ethics). Or, as Graham Harman remarks, 'it is not just the night but, even more so, the daylight, for Laruelle, in which all cows are black'.[8] This understanding of immanence – as a mute, hermetic, and brute facticity of 'the Real' – is what initially earned Laruelle admittance into the non-correlationalist/speculative realist school of thought of Quentin Meillassoux, Graham Harman and Ray Brassier, although Laruelle quickly exited at the very moment of his entry, apparently saying on his way out the door: 'no, I have nothing to do with that – I just kind of got thrown into that Noah's ark'.[9]

Laruelle defines his own One as the 'One-in-One', which he imagines not as the Spinozist 'One-All' (in its full, affectual, nonhuman potentiality) but in the absolute singularity and solitude of the ordinary or generic human.[10] Laruelle's immanence begins, that is, with the monadic-material singularity of the

Fig. 1: The entrance to the Philosophy Department at Millersville University. © Author

Existent ('the Real') as something that must be engaged always as a cipher to the infinities of a world; whereas for Deleuze and Guattari, everything starts in the middle, in the ceaseless turbulence and motion of a worlding that stretches ethologically across bodies of any and every sort (part-, organ-less and otherwise). Admittedly, it is hard for me not to hear in Laruelle's version of immanence a sort of wilful acephalism; the naïve-ish denial of one's head (even if it is an always, already nonthinking head), and the separation of any reciprocation in capacities to affect and be affected in the void of all but the matter of the living and non-living in their purest state of suspension.

Fortunately, there are other ways to address immanence philosophically and non-philosophically, and, to give Laruelle a bit of credit, he does elucidate many of the real difficulties of immanence in ways that Deleuze will sometimes gloss with a gesture or a glance. But then again, Deleuze does acknowledge that Spinoza's immanence as a third knowledge (following *affectio* or the capacity to affect and be affected as first knowledge, and common notions or relations (*affectus*) as the second) is difficult to attain, telling his students at a seminar in March of 1981:

> I would be very much in favor of a mutilated Spinozism. I find at the level of common notions [Spinoza's second kind of knowledge] that it is perfect. It suits me. It's great […] except for the very simple reason that then there is a condition of being a truncated Spinozism. To be a mutilated Spinozism one must really believe that there is no essence, that there are only relations. If I believe that there are only relations and no essence, then it is obvious that I have no need of the third type of knowledge […] you can be a truncated Spinozism only if you think that, finally, there is no being, there are only relations.[11]

So, yes, I suppose – right about now – the big question is: Why bother? Why do both Laruelle

and Deleuze/Guattari, despite their divergences, feel that the practice of philosophy requires any accounting of immanence? And even more for my purposes here, why does this matter at all to the study of affect in and across, other disciplines besides philosophy?

The answer is, quite simply, that immanence both the matter/mattering of philosophy and the motor/motoring of affect. For Laurelle, the matter-ing/motor-ing of immanence provides an absolute stillness, a dense point of the tightest, most contracted infinity. For Deleuze and Guattari, the matter/motor of immanence turns an infinite process, an all-at-once absolute expanse of survey without distance. Here I'd argue that one thing that Laruelle and Deleuze share, across the gulf of their respective conceptualisations of immanence, is immanence as (a) neutrality, as other than human, not anti-human but as an *a*-human-ness that nevertheless is, for us, only accessible in the oscillation of entry/exit of what-counts-as-human. And it is affect-in-immanence that reverberates across/along the cusp of this very oscillation.

That is, immanence is most difficult to grasp because it ushers forth as sheer un-mediated neutrality in its indifference to most standard categories of thought (to thought-representation, to dialectics, to signification, to intellectual cognition), indifferent to perceptual-consciousness and a repressed unconscious, indifferent to 'authentic' human feeling (whatever that is), indifferent to any correlation of subject/object or human/world. In its sheer un-boundedness for Deleuze/Guattari (or in its tightly wound density for Laruelle), immanence is the horizon of potential or dispersion, but without guarantees (beyond good and evil); its tending never belongs strictly to anyone or anything, except to the ontogenesis of belonging (understood at its most generic, perhaps better as simply 'being with'). As lived (by humans and non-humans, or by particles and waves for that matter), immanence is

endured as extraordinariness: on this, I think that Deleuze/Guattari and Laruelle would agree.

This, then, is where I'd argue that there is something especially instructive about those so-called low-level, seemingly inconsequential affects – what Felix Guattari called 'problematic affects' as compared to 'sensory affects', which are those affects that are immediately 'there' and present to the senses, 'a feeling of being', although still without necessarily ever being brought to the forefront of conscious awareness. Problematic affects arrive at an outside-experiential or epi-phenomenological threshold; or more exactly, problematic affects fall perpetually and palimpsestically below this threshold where, Guattari says, 'affect's spatio-temporal congruence dissolves and its elucidating procedures threaten to fly off in all directions'.[12] It is these problematic affects that are more fundamental; they are, Guattari emphasises, 'at the basis of sensory affects and not vice versa'.[13] Continually slipping above or below a phenomenological threshold one encounters the emptiness or impassivity of time: a time-that-no-longer-passes or, as Guattari says, 'pathic time' is threatened.[14] Hence, often in the realm of such problematic affects, a certain degree of stability, accommodation or resistance is sought through the creation of ritornellisations; i.e., patternings, refrains, recurring spatio-temporal envelopes, or rhythms.

In her *Ugly Feelings*, Sianne Ngai locates something similar in what she calls 'the stuplime'. Her notion of stuplimity is a rewiring of the Kantian sublime. In this case, transcendence does not erupt as the verticality of an infinite magnitude tearing away from the tedious ground of the ordinary, but rather, the stuplime is manifest as a supremely stupefying lateral-isation of feeling in suspension, congealing into the stickiness of affectual agglutination; relying, in part, on the typical snowballing of resonances, swerves, and impingements. For Ngai, the stuplime would be but one modality among the

suspended churnings of problematic affects; these are affects that she argues *might* seem indeterminate but are 'actually highly determined' (or better, highly *determinable*). Ngai says:

> [W]hat each moment of conspicuous inactivity produces is the inherently ambiguous affect of affective disorientation in general – what we think of as a state of feeling vaguely 'unsettled' or 'confused,' or, more precisely, a meta-feeling in which one feels confused about what one is feeling. This is 'confusion' in the affective sense of bewilderment, rather than the epistemological sense of indeterminacy. Despite its marginality to the philosophical canon of emotions, isn't this feeling of confusion about *what* one is feeling an affective state in its own right? And [isn't it] in fact a rather familiar feeling that often heralds the basic affect of 'interest' underwriting all acts of intellectual inquiry?[15]

Later, Ngai adds that these relatively inconspicuous, low-level affects – as manifest in the stuplime's combination of astonishment and boredom – 'might be said to produce a secondary feeling that seems strangely neutral, unqualified, open […] [T]his final outcome of stuplimity – the echo or afterimage produced by it, as it were – makes possible a kind of resistance'.[16] But perhaps it is exactly this 'kind of resistance' (secondary *in feeling*, though actually first as Guattari would maintain) – over-saturated, exhausted, dispersed, slack, unqualified, open – as a 'strangely neutral' sphere that brings us somewhat nearer to an understanding of affect as plane of immanence.

It is as 'strangely neutral' that, from a slightly different angle, Maurice Blanchot once referred to the 'eternullity' of the everyday.[17] Or in the vibrant voicing of Clarice Lispector, from her *The Passion according to G.H.*, when she registers the very moment of her own stupliminous epiphany:

> I am trying to tell you how I came to the neutrality and inexpressivity of myself. I don't know if I am understanding what I say, I feel – and I very much fear feeling, for feeling is merely one of the styles of being. Still, I shall go through the sultry torpor that swells with nothingness, and I shall have to understand neutrality through feeling. Neutrality, I am speaking of the vital element linking things.[18]

Perhaps it now seems fair to ask: but is 'the neutral' truly equivalent to immanence? Well, strictly, no. The neutral is, more properly, the in-itself intensity of capacity, the eternal latency of capacity: whether this capacity is One-All ('a plane' for Deleuze) or One-in-One ('generic humanity' for Laurelle). Either way, immanence is, as Guattari says of affect, 'not [some] massively elementary energy but the deter-ritorialized matter of enunciation' composed of the accretions of bare (often minimal) things, their relations and non-relations.[19] As Clarice Lispector writes at one point: 'The will to accretion is great […] because bare things are so wearing.'[20]

Because 'the neutral' is drawn from the lived/living gradients of an empirical field – even if the neutral actually comes to carry these gradients of intensity further away, never to return as personological or somehow representational (that is, the neutral's minimal participation in transcendence does not fold itself over to reduplicate the empirical) – its imma-nence remains immanence-to-the-transcendent (a power of extraction, of affectedness, of corporeal sensation/sensitivity or vulnerability), a relative immanence but not quite immanent to immanence itself (not quite Laruelle's *radical* or Deleuze's *absolute* immanence).

But this is a moment when I think 'the neutral' might give us insight into the role of disciplinarity in regard to affect, as well as a pedagogy of the 'non-'. The image that I cannot shake (some-times arriving in a moment of theoretical, if not also pedagogical danger) is Walter Benjamin's depiction of the translator's task, where transla-tion is 'standing not in the center of the language forest, but on the outside facing the wooded ridge; it calls into it without entering, aiming at that single spot where the echo is able to give, in its own language, the reverberation of the work in the alien one'.[21] Benjamin has a variety of carefully chosen critical targets in this essay and in its brief echoing scene, just three of which are of immediate conse-quence here. One is Benjamin's quick, but crucial slide, *from* the task of translation *to* the capacity for translatability immanent in any act of translation. Second is his critique of any overly romanticised vitalism that links life only to 'organic corporeality', or perhaps extends life only as far as what he says is the 'feeble sceptor of the soul […] or the even less conclusive factors of animality, such as sensation'.[22] Finally, given Benjamin's forest-y thought-image, there is the whole matter of translation's produc-tion of the echo. Benjamin argues that life must be apprehended as a continua of translations or transformations. He acknowledges that there are whole sets of 'beyonds': the beyond of language, of organic corporeality, the beyonds of sensation and soul… but each beyond is yet-too-narrow. Benjamin understood that there was a wider plane that might encompass them all while also leaving them intact and not dissolving them into non-affectual nodes. Note, too, that Benjamin depicts this process through an image that would seem to lend itself to more immediate alignment with the spatial exigen-cies of non-human activity: it is *translation* itself that stands at the edge of the wooded ridge, not an actual (human) translator.

Trading the wooded ridge for an open field (where no echo can return), Roland Barthes says the neutral (although here he uses 'neuter') 'opens up an infinite, shimmering field of nuances, of myths, that could allow the Neuter, fading within language, to be alive elsewhere. Which way? I would say, using a vague word: the way of the affect: discourse comes to the [Neutral] by means of the affect'.[23]

Opens up? Fading within? Comes to? Where (in what space, in what manner of space) do these lines ultimately resolve themselves? Not, apparently, by the coordinates of Barthes' own equation, within the neutral, but in an 'alive elsewhere'. However, what is perhaps *just as* intriguing in Barthes' formulation here is its last bit: 'discourse comes to [the Neutral] by means of the affect'. Might such a characterisation in the end help us to understand something of what happens when disciplines – as 'systems of control in the production of discourse'[24] – come sometimes, each in their own way, to face up to the impassive face of the Neutral (by way of affect), and how their lines of discourse – at least momentarily untied or slackened – ultimately come to resolve in an 'alive elsewhere', in immanence?

'Disciplines', Michel Foucault noted in his lecture entitled 'The Discourse of Language', 'constitute a system of control in the production of discourse, fixing its limits through the action of an identity taking the form of a permanent reactivation of the rules.'[25] And, in many ways, affect is no doubt *not* wholly unique in its inconspicuously conspicuous unsettling of different disciplinary practices and identities, since disciplines are, after all, not infrequently struck by a variety of vibrancies: 'turns', returns, and 'fermentations', timely interruptions, nervous exhaustions, tactical interventions, reckless exhilarations. And yet … and yet, there does seem to be something singularly unsettling, something distinctly *otherwise* about the supple and immanent architectural-effectuations of affect, so that when a discipline comes, by way of affect, to the Neutral (as an impassive delegation born of immanence's own immanence), it produces – simultaneously at the level of disciplinary expression and at the level of disciplinary content – the curious (or not-so-curious?) effect of a certain, yes, hyperconsciousness toward disciplinary boundaries, modes of address, thresholds, organising pre-suppositions, research methods, writing practices and the like, as it also ushers in a differentially pathologised surface-surround of a

felt-relationality toward other (what-had-previously-seemed non-adjacent) disciplines.

And yet… disciplines need to retain their 'non-s'. It is what keeps disciplines from resolving their vibrancies and loose threads and dangling lines of discourse in the most unproductive of ways: by turning into each other. 'Resolve' has many meanings, one of which is 'to become void', but far better to head in the direction of other definitions of 'resolve', such as 'to become separated into component parts' or 'to become convinced'. Barthes cautioned, back in 1978, that the Neutral brings with it 'the temptation of the ultimate or of the "ur" paradigm'.[26] More recently, Isabelle Stengers has fretted similarly that, with the cosmopolitical, she has come too close to 'transforming a type of practice of which we are particularly proud into a universal neutral key, valid for all'.[27] The neutral (and particularly *this immanent/affective neutral* as 'ur paradigm', valid for the whole of the study of affect) will not do. Disciplines – architecture, philosophy, communication studies, etc. – need their 'non-s' and their 'alive elsewheres'.

At the end of *What is Philosophy?*, Deleuze and Guattari speak about how the plane of immanence intersects with disciplinarity, of the interferences that jump from plane to plane between disciplines, of the interferences that lodge some fragment of one discipline in the plane of another, and, finally, of the interferences that slip any disciplinary-localisation to address a discipline from its 'non-' place. 'Even science has a relation with non-science that echoes its effects', they wrote, implicitly directing these words toward Francois Laruelle.[28] Pedagogy should set to work – continue Deleuze and Guattari in their work's final paragraph – in a discipline's relationship to its 'non-'. However, they stress that this 'non-' was not present at (nor responsible for) the birth of the discipline, nor will it serve as its termination point; instead, the 'non-' accompanies the discipline at every moment of its becoming or

its development.[29] Thus, I tend to hear the call of Laruelle's 'non-' more as a neutral provocateur. But in the collective space of every discipline's own translational echoes, in their resolve not to dissolve, and through the pathology of these singular bodies of knowledge, by way of affect, lies each discipline's 'alive elsewhere'. An 'alive elsewhere' – where affect serves at once: its entrance and exit.

Notes

1. Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *What is Philosophy?* trans. by Hugh Tomlinson and Graham Burchell (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), p. 234.

2. Ibid., p. 220.

3. Francois Laruelle, 'Response to Deleuze' (trans. by Taylor Adkins and Sid Littlefield), *Pli*, 20 (2009), pp. 138-64.

4. Deleuze and Guattari, *What is Philosophy?*, pp. 59-60.

5. Ibid., p. 60.

6. Francois Laruelle, 'Fragments of an Anti-Guattari', trans. by C. Wolfe, *Long News in the Short Century*, 4 (1993), pp. 158-64, section 1.5.

7. Laruelle, 'Fragments of an Anti-Guattari', section 2.3.

8. Graham Harman, review of *Francois Laruelle's Philosophies of Difference: A Critical Introduction to Non-Philosophy,* Notre Dame Philosophical Reviews (August 08, 2011) <http://ndpr.nd.edu/news/25437-philosophies-of-difference-a-critical-introduction-to-non-philosophy/> [accessed 08 May 2012]

9. Drew Burke, 'Autumn of Non-Standard Evenings', *Workshop I: What is a Non-Workshop?'* Part IV of V, 18 October 2012 <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zylukk5tZ7g> [accessed 01 May 2013]

10. Marjorie Gracieuse, 'Laruelle Facing Deleuze: Immanence, Resistance and Desire', *Laruelle and Non-Philosophy*, ed. by John Mullarkey and Anthony Paul Smith (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012), pp. 42-59.

11. Deleuze's Seminar on Spinoza (17 March 1981) translated by and cited in Terence Blake, 'What Is It Like To Be A Brain? On R.S. Bakker's Blind-Brain Theory', *Agent Swarm*, 10 May 2013 <http://terenceblake.wordpress.com/2013/05/10/what-is-it-like-to-be-a-brain-on-r-s-bakkers-blind-brain-theory-2/> [accessed 11 May 2013]

12. Felix Guattari, 'Ritornellos and Existential Affects' in *The Guattari Reader*, ed. by Gary Genosko. (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1996), p. 161.

13. Ibid., p. 161.

14. Ibid., p. 161.

15. Sianne Ngai, *Ugly Feelings* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005), p. 14.

16. Ibid., p. 284.

17. Maurice Blanchot, 'Everyday Speech', in *The Infinite Conversation*, trans. by Sean Hanson (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), p. 241.

18. Clarice Lispector, *The Passion According to G.H.*, trans. by Ronald W. Sousa (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988), p. 92.

19. Guattari, 'Ritornellos', p. 168.

20. Lispector, *The Passion According to G.H.*, p. 133.

21. Walter Benjamin, 'The Task of the Translator', in *Illuminations*, trans. by Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken Books, 1969), p.76.

22. Ibid., p. 71.

23. Roland Barthes, *The Neutral*, trans. by Rosalind Krauss and Denis Hollier (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), p. 190.

24. Michel Foucault, 'The Discourse on Language', in *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, trans. by Rupert Swyer (New York: Pantheon Books, 1971), p. 224.

25. Ibid., p. 224.

26. Barthes, *The Neutral*, p. 51.

27. Isabelle Stengers, 'The Cosmopolitical Proposal', in *Making Things Public: Atmospheres of Democracy*, ed. by Bruno Latour and Peter Weibel (MIT Press: Cambridge, MA, 2005), p. 995.

28. Deleuze and Guattari, *What is Philosophy?* p. 218.

29. Ibid., p. 218.

Biography

Gregory J. Seigworth teaches in the Department of Communication and Theatre at Millersville University. He is co-editor (with Melissa Gregg) of The Affect Theory Reader. Greg has published widely on affect, philosophies of the everyday, cultural studies, and the works of Deleuze/Guattari. He is presently at work on a project that focuses upon the role played by ubiquitous technologies in the embodiment of debt.

Review Article
What Will the Architect Be Doing Next? How is the profession of the architect evolving as the focus of society shifts from sustainability to resilience or reactivist-driven design demands?
Alexander Mooi

Introduction

Something seems to be afoot in the field of architecture. Several experts, among others the former RIBA president Angela Brady, have been quoted as stating that given the current economical and ecological circumstances, architects will have to approach their (sustainable) profession differently from before.[1] A more engaging and visionary role for architects is supposed, altering the focus from the current technological advisor to a more sociological engineer or entrepreneur.

To verify this supposition, an inventory of stances held by architects and scholars needs to be made, stating the various opinions about how the architect's role is developing and changing. The main purpose of this is to distil some kind of consensus within architectural practice about the evolution of the architect's role in the foreseeable future. A key factor involved lies in analysing the perception of the role of the *architect*, not of the role of *architecture* itself. The reason for this distinction is that although many texts, scholars and philosophers reflect upon the role of architecture in our society, significantly fewer seem to have written about how architects themselves perceive their role. Therefore, taking instruction from such names as Baudrillard, Deleuze, Derrida and Foucault, as Roland Faber suggests, may perhaps provide valuable insights regarding the viability of sustainability or resilience as a new paradigm for architecture in the near future.[2] It is more likely, however, that conversations *with* architects or personal manifestoes *by* them,

as described by Hyde,[3] Zaretsky,[4] Maxwell and Pigram,[5] and others, will offer a clearer view on how *architects* foresee the evolution of their profession.

A parallel to this shift from the *object* of architecture to the *subject* of architects, may be found in the recent developments in research within the profession itself: various architects and scholars referred to here state that a practice which until now has been dominated by a reward structure dependent on the creation of buildings, or at least on plans for buildings, is now having to reinvent itself. How, then, can an architect be otherwise compensated for a project that doesn't lead to either a building or even a design for one? How, then, will the architect fulfil his/her role as the provider of 'spatial intelligence', as Hill likes to describe architecture's core aim?[6]

The perceived paradigms of architecture
In order to offer a point of departure for answering these questions, it is firstly necessary to search the current architectural discourse for what seem to be current and upcoming paradigms of architectural practice: to set the playing field as it were. Yet it is very hard to state what the current paradigm might be. Even distilling previous paradigms could prove quite difficult. How, then, can we focus on an apparent shift or evolution?

If we read the introductions to the architectural publications of this last decade cited here, time and again one aspect is made clear: something has changed or is changing in the field of architecture,

whether it be comments by Oosterman in his editorial for Volume's *Unsolicited Architecture*,[7] Hill in his foreword for *Future Practice*, or Van 't Klooster in her introduction to *Reactivate!*,[8] they all describe the apparent change from the traditional role of architect – whatever that may have been – towards a new reality or paradigm. Hill and Van 't Klooster in particular seem to identify a movement away from sustainability, the defining element in architectural practice of the last decade, towards a more reactivist stance. Meanwhile, articles by Zolli[9] and Weessies[10] in the popular (architectural) media seem to point towards the emergence of resilience architecture as the upcoming movement shaping the new paradigm. Others like Schneider and Till[11] state that agency in architecture is the defining element changing the practice as we speak.

For this reason, this review will focus mainly on the following various, and possibly overlapping movements or practices within contemporary architecture, namely: sustainable architecture, resilient architecture, agency in architecture and reactivist architecture. Although highly arbitrary, examining such a list may demonstrate the various current developments within architectural practice and the way the architect's role is evolving right now. In other words, in what direction is the profession of architect moving as society's focus shifts from sustainability to resilience, or to reactivist-driven design demands?

What is the sustainable architect's role?
In finding an answer to this question one might presume to start by asking what sustainable architecture actually is. The problem here is that sustainability 'has come to mean all things to all people', as Jantzen puts it.[12] In his experience as a principal partner at the renowned *sustainable* architecture office Behnisch Architekten, Jantzen is possibly justifiably fearful of it becoming a 'mere label' or 'add-on'. And it is proving to be a very unclear label at that!

In further exploring the meaning and suppositions invested in the term 'sustainable architecture', Guy and Farmer distil up to six possible manifestations, or 'logics' as they call them, of sustainability in architecture, each of them used simultaneously or in a contrary way to each other.[13] These six varying approaches or logics are:

1. *Eco-technic* logic, based upon the techno-rational and scientific discourse, and the belief that both can offer solutions for the environmental problems society faces.[14] This approach sees sustainable architecture as a manifestation of architecture's ability to improve the world through technological innovation.

2. *Eco-centric* logic, contrary to the former, sees architecture and its technology as an invasive practice, emphasising its possible negative impact and calling for a holistic approach to sustainable architecture. This ecologically based point of view asks whether it is necessary to build at all, and, if so, how it should then reduce architecture's footprint and impact on world sustainably.

3. *Eco-aesthetic* logic is the approach wherein architecture is required to act as an icon or metaphor, inspiring increased identification with nature and making its appearance in relation to New Age forms more important than its actual performance. Architecture's ability to act as a 'symbolic' sustainable beacon through its 'green' image seems to be paramount here.

4. *Eco-cultural* logic considers the vernacular and local tradition as the most sustainable manifestation of architecture, and in doing so tries to counteract the past deficiencies in globalist modernism. Its main statement, therefore, is that to create sustainable architecture one merely has to reinterpret cultural archetypes and historic typologies and adapt them to the current societal reality.

5. *Eco-medical* logic focuses on the possible detrimental effects the built environment may have on the individual with regard to the quality of air and water, emissions, and the urban space it produces.

This logic aims to counteract these nefarious effects by using a 'healthy', sustainable architecture, paying more attention to the quality of the interior and its 'tactile and natural' aspects.

6. *Eco-social logic* believes that most environmental problems originate in an oppressive societal system and because of a lack of democratic process. Only through the use of participatory, decentralised and local processes in building can architecture truly be a sustainable phenomenon.

Each of these logics has its own aesthetic, its underlying body of knowledge and its preferred applied technologies. One cannot simply select one narrow definition, or even amalgamate a number of them, to create a coherent definition of sustainable architecture.

Faber recognises this 'elusive' nature of sustainability but sees it as more 'hybrid' in its identity: sustainability in part 'describes' the way cycles of energy transform and in part it 'prescribes' our understanding of the mechanisms of those natural cycles and how they are needed for humans to thrive.[15] Given this elusive nature, how can we then describe the role of the 'green' architect in the realisation of architecture?

Perhaps it is therefore more useful to merely investigate how several architects known to practise sustainability describe the nature of sustainable architecture and their role within it. To begin, one might take the 'grand master' of sustainable architecture in the Netherlands, Jón Kristinsson, and try to distil his vision on the matter.[16] Kristinsson is well known for his opinion that sustainability is a state of mind influencing every facet of life and architecture.[17] In reference to the above-mentioned logics of sustainable architecture, one might qualify him as both eco-technic and eco-centric: his belief in the positive effect of technological innovation in design, his emphasis on the otherwise detrimental effects of the current building industry, and his call

for a holistic approach, justify this description. Yet the description might also prove to be too limiting since he also expresses his admiration for the inherent sustainable wisdom of local, vernacular architecture, making him an eco-culturalist as well.[18] Kristinsson's view on the role of the sustainable building process is less explicit. Although his much-used handbook provides many examples and case studies on the matter, a precise role is not revealed. If anything, what is made clear is that Kristinsson sees the architect as a technological expert and advisor, showing the construction industry the 'right' way to build.

Behnisch Architekten is another well-known practitioner of sustainable architecture, noted, among other work, for their projects for the Genzyme Corporation. Partner Christof Jantzen, mentioned earlier, expresses his firm's desire to fully integrate sustainability into the design of buildings. To this, however, Jantzen adds two main desires: 'The first is to fully maximise user comfort; the second is to establish an understanding of what constitutes responsible design'.[19] According to the logic of Guy and Farmer, the first desire makes him a more eco-medical kind of architect.[20] However, further on in his conversation with Zaretsky he reinforces the firm's 'holistic' view on design too. The parallels with Kristinsson do not end there. The way in which Jantzen describes the role of the architect 'in educating the client, owner and user', can be easily interpreted as reaffirming the role of technological advisor as well. This conclusion is further subscribed to by the description of the Genzyme Center design process, in which fine-tuning the performance of the building with the client and builder is made clear and appears to be preeminent.

In Shannon May's analysis of the designers McDonough and Braungart, known mainly for the highly influential sustainable manifesto *Cradle-to-Cradle*,[21] she calls the above-mentioned role of the technological 'designer expert' something

'unabashedly modernist' in its attitude towards development.[22] The no less than seven reasons she mentions to underpin this statement are too many to repeat here, and would go beyond the premise of this review, but May basically states that McDonough and Braungart are prone to repeat past modernist mistakes, which they risk making by being too 'critical and utopian', and claiming 'omniscience and omnipotence' in their role as environmental designers and advisors. May continues by describing MacDonough's master plan for Huangbaiyu, China, a sustainable city she claims lacks the element of 'community'. Her main criticism is that the concept 'community building' has been taken far too literally, without talking to the local community or taking their actual needs into consideration: one cannot simply build a community using only bricks and mortar.

It is precisely this top-down element of the current practice of sustainable architecture by technological experts and advisors that seems to have prompted the emergence of practising architecture in a more inclusive way, together with the end-users. In the following sections, two variants of this, resilient architecture and agency in architecture, will be discussed further.

Resilient architecture
In his article for the New York Times, Andrew Zolli claims that the world of sustainability is currently being challenged from within. According to Zolli, various experts from differing fields of design and engineering appear to be moving away from sustainable development in the traditional sense. The aim of this newfound development strategy, which is apparently ever more broadly embraced, is 'to imbue […] communities, institutions and infrastructure with greater flexibility, intelligence and responsiveness to extreme events', and by doing so, make society and its architecture more resilient.[23] Zolli states that whereas 'sustainability aims to put the world back into balance, resilience looks for ways to manage in an imbalanced world'. One could argue that this, too, is a kind of sustainable development of architecture. This ambition to deal with an imbalanced system can easily be placed within the aforementioned eco-social logic of Guy and Farmer.[24] Yet it seems the main difference lies in the expected role of the architect or designer within this strategy, with reference to the society or client s/he serves. Not only is it important how buildings are able to cope with a changing world, but it matters equally how the people using those buildings can adapt to new circumstances. This approach could, of course, help to bypass the top-down, community-ignoring schemes described by May.[25]

To deepen our understanding of the process of resilience in architecture, Roche offers some perspective. In his essay introducing the theme of resilience and resistance in society and architecture, Roche calls for a fusion of the bottom-up and top-down elements in the current 'architectural protocols'.[26] He proposes to marry two opposed philosophies within architectural and societal reality today: the perhaps conformist movement that sees 'technology as a vector of invention' supporting a system of 'free enterprise and the ideology of progress […] as a basis for the democracy empire' and the more resistant movement of 'bio-political tribes, suspicious' of a 'corruptible system that needs to be renovated by […] the multitudes and their creative energy'.[27]

Sterner puts this in perhaps more practical terms. In his analysis based on three case studies of the applicability of 'Complex Adaptive Systems Theory' in sustainable design, Sterner concludes that a resilience enhancing strategy offers 'a great potential' for tying together the 'social and ecological considerations of sustainability'.[28] This means fusing the current practice of technological advice and sustainable design with community-based development, as required by a changing societal reality proposed by Roche. According to Sterner, the resilience element

also adds a certain longevity to sustainability ambitions and systems by looking differently over a longer term. Resilience does not only focus on the sustainability of ecological systems, but integrates it over time with socio-economic and technological networks and the changes therein, thus responding to society's newfound need for communal involvement. However, it is debatable whether or not this is a truly different architectural practice as Zolli and Roche seem to suggest. It could be seen as a form of sustainable architecture in which the emphasis has simply come to lie with the eco-social logic, as described by Guy and Farmer. Sterner seems to hint in his analysis that this incorporated resilience is merely a further development of sustainable design attempting to cope with ever more complex systems. The aim is to create a system able 'to absorb disturbance and adapt to change' without losing a certain level of quality.[29] The question remains whether or not resilience in architecture is truly shifting focus towards community-based design. What would the role of architects be in this development? None of the above-mentioned sources seems to provide a clear vision for the actual practice of designing *with* the community and its implications for the architect.

It is perhaps necessary to further investigate this claim of resilience in architecture in order to fully incorporate the community factor in a different manner. Yet there is another development in current architectural practice that claims a similar involvement and empowerment of social agents and the community: agency in architecture. In the following section this variation will be discussed further to see whether it is something different, or part of the evolution of sustainable and resilient architecture discussed above.

Agency in architecture

In their analysis of agency in the architectural discourse, Schneider and Till touch upon the essence of its application by architects. The architect is merely one of the many agents in the building process, not the sole 'agent of change'.[30] Architects in this sense are just one of many contributors to the process of architecture, together with end-users, and therefore a more modest approach from the profession is called for. Architecture requires an 'anti-hero'; a relinquishment of sole authorship of the architectural creation. Schneider and Till add to this new role of the architect the responsibility for governance over the 'social space' within the context of 'spatial agency'. They claim that the introduction of social space, in which space has acquired a temporal dimension, has introduced within spatial agency a 'dynamic' and 'continuous process' of space making. In doing so, this has added a new dimension to the evolution of architecture: it no longer depends upon the creation of a static, built environment. In this way it incorporates the ambition of resilience architecture as described by Sterner by being adaptable to change, without the pitfalls described by May of being top-down and literally rigid. Hence, architects can act as agents 'on behalf of others', keeping in mind 'the longer-term desires and needs of the multitude', and clearly connecting with the desired fusion of architectural protocols described by Roche. By *co-authoring* the social space, end-users and architects will be linked in the creation of space long after the building, if any, has been realised.

The implications of creating architecture and space without buildings will be discussed further on. However, a final movement within current architectural practice has still to be mentioned: so-called reactivist architecture. The way in which this relates to the movements mentioned earlier, or if it advocates a wholly different approach, will be discussed next.

Reactivist architecture

The phrase reactivist was coined by Indira van 't Klooster in her book on the current, 'innovative' generation of architects, particularly, but not exclusively, in the Netherlands. The concept of reactivism

was borrowed from the field of chemistry to describe the 'ease with which small units' in the field of architecture are reacting to the changing circumstances of the practice. The implied activism suggested by the term appears to be merely an added bonus of the phrase. Van 't Klooster found that as the economic building reality changed following the worldwide economic crisis in 2008, more and more small architectural offices began to manifest a wholly different approach to the profession. She came to distinguish three distinct ways in which these small offices aimed to give new meaning to the practice of architecture:[31]

1. *Performative design and collaboration*: small offices collaborate in flexible configurations with each other and/or other building practice experts, asking the end-users not to describe a final product but a desired performance of the architectural process – an attitude that is certainly reminiscent of the spatial agency concept as described by Schneider and Till.
2. *Testsite NL*: these offices approach architecture not as a form of *design* but as kind of *strategy*, allowing for an 'assertive role' in the building process as moderators of an experimental strategy, or as developers of the process themselves.
3. *Unsolicited architects*: by adopting this role, architectural firms seek out societal problems themselves and propose solutions without having to wait for an actual commission, suggesting independence from the whims of the client, or economic circumstances.

Van 't Klooster continues to typify the reactivist architect as one who combines all three of these methods into an adaptable strategy, continually changing the weight of each of the ingredients as the situation demands.

In this sense reactivist architecture seems to be a further development of agency in architecture, with the more assertive stance and role of the unsolicited architect added to provide greater independence. Yet it clearly still borrows elements from sustainable and resilient architecture in the way it expresses (respectively) the ambition to develop architecture sustainably and to empower communities.[32] It simply chooses to no longer associate itself with one or the other – an independence of thought that Van 't Klooster refers to on various occasions.

The concept of unsolicited architecture, however, requires more clarification. Both Hyde and Van 't Klooster describe it as the point of departure leading away from conventional architectural practice, and part of the movement of the upcoming generation of architects towards a new architectural practice. The following section will try to examine its importance in providing an alternative view of the architect's role.

The concept of unsolicited architecture as a blueprint

Ole Bouman founded the *Office for Unsolicited Architecture* as a MIT studio, and being a former editor of *Volume*, he was invited to publish the studio's work in a dedicated edition of the magazine. *Volume*, issue 14, *Unsolicited Architecture*, ended up not only containing the overview of the studio's student work, conversations with experts from the field and essays on the subject of unsolicited architecture, but most importantly, it contained a manifesto by Bouman himself, providing a kind of blueprint on how to create unsolicited architecture.[33] In particular, the scheme on 'How to Make Unsolicited Architecture' was recognised as having a clear and singular potency.[34] In the scheme, designed by Andrea Brennen, Ryan Murphy and John Snavely, Bouman offers a five-step plan on how to make unsolicited architecture:

1. Pro-actively find new territory for architecture.
2. The absence of a traditional client, site, budget, and/or program, necessitates the transgression of status quo assumptions.
3. Design…
3a) The architectural object

3b) The marketing plan (reading of…)

3c) The financing plan (implementation of…)

4. Reflection upon reaching the 'turn-key' stage.

5. Action, solicit and tell us about it!'[35]

The second point in particular seems to connect with the new circumstances within the current architectural reality for the 'new generation' of architects, touched upon by Van 't Klooster and Hyde. Its importance is underlined by the comment next to the point in the scheme itself, declaring that if the project at hand does not demand the 'rethinking' of any of the mentioned 'cornerstones of architecture', these being the client, plan, site and/or budget, then one is 'doing regular practice',[36] with the suggestion that this should be avoided at all cost!

The scheme also appears to connect the relevance of agency as described by Schneider and Till, and the three principles of reactivist architecture stated by Van 't Klooster. It does so by stating, in another side note to the third point of the scheme, that only through providing the financing, the marketing and the object is one truly an architect, rather than a mere academic, politician or capitalist. It calls for the architect to develop a different role or skill set.

The question remains, how did the architects of that so-called new generation translate this scheme into architectural practice? The following section presents a selection of this generation's architects, chosen for their clear expression of how architectural practice is evolving and how it seems likely to evolve in the foreseeable future, including a reflection on this new architectural practice.

How architects perceive their supposedly new role

In their influential *Compendium for the Civic Economy*, Johar and his colleagues from 00:/ (pronounced 'zero-zero') identify a shift towards a more open-ended approach in planning buildings.[37]

In his conversation with Hyde, Johar adds to this vision the need to create 'conditions for behavioural nudges, self-organisation and a deep influence on systems'.[38] This statement demonstrates Johar responding to the desire to include community involvement in a manner comparable with both the reactivist philosophy described by Van 't Klooster and the architect as agent of change mentioned by Schneider and Till. Johar goes on to say that the architect's current main role concerns 'place-making as opposed to the design of a physical product'.[39] Again, this statement clearly locates Johar within the practice of reactivist architecture, in particular its strategy of performative design.[40] A third element of the new practice according to Johar, is the architect's new role as a civic enterpeneur. He explains this role as a kind of programme developing architect, allowing 'a deep democratisation of process liberating […] people to organise themselves locally', creating 'institutions and organisations […] fundamentally focussed on a civic purpose'.[41] With this stance, Johar not only establishes himself within the reactivist practice, but he also connects with the eco-social and eco-cultural logics of sustainable architecture as described by Guy and Farmer.[42]

In order to voice the resilient architectural view on the current practice it is perhaps wise to share the opinion of Maxwell and Pigram on the matter. In their essay on the practice of resilient architecture in *Log 25,* they, too, state that the 'shift away from object-centric models focused only on end products' is currently changing architecture. Maxwell and Pigram give special importance to the 'removal of the divide between design and making' allowing for 'more open-source societies of knowledge' to emerge between architects and end-users.[43] By this, they mean the ability to produce and print design elements anywhere in the world, freeing up architects to produce objects themselves, or to engage with the end-user directly. It underlines the ambition of both resilient architecture and agency in architecture to have an *inclusive* relationship with

the end-user and the community at large, including sharing authorship, as previously expressed by Roche, and Schneider and Till.

Yet this liberating aspect of the technological revolution and the liberation of production currently taking place are not exclusively tied to the practice of resilience. DUS Architects mention similar benefits in an interview with the Dutch popular media on the subject of 3D printing.[44] Their inclusion in the review of firms discussed by Van 't Klooster clearly places them within the realm of reactivist architecture. In a second interview with Hyde, they demonstrate that there are more connections with the ambitions of resilience and agency. Among others, the interview refers to their manifesto in which they state that architects should 'avoid authorship',[45] reminiscent of the statement made earlier on the requirements of agency by Scheider and Till. Yet most parallels are to be found with reactivist principles.

For instance, DUS Architects remark that they want to challenge the idea of a building as 'a fixed thing'.[46] And previously, they expressed the importance of 'architectural beta-testing'; i.e., experimenting as you build and develop. These two elements directly relate to the first two principles of reactivism: Performative design and collaboration and Testsite NL, as described by Van 't Klooster.

Perhaps at this point, it is time to put all these connections and evolutions into perspective, for clearly a pattern is emerging: certain elements within all four practices of architecture recur more than others, and there are obviously similarities between them. The following section will conclude with an overview of these connections.

The next evolution of the architect's role
To recapitulate what has been said so far, a certain evolutionary path seems to emerge. Urged by a perceived lack of direct community input in traditional, sustainable architecture, architectural

practice seems to have chosen to introduce this element through agency. Even though this community element might already have been present within sustainable practice through eco-societal and eco-cultural logic systems, it was deemed necessary to go beyond the role of the sustainable, technological advisor and fuse it with a more bottom-up approach. This introduction of resilience-providing architecture, however, did require an adaptability to change that went beyond the lifespan of the current praxis; it demanded space to acquire a temporal dimension known as social space. Only by incorporating this temporal element is it possible to free the architect to operate beyond the constraints of the architectural object and to focus on performative design and collaboration in the service of communities. Aided by the principles and blueprint of Unsolicited Architecture, and forced by the new economic reality since 2008, has meant that the architect can now operate as a civic entrepreneur. By developing the financing, marketing and the architectural object, the architect can maintain his/her relevance and find a new autonomous role in society. In this capacity, the architect shares authorship with the end-user and the community at large. This new role is partly made possible by the opportunity of bridging the divide between design and making through the decentralisation of production. It allows the architect to have direct contact with either the end-user and/or the architectural object.

All of the above seems to have been absorbed into a set of principles described as the elements of reactivist architecture. This descriptive, not prescriptive, set of principles appears to have incorporated elements of sustainability, resilience and agency in architecture, becoming more than the sums of its parts. Neither is it static in its nature, since it clearly advocates experimentation in the field. The remaining question is whether reactivism will develop to define a generation and a stance in architecture. Will the term 'stick', or is it merely another phase of the evolution of sustainable

development and architecture into something new? Only time will tell.

Final reflections

The research prior to this review has for some time been preoccupied with the need to define sustainable, resilience and reactivist architecture. Yet this proved to be more and more a matter requiring a thesis of its own. Moreover, it was never the intention to make this a mere exercise in labelling. Only after clarifying these definitions by simply stating a number of architects' opinions on these matters, and hopefully distilling them to workable definitions, could some progress be made.

For this reason it was necessary to clearly state in the introduction what this text was *not* going to address. It has hopefully provided a significant and enlightening description of the transformation architectural practice seems to be undergoing. This was, after all, the main reason for researching this topic, arising from the distinct feeling that, as the profession shifts paradigms, a fundamental change is taking place in the way both society *and* architects see their role within architectural practice. In other words, what will the Architect be doing next?

Notes

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4. Michael Zaretsky, 'Interview with Christof Jantzen of Behnish Architekten', in *New Directions in Sustainable Design* (2011), pp. 202-06.

5. Ian Maxwell and Dave Pigram, 'In the Cause of Architecture: Traversing Design and Making', *Log* (2012), pp. 31-40.

6. Dan Hill, 'Forward, the Disruptive Power of an Edge', in *Future Practice* (2012) pp. 6-15.

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8. Indira Van 't Klooster, *Reactivate! Innovators of Dutch Architecture* (Amsterdam: trancityxvaliz, 2013).

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17. Jón Kristinsson, *Integrated Sustainable Design* (Delft: Delftdigitalpress, 2012), p. 312.

18. Guy and Farmer, 'Reinterpreting Sustainable Architecture'.

19. M. Zaretsky, 'Interview with Christof Jantzen of Behnish Architekten'.

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23. Andrew Zolli, 'Learning to Bounce Back', The New York Times, (2012) <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/11/03/opinion/forget-sustainability-its-about-resilience.html?smid=pl-share> [Accessed 06 February 2013].

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41. Indy Johar, 'The Civic Entrepeneur', in *Future Practice: Conversations from the Edge of Architecture*, ed. by Rory Hyde (Routledge, 2012), pp. 42-55.

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Biography

Alexander Mooi (Amsterdam, 1976) is a Master student at the Delft University of Technology. After being an assistant at the chair of Sustainable Development for six years, he currently works on his final project on the subject of sustainable tourist housing. Previously, he briefly studied Art History at the University of Amsterdam and did an extended internship at the Architekten Cie.

Footprint is a peer-reviewed journal presenting academic research in the field of architecture theory. The journal addresses questions regarding architecture and the urban. Architecture is the point of departure and the core interest of the journal. From this perspective, the journal encourages the study of architecture and the urban environment as a means of comprehending culture and society, and as a tool for relating them to shifting ideological doctrines and philosophical ideas. The journal promotes the creation and development – or revision - of conceptual frameworks and methods of inquiry. The journal is engaged in creating a body of critical and reflexive texts with a breadth and depth of thought which would enrich the architecture discipline and produce new knowledge, conceptual methodologies and original understandings.

In this issue, the following papers were peer-reviewed: The Birthing of Things: Bergson as a Reader of Lucretius; How to Think Constructivism? Ruskin, Spuybroek and Deleuze on Gothic Architecture; Video Assemblages: 'Machinic Animism' and 'Asignifying Semiotics' in the Work of Melitopoulos and Lazzarato; Medium Affect Desire: Hybridising Real Virtual and the Actualised through Affective Medium Ecology; Moiré Effect: Index and the Digital Image; The work of Art as Monument: Deleuze and the (After-) Life of Art.