

Nine Notes on the Refrain

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Abstract

Deleuze's concepts are inherently relational, inseparable from their interrelations within and between the works in which they are developed. The concept of the refrain is no exception. Moreover, the following notes outline how this concept can be seen to concentrate and summarize Deleuze's philosophical development after his encounter with Guattari. This can be summed up with the formula "refrain = expression + territory". This means that Deleuze's univocal ontology of expression – the single Event speaking all events – is compromised as global structure, now favouring instead the concrete analysis of assemblages operating as nontotalizable multiplicities. A decidedly practical "logic of multiplicities" tied to inter- and intra-territorial relations replaces a generalized ontology of force wedded solely to the expressive principle of eternal return. Through this "logic", Deleuze and Guattari trace a line from territorial animals to art and the contemporary demand for "self-expression". In doing so, they fundamentally alter Deleuze's earlier reading of Nietzsche, subtracting the eternal return (as the being of force) from the practical construct. Through the refrain, it is now the practical construct that constructs itself as the being of force. Yet, as concept, the refrain's tendency toward self-transcendence nonetheless sits uneasily with the subtractive character of practical multiplicities – this irresolvable tension between concept and construct lying at the heart of Deleuze and Guattari's own collaboration.

1. Deleuze and Guattari's *A Thousand Plateaus* chapter "10,000 B.C.: The Geology of Morals (Who Does the Earth Think it Is?)" famously lays out a world of formed strata (actualized spatio-temporal milieus) and de-stratified "planes of consistency" (virtual flows of unformed matter diagrammed by unformalized and unfinalized functions). Maintaining dualisms with one hand while doing away with them with the other, we later learn that this distinction is absolute in principle but not in practice. For the plane of consistency is constantly at work in the strata, re-potentializing milieus' closed, pre-established grids of possibility. At the same time, this means that the plane of consistency is not simply a dimension to be considered fundamentally apart from the strata (being de-stratified in principle); rather, in practice it is a radically heterogeneous dimension within the strata and inseparable from them (being the de-stratification *of the strata*, not simply the *de-stratification* of the strata). The plane of consistency works against the strata but is also internally constitutive of them, in turn constituting itself as their de-stratifier. Deleuze and Guattari capture this dynamic in their notion of "double articulation" (2004: 45). The first articulation

chooses or deducts, from unstable particle-flows, metastable molecular or quasi-molecular units (*substances*) upon which it imposes a statistical order of connections and successions (*forms*). The second articulation establishes functional, compact, stable structures (*forms*), and constructs the molar compounds in which these structures are simultaneously actualized (*substances*). (Deleuze & Guattari 2004: 46)

Putting it in other terms, the first articulation is *diagrammatic*, generating singular points using nonformalized, nonfinalized functions that relatively stabilize force relations and derive from them statistical laws of probability, but do not yet encase them in defined forms. The second articulation is *structural*, incarnating these singularities in actual beings and real relations. Yet a trace of the diagrammatic is always retained by the actual which, being generated on the basis of the first articulation, remains prone to reversing the direction of its genesis. The more immanent a structure, the more it identifies itself with its own movement of de-structuring.

2. Not only are strata immanent in principle to their de-stratified element, this element is also constitutive of strata themselves in practice (even when we abstract strata from their movement of de-structuring). Strata always come in pairs, they are dual (and not only in a relation of dualism with their informal element). What is more fundamental than either half of each pair is the element of their co-articulation that grounds them in a kind of monism specific to that pairing (within a larger pluralism of paired strata). And what is more fundamental still is that which underlies and accounts for this element of monism (the informal and diagrammatic). Yet the former *expresses* the latter (which does not mean it unilaterally produces it: their causality is immanently dynamic). It is only from the side of strata, from the viewpoint of their co-articulation, that the informal element underlying it can be attained and elaborated so as to de-stratify them. In short, strata de-stratify themselves from the level of the strata themselves. This is why strata only exist in relation to a double articulation of informal diagram and formed strata. This relation of dualism exists at the heart of, and is expressed by, the co-articulation of strata themselves.

What are these pairings of strata, and what is the element of their monism? Deleuze and Guattari respond, forms (and substances) of expression and forms (and substances) of content. The terminology is relative. A stratum – or rather one half of a necessarily paired stratum – is “expressive” if it expresses its other half (termed the “content” of this expression). Yet double articulation means we are no longer in the framework of “expressionism in philosophy”. Deleuze’s 1968 Spinoza monograph considers expression as expressing a potent matter which, contra idealism, doesn’t lead to a form being unilaterally imposed on it. Expressive form gives rise to something more profound than matter or form when considered in a relation of dualism. “What is expressed”, this more fundamental element beyond dualism, doesn’t resemble expressive forms (contra Platonism) yet doesn’t exist outside them (recuperating Plato via an overturning). What is expressed is

an incorporeal event or fragment of immanence (as Deleuze tells us, the Stoics were the first to reverse Platonism). Form no longer acts, now it reacts onto the actions and passions inducing its formation; but in following its own formal principles, that cannot themselves be deduced from the actions and passions, it gives rise to a new figure of causality: “double causality” (cf. Deleuze’s *Logic of Sense* [1969]).

This follows from Deleuze’s subscription to a notion of “inactive vitalism” (cf. the conclusion of Deleuze and Guattari’s *What is Philosophy?* [1994]). Lacking any inherent teleological principle, life must be selected and thereby expressed by a constructive “form” (in the most general sense of the term). Matter’s open potentiality can only be effectuated through formal expression such that matter is fundamentally inactive and life must be activated. Matter acts at the level of actions and passions, but life is only activated by a selective procedure of expression (formal reaction) which narrows down matter’s open field of potential giving it form and finality. By seeking to strip out any vestiges of finality from matter (conceived as unformed flows or force relations), Deleuze’s inactive vitalism presents itself as a radicalization of all the earlier expressive schema in the history of philosophy (from the Stoics to Spinoza and Nietzsche).

Yet matter, in the earlier Deleuze of 1968, lacking its own form (when considering the entire movement of expression), only contributes material potentials to this movement, being ultimately contained within the forms imposed on it by expression. By contrast, by introducing a diagrammatic component, double articulation gives unformed flows of matter, material potentials, a first level of proto-formation. Expression is now only a second level of formation imposed upon a first. Moreover, as we know from note 1, this first level of proto-formation is constantly at work against or beneath the second, frustrating the finality of its process and by means of independent functions that are not yet finalized or formalized. Double articulation sabotages expressionism, de-finalizing and de-formalizing its process. Yet double articulation still gives rise to a monism that gives consistency to this overall process of expression and self-sabotage. No longer the monism of the movement of expression, which folds form and matter into its own process as a single “incorporeal”, monism is now the monism of structuring (second articulation) and de-structuring (first articulation), or of a single expression (constitution of monism) and a double articulation (self-sabotage).

This further equalizes the respective roles of form and force in the constitution of monism. The first iteration of expressionism, in Deleuze, seeks to do this but ultimately prioritizes form, or at least fails to provide force with a fully independent schematism (the diagram). The second (double articulation) completes the immanence of expressionism by giving the self-sabotaging reversal of its formal process (or of the first iteration) an equal role in its genesis. Hence, we arrive at a more immanent, which is to say a more fully equal, articulation of force and form, given that force now has its own independent level of proto-formation that can de-formalize and de-finalize its expression by form. The notion of “double articulation” gives an overall consistency to this back-and-forth bet-

ween proto-formation and finalized formation, since proto-formation doesn't just come first, it can also come after or "double" its finalization (the second articulation), thus de-forming and de-finalizing expression within what is nonetheless overall a monism (that of double articulation).

The first iteration of expressionism gave us the triadic figure: expressing matter (unformed potential), expressive form, expressed incorporeal (immanence). The second iteration breaks apart this process into two opposed yet mutually informing (or self-doubling) directions. (i) Expression: The stratum termed "content" is expressed by the stratum termed "expression", giving us a stratum proper (as a pairing of strata). (ii) Content: Yet the content stratum works against the stratum as such, enabling the diagram to emerge at this point, de-stratifying (and later re-stratifying) the stratum.

3. What do we call this monism within double articulation? Deleuze and Guattari give it the name of "assemblage". The assemblage is two-sided, or rather it has two dimensions. On one side, it is actualized in a concrete, spatio-temporal milieu (formed stratum). On the other, it opens onto virtuality (the plane of consistency). On one side it is *structured*, on the other side it is *machinic*. The concrete assemblage (structure) incarnates, or is the processual result of, a diagrammatic process that is fundamentally machinic. But as structure, it represses its own machinic nature. It locks it out as it locks itself up as fully actualized, giving finality and form to the diagrammatic functions on whose basis it was generated (the first articulation). Diagrammatic functions, by contrast, being nonformalized and nonfinalized, are "abstract". Without the concrete assemblages in which abstract functions are actualized, the diagram's effects would remain purely virtual. Yet, without the diagram, concrete assemblages would be unable to form and finalize flows of unformed matter (force relations), since concrete assemblages react only onto substances of content (the first articulation), onto proto-formed, proto-finalized relations of force (singularities). Moreover, without the first articulation, structured assemblages would be unable to mutate from one structure to another.

Foucault's example: the diagram of disciplinary power is the general function of separating bodies from what they can do, segmenting them in time and space (formalized and finalized as a "prison", "hospital", "school", "workshop" only in the second articulation). The diagram or "abstract machine" of disciplinary power is an emission of reactive singularities (in the Nietzschean sense) incarnated in real inmates, patients, students and workers. The naval military hospital, an example of a "supple" institution, exists at the crossroads of several overlapping functional finalities (curing, training, managing the port's flow of goods). Here, the diagram has a relatively low "coefficient of effectuation" (Deleuze 2006b: 35, translation modified). It is more virtual, its machinic component less finalized, its segmentation of the institution into parts less rigid. Moreover, diagrams exist not only in varying states of actualization, their actualization can also be overturned entirely by

participating in an overall structural mutation, not only of the assemblage but of the diagram itself. For instance, the shift from sovereign to disciplinary power implies a new diagram, or a new set of general functions (segmenting bodies in time and space replaces the violent spectacle of sovereign power over the body of the condemned), and not only a new set of institutional finalities. Revenge of content within double articulation, the self-sabotage of expressive finality.

The concrete assemblage incarnates the abstract machine by formalizing and finalizing its functions, giving the first articulation a defined spatio-temporal actuality. Nonetheless, the second articulation doesn't entirely subsume the first, but establishes the limits the first will transgress in its irreducibility to them. Hence, the machine is defined strictly in relation to the singular concrete assemblage from which it is excluded as a "singular key" (Deleuze & Guattari 2004: 368) specific to that assemblage and that assemblage alone.¹ The machine's function is to unlock its corresponding assemblage. The machine is counter-produced or retroactively generated in tension with and against the concrete assemblage that nonetheless incarnates it, and in this tension defines that assemblage's singular lines of de-stratification or re-potentialization. Hence, a machine is not simply against structure; more precisely, it is the de-structuring of a structure. More precisely still, there are no machines and structures, only a single assemblage with two dimensions (self-sabotaging expressionism). Hence, Deleuze and Guattari tell us that the assemblage is tetra-valent, caught at a crossroads made up of two perpendicular polar axes. The first formal: expression and content. The second in/formal: form (stratum) and informal dimension (plane of consistency). But as we know, these two axes can only be distinguished in principle: content is only stratified from the viewpoint of expression, and the plane of consistency is only informal from the viewpoint of content. In practice, we have a diagonal line. To help us in this regard, Deleuze and Guattari give us new terminology with which to apprehend the second axis, which also helps us better understand the overall assemblage more generally as well as the monism of double articulation: territorialization and deterritorialization. Or better, deterritorialization and reterritorialization (since a territory is always established away from a previous one).

Interlude 1 on "Machine and Structure". Guattari's 1969/1971 essay of this name, commissioned by Lacan who wanted to better understand Deleuze's Difference and Repetition (1968) and Logic of Sense (1969), disengages the machine from structure using two types of repetition found in the 1968 text. Repetition proper is characterized by what Deleuze (2004) calls "non-exchangeable and non-substitutable singularities" (1), whereas repetition as generality is "characterized by a position of exchange or substitution of particularities" (Guattari 1984: 111). The machine accounts for the singular events (diagrammatic func-

¹ "Machines are always singular keys that open or close an assemblage, a territory" (Deleuze & Guattari 2004: 368, emphasis in the original).

tions) that structure subsequently stabilizes and covers over by imposing on them a restricted grid of possibility conditioned by the structure's operational closure. This is what Deleuze (1969) calls the "empty square", the element of totalization that functionally cordons off the signifying series (singular events) from the signified series (propositionally denoted spatio-temporal states of affairs), subordinating the former to the conditions of "good" and "common" sense of the latter. For Guattari, the empty square is a structured machine, and the machine proper equalizes the generative ("nonsensical") role of singular events within a structure.

4. "Every assemblage is basically territorial" (Deleuze & Guattari 2004: 554-55). Yet, assemblages "are already different from strata. They are produced in the strata, but operate in zones where milieus become decoded: they begin by extracting a *territory* from the milieus" (554). It is milieus, and milieus alone, that are stratified (or, perhaps better, fully stratified). Milieus are spatio-temporally fixed. They exist in history and geography. But not a territory. As "assembled", a territory has two dimensions. Which is to say that a territory is inseparable from its own immanent and singular vectors of deterritorialization (and of de-stratification). A territory is not grounded in its actual milieus but in its own processual semiotics that are as structural as they are machinic. A territory is a semiotic construct (which is to say that it is neither purely semiological nor purely diagrammatic). This is the first sense in which a territory is inseparable from its own (machinic) deterritorializations. A territory is formed in a niche that it is brought to on waves of deterritorialization (machinic de-structuring) that carry it away from other territories (structures or concrete assemblages).

More accurately, a deterritorialization occurs not only when there is machinic de-structuring but when this de-structuring reaches a critical point of mutation. As we saw, there are variable states of effectuation of a diagram, ranging from supple to rigid segments within the same territory. A mutation of the diagram occurs when the totality of the general functions of a particular diagram undergoes a reconfiguration, leading to a new array of possible concrete actualizations. At this point we can say that an abstract machine (or a more abstract machine) is released from its partial determination within a particular diagram (first articulation), and submitted to a new set of general functions generating a new diagram. Territories emerge at the meeting point of these mutations. They are established in relation to other territories which can now be considered as distinct (and not solely as supple segments of the same territory). Territories are hence relational assemblages or relational coordinates between assemblages, coordinates that are comprised of structural points of mutation.² Indeed, insofar as an assemblage is twofold, both structured and de-structuring, the notion of territory is alone able to account for the unity of

² Though perhaps we can consider territories in some cases as supple or rigid segments of the same territory from the viewpoint of a single diagram, as well as considering them as distinct territories from the viewpoint of multiple territorialized diagrams, depending on the territory in question. As

the assemblage since it emphasizes the latter's essentially relational nature. Territory doesn't merely map relations between assemblages, it highlights the relations internal to assemblages as such, internal relations that are always both between the assemblage's two halves and (insofar as the machinic half is by nature deterritorializing) between one structured, concrete assemblage and another. This solves the problem of a structure's genesis, since a structure must now presuppose the mutation of a previous structure. In short, a concrete assemblage presupposes other concrete assemblage with which it articulates machinically, machinic relations on top of which the concrete assemblage is built.

As such, the notion of territory shows how lines of de-structuring and of de-stratification are primary within an assemblage, if always singular and immanent to the assemblage undergoing de-structuring and de-stratification. Deleuze and Guattari refer to the semiotic matters of expression, or constituent diagrammatic functions, of a territorial assemblage (the assemblage's first articulation) as its "components of passage" (Deleuze & Guattari 2004: 358), whose function is only ultimately territorial because it is first deterritorializing and decoding. Semiotic matters of expression reterritorialize or recode milieus and other territories. They effect a movement toward territory only because they leave another one behind; indeed, the "territory" they effect a movement toward is nothing else than the consolidation and culmination of this movement away from another. The monism of double articulation therefore has a new name: de/reterritorialization. These semiotic diagrams reach into another territory's coded forces in order to decode the forms that encase them. Their forms decoded, forces' potentialities reemerge. The diagram can never capture all these potentialities, but it can direct them toward a new territorial coding (territory's second articulation).

Territorial assemblages thus complete the geology of morals. God is a lobster, a double articulation. Yet as Deleuze and Guattari tell us, lobsters are prone to deterritorializing migrations. This is why monism operates within an initial pluralism. In principle, each stratum, each pairing of strata (internally constituted by a plane of consistency as interstratum), has a different fate, though in practice we have seen they articulate by means of relations of de/reterritorialization. Deterritorialization emerges here as potentially a new figure of monism, a point of convergence for the plurality of stratified territories. Though it is yet to be established whether the monism of deterritorialization takes precedence over the plurality of reterritorializations. In any case, it is clear that we can thus only fully understand the theory of strata, the geology of morals, in relation to their territories and movements of deterritorialization. Does this thereby privilege the territorial animals within Deleuze and Guattari's general ontology of strata? Do only the territorial animals condition the diagrammatization of the plane of consistency? Moreover, does the plane of

such, these coordinates would also include general diagrammatic functions of the same diagram, and not solely points of mutation, meaning that different types of diagram would intersect in relation to a set of territories (rather than simply having one diagram per territory).

consistency hinge above all on those territorial animals tending more towards deterritorialization? If God is a lobster (the monism of double articulation), is he not more fundamentally a migrating pod of them (a plurality of strata converging on generalized deterritorialization as a new monism)?

5. Hypothesis I: Deterritorializing migrations are needed to unfold and constitute the plane of consistency as immanent, that is to say, to realize the plane of consistency (the fundamental ontological horizon of *A Thousand Plateaus*), releasing and fully autonomizing its diagrammatic functioning within and against the strata. Refutation: each deterritorialization is recoded onto a reterritorialization. Lobsters reach their destination. Perhaps we then need a more fundamental concept than de/reterritorialization to ground the geology of morals. This would also diminish the absolute importance of the territorial animals.

Hypothesis II: Territorial animals embody a *refrain* that grounds their movement of deterritorialization, but which can also be abstracted from this very movement and elaborated for itself as music (“Music is a creative, active operation that consists in deterritorializing the refrain” [Deleuze & Guattari 2004: 331]).

6. Theory of the refrain. Deleuze and Guattari tell us that the refrain has three components, and two subcomponents: (a) chaos, (bi) milieu, (bii) territory, (c) cosmos. Hypothesis II, Specification I: the refrain is the refrain of the earth, and if animals embody it, and music releases and develops it for itself, these are only the expressions of a self-expressive musical earth. Hypothesis II, Specification II: the earth as the expressive development of force doesn’t preexist its expressions and must be constructed by them. Territorial animals and music are not only of the earth, they are fully equal to it (*Deus sive Natura*). The components and subcomponents again: (a) the earth’s forces, (bi) coded forces, (bii) semiotically expressed (decoded and recoded) or *assembled* forces, (c) forces *machined* or diagrammed on the plane of consistency. Hypothesis II, Specification III (or, partial refutation of Specification II): one animal must stand apart from the earth as most fully constitutive of it: the machine, and more specifically, the musical machine. Consequence of Hypothesis II, Specification III: the being of the earth is not given in force, in its coding, decoding, or recoding, but in its diagrammatization as something else than either pure force (chaos) or pure form (strata): immanence (territorial expressionism’s self-sabotage).

Hypothesis III: the being of the earth, or of developmental force, is immanence. Hypothesis III, Specification I: immanence is constructed by the refrain through pure diagrammatization without recoding. The construction of territory operates through (diagrammatic) decoding/(semiotic) recoding, but the construction of the cosmos operates through pure diagrammatic decoding alone. This is not the same decoding as territorial expression but it is not simply a return to chaos either. Pure diagrammatic decoding thus

needs more accurate terminology. Deleuze and Guattari provide it for us when they give us two types of deterritorialization: relative and absolute. The development of a pure diagrammatic decoding entails absolute deterritorialization, which is not simply a deterritorialization away from territory as such (back to chaos), but *into* or beyond territory (if nonetheless through it), into the inter-stratum (plane of consistency) operating at the heart of (if radically distinct from) every stratum. A new tryptic: (a) unruly winds, (bi) the foundations of the house, (bii) the house-assemblage (inhabited by musicians), (c) the open window through which the musical line escapes (while anchored to the sedentary instrument), mingling with the stratus clouds. Hypothesis III, Specification II (or, refutation of Hypothesis II, Specification III): music as absolutely deterritorialized refrain is just a species of creationism. First consequence of Hypothesis III, Specification II: more fundamental than the musical machine is the creative construct in general. Second consequence of Hypothesis III, Specification II: the refrain is not essentially musical, neither in its process nor in its terminal machinic point.

7. Unpacking the theory of the refrain.

(A) Force. For Deleuze, forces are chaotic. Chaos is “purely disjunctive diversity” (Deleuze 2005: 86), or the chance encounter of forces outside any synthesis or mediation (Deleuze 2006a: 24-25). First attempt at an ontology of force: The being of forces is return (Deleuze 2006a: 44). Only active forces, ones that affirm their quantitative differences from one another, return (reactive forces don’t), since in affirming this difference they are selected by the will to power. More accurately, they are selected by the eternal return which ontologically valorizes the active and reactive valences (or singularities) of the will to power. Second attempt at an ontology of force: Deleuze rejects the first theory in 1980. The eternal return is ultimately idealistic (Deleuze & Guattari 2004: 6-7), since active forces only eternally return in thought (“the thought of the eternal return”, Deleuze 2006a: 41) – which is to say on a supplementary ($n + 1$) stratum (or meta-stratum) internal to thought, giving thinking a certain non-immanent priority over being. Now, in 1980, return must be practically constructed at $n - 1$ dimensions. The logic of concrete assemblages is that each constitutes its own ontological plane (of consistency), and thus together they never add up to form a whole, either at their own level or in relation to a meta-level that thinks them. It is thus not enough to say that each concrete assemblage simply thinks the return of active forces on its own irreducible plane of consistency. Planes of consistency are made not thought, and it is the inner practical workings of each plane and their practical relations to other planes that now matches and equalizes thought’s role in collectively expressing the return or being all planes share.

Yet, it was suggested that all planes of consistency nonetheless converge on a generalized movement of deterritorialization. Is the latter still ultimately a point of monism beyond pluralism? Or are there several ends to the general process of deterritorialization happening across planes? Moreover, is this beyond still to be thought of in terms of

thought and, if so, does this occur at a supplementary level? Without yet being able to answer all these questions, we are nonetheless in a position where we can start distinguishing between *planes* of consistency and the *plane* of immanence (whether there are one or several of the latter is still up for debate).

(Bi) Milieu. If the being of forces is return, but as made not as thought, how do we make forces return? First, we must code them. What is it to code a force? Deleuze and Guattari consider the milieu to stratify forces, to actualize them in space and time, by imposing a rigid form and finality. The theory of the refrain understands this in terms of rhythm as habit: repetition without difference. “Rhythm is the milieu’s answer to chaos” (Deleuze & Guattari: 345). But coding is always already transcoding. “What chaos and rhythm have in common is the in-between – between two milieus, rhythm-chaos” (Deleuze & Guattari: 345), or repetition with difference. As soon as we have coded milieus we have communication and polyrhythm across milieus, a rhythmic composition of chaos. Or rather, rhythm always re-introduces a trace of chaos, “never [being] on the same plane as that which has rhythm” (Deleuze & Guattari 2004: 346), namely stratified milieus. Milieus have repetition, rhythms difference. Hence milieus are infra-assemblages, laying the ground for the decoded and de/stratified assemblages (the latter, as we know, is always both stratified structure and destratified machine).

(Bii) Territory. Just as easily as habits are made they can be unmade, which is after all the function of music (to reconstitute a body). But this is also the function of territorial semiotics in general, and the refrain reaches its apex only in relation to territory and its processes of deterritorialization. Territory is the act that territorializes-assembles diverse milieus and rhythms, cutting across them in order to enclose them within structure (assemblage) with one hand while, with the other, multiplying transcoding (machine) and intensifying the trace of chaos in territory (this is most comprehensively what they term the “earth”).³

“There is territory when the rhythm has expressiveness” (Deleuze & Guattari 2004: 347); “Territorialization is an act of rhythm that has become expressive” (Deleuze & Guattari 2004: 348). Hence, “functions in a territory are not primary; they presuppose a territory-producing expressiveness” (Deleuze & Guattari 2004: 348). The difference in level between milieu (coded repetition) and rhythm (transcoding difference) is now replaced by a plane of “territorialized functions” and “territorializing expressions” (Deleuze & Guattari 2004: 348). Territory territorializes by establishing an expressive fold of immanent causality (expressing matter/expressive form/expressed immanence) through a territorial semiotics. In the infra-assemblage, milieus’ periodic repetitions rhythmically jar to constitute a plane irreducible to any one milieu. In the territorial assemblage proper,

³ “Whenever a territorial assemblage is taken up by a movement that deterritorializes it [...] we say that a machine is released. That in fact is the distinction we would like to propose between *machine* and *assemblage* (emphasis in the original) [cf. “Machine and Structure”]: a machine is like a set of cutting edges that insert themselves into the assemblage undergoing deterritorialization, and draw variations and mutations from it” (Deleuze & Guattari 2004: 367).

the causality is no longer unidirectional but immanent (bi-directional). Milieus are territorialized, their functions formalized and finalized by means and ends given to them by territorial semiotics. These functions (periodic repetition as coding of force) no longer uni-linearly engender polyrhythm from rhythm (the infra-assemblage) but are now themselves the quasi-causal effects of a territorial expressiveness. In principle, territorial expression within an assemblage brings all its parts into constant variation and communication, such that “what is expressed” (territory) is now as much the effect of expressive forms (territorial semiotics) as of expressing matters or matters of expression (milieus territorialized as functions).⁴ Only “in principle”, since territorial expression (the refrain as such), being an assemblage and thus two-sided (structure and machine), tends to lock up its machinic dimension (its diagrammatic functions) in order to better formalize and finalize them according to its expressive finalities. Hence, the territorial assemblage introduces the diagram into expressionism, something expressionism seeks to cover over or repress.

Interlude 2 on the golden formula: Refrain = expression + territory. Second version: Refrain = (double articulation [= expression + assemblage (= structure + machine)]). Third version: Refrain (double articulation) = expression (structure) + machine (deterritorialization or frustration of expression).

Uexküll’s paradox: Habits respond to environment, but environment doesn’t preexist habit. The territorial animal “selects” which stimuli to respond to. From these stimuli it establishes its milieu. But the animal is only really territorial if it finds expressive means to mediate this already reduced world of stimuli. Warning calls are sounded to indicate an enemy is approaching. Coloured feathers attract a mate. Pheromones mark the edges of a territory. New stimuli are provided just as old ones are buried beneath them. Forces are decoded as much as they are recoded. This is because territories have no end: a territory has an interior zone (“residence or shelter” [Deleuze & Guattari 2004: 347]), but also an exterior zone (“more or less retractable limits or membranes” [Deleuze & Guattari 2004: 347]). In fact, “more or less” is disingenuous. Deleuze and Guattari will later show that, in principle, the exterior zone has no end (perpetual war under conditions of capitalist accumulation, itself infinite in principle). Though territory can just as easily be positively constituted and not just ripped apart by deterritorialization, operating transcoding within a more limited enclosure. A figure approaching in the distance could be an enemy intruding on a territory (inter-assemblage), but equally the basis for a new conjugal assemblage composing a new territory made for two (intra-assemblage) built on the ruins of a monogamous territory that has been recoded.

⁴ See following footnote.

This is the very basis of territorial expression. Before we can have territorial semiotics (forms of expression) we must have matters of expression or components of passage, milieus (expressing matters) that have been decoded away from their “natural” functions so as to grant safe passage to a territory. It is only once an array of matters of expression have been assembled by testing the consistency of their intra-composition that a territory can build itself atop them, “territorializing” them as dependent (formalized and finalized) functions of a semiotic expressivity.⁵ But until this work of territorial expression is complete, the gift of a matter of expression must always be initially treated as poisonous or decompositional. A foreign element is only determined as a component of passage to a new assemblage once its consistency with other territorial matters of expression has been verified. Territorial expression completes the transmutation of foreign matter into matter of expression by vacating its materiality (determining it as a dependent function of an overall semiotic expressivity). Yet, semiotic expressivity is generated from foreign matters that are initially always potentially decompositional weapons.

(C) Cosmos. If the conjugal assemblage is the model of territory (as reterritorialization), it also covers over the finality of territorialization. The vector of territorialization is an always potentially warlike deterritorialization; but if deterritorialization in the conjugal assemblage is only relative (de- and then reterritorialization), we need to ask if it doesn’t cover over and suppress a more powerful, absolute, and nonconjugal deterritorialization away from assemblages altogether (inter-assemblage) which, moreover, cannot be simply conflated with war.

Where is home? Deleuze and Guattari insist that it is not conjugal but cosmic. The most intense part of the territory (what we saw was termed the “earth”), where forces are most fissile and prone to being decoded, is not the conjugal home but the monument of creation. In principle, it is on this point that one or more assemblages should converge as their shared point of absolute deterritorialization. “The Natal is outside” (Deleuze & Guattari 2004: 359). Forces are gathered together through habits and abodes (as architectural habits), but the latter do not for all this contain the forces whose decoding provided their brickwork. Nor do they release these decoded forces by building a new territory on the foundations of a previous one. Home is then not the abode but the point in the territory where there can be further decoding, and not with the view of establishing yet another territory but rather an unlimited deterritorialization without end.

8. What is this “monument of creation”, then, if not the abode or territory? Deleuze and Guattari tell us that it is the painting hanging on the wall, or better the tune escaping through the open window, the philosophical system taking off from the mind of the seated inventor. The being of forces (return) must be made rather than thought, and what returns is a generalized movement of decoding and deterritorialization. Territory embodies

⁵ “As matters of expression take on consistency they constitute semiotic systems, but the *semiotic* components are inseparable from *material* components” (ATP: 369, emphasis in the original).

this movement to the extent that it tends towards the conjugal abode comprised of a movement of de- followed by reterritorialization. But it hits a brick wall. The being of forces is only affirmed to the extent that the movement is unceasing. From this follows the ethics of forces: one plane of consistency is as good as any other, to the extent that it encapsulates a movement of deterritorialization, but only if its attendant assemblages have the stamina to maintain this process with the necessary care and not succumb to a reterritorialization on a “black hole” as the index of an absolute deterritorialization that has happened through imprudence and by forcing the process. Deleuze and Guattari seem to conclude that better than the plane of consistency, in this regard, is the pure plane of creation or of immanence. Planes of consistency are embedded within, at the heart of, territorial assemblages and anchored to their movements of de- and reterritorialization. In this sense, the finality of the territorial assemblage is the conjugal abode as that which gives “consistency” to two or more territories giving way to just one. Assemblages risk blocking the very development of the plane of consistency that they express. Fortunately, each assemblage has a machinic component even if lying dormant in it. From this Deleuze and Guattari derive a second principle which seems to reverse the first one (that the being of forces is made not thought). Or less confrontationally, which comes back to rescue the tendency towards stagnation inherent in the first (that making is bound to territorial assemblages that tend towards the conjugal abode, at best, and into black holes, at worst).

Interlude 3 on What is Philosophy? (1991). Deleuze and Guattari’s final text (co-signed by both, but perhaps really a Deleuzian buggery of their earlier project?) is structured according to the refrain, but now pluralized by the disciplines: (a) chaos, (b) socio-political milieu, (c) disciplinary plane of creation (philosophy, art, science). Exploring philosophy further, we have: (a) chaos, (bi) “milieu of immanence”, (bii) “conceptual personae”, (c) plane of immanence. The milieu of immanence codes forces according to “geographical, historical, and psychosocial” determinations or movements of relative de- and reterritorialization (Deleuze and Guattari 1994: 88). Conceptual personae – alluding to the refrain’s “rhythmic personae” as singularities of expressive territoriality – straddle the milieu and the plane of immanence (ibid. 88). They have one foot in the “psychosocial types” determined by history and geography, and the other in the impersonal event expressed by the creative concept. The key difference with their earlier theory is that the pure plane of creation is now considered strategically as not only beyond the assemblages but against them, given the earth’s near total subsumption in 1991 under globalized capitalism.

9. In 1980, Deleuze and Guattari rejected the thesis that the being of forces is made not thought. The dust kicked up by 1968 had not yet fully settled. The possibility of remaking the world through collective practice still in the air. In 1984, however, they write that “May 68 Didn’t Happen”. Jaded disillusionment with making not thinking. Neoliberal ascendancy. Against “the self as work of art” reimagined by lifestyle branding and careerist

entrepreneurs of the self, Deleuze and Guattari both seek in their later years an alternative to yuppy “creativity” and “self-realization”. What is philosophy? The practice of creating pure non-propositional concepts. What is art? The practice of creating blocs of impersonal experience, affects and percepts. What is the point? To absolutely deterritorialize (defenestration). Creation isn’t separate from territorial assemblages. Philosophy could only emerge in Greece. But creation is now considered radically distinct from the assemblages that spawn them. This is because creation is precisely the de/rehabilitation of thinking and being as conditioned by one’s assemblage. Philosophy gives you new habits. Kant’s strolls were an integral part of his system (Nietzsche already knew this, as recounted by Klossowski [2005]). Or rather, following Uexküll, environment doesn’t preexist habit. Creative thought provides a step ladder with which to access a new environment. This new space, the pure plane of (philosophical) immanence, (artistic) composition (and, they even suggest, scientific reference), this new space of creation, doesn’t exist separately from the territorial assemblage (the feet of the ladder must be rooted somewhere), but as with kaleidoscopes or vertigo, the ground swirls and is reconfigured by the distance. Creation transmutes actions and passions conditioned by territorial assemblages. One never reaches the top of the ladder or gets off it, one is always between the table of the Gods and of Men. But this doesn’t mean one can ever return to the ground once the climb has begun. Half way up the ladder one enters a new environment. This isn’t a new territorial assemblage or even the plane of consistency but a pure plane of creation achieved through thinking, and by thinking about what one has made.

To answer an earlier question, to the extent that, in principle, everything that can be made can be thought, we thus have a plane of immanence (or artistic composition) for every plane of consistency, a pole of absolute deterritorialization vacating every plane of consistency. No longer an ultimate convergence of planes on generalized deterritorialization (the seeming thesis of *A Thousand Plateaus*), but a pluralistic doubling of each plane into (1) itself (plane of consistency) and (2) its own absolute deterritorialization (plane of immanence). A redoubling of each plane into its own expiration. The refrain is the oscillation between these two planes, it is the doubling itself. A new monism. The refrain as the being of force, a being of force constructed by the refrain.

Interlude 4 on antihumanism. The Appendix to Deleuze’s Foucault gives us a compressed reading of Foucault’s The Order of Things via the concept of the refrain: (a) pre-critical philosophy (the infinite; or, read via Deleuze’s Leibniz, chaos as “purely disjunctive diversity”), (b) critical thought (finitude; or, read via Deleuze’s Foucault, the interior self as the in-folding of chaos), (c) post-Nietzschean modernism (releasing “life” within and beyond the cracked form of man).⁶

⁶ See Tiqqun’s “Bloom” for a more critical reading of this impersonal figure of modernism.

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