Sericomyrmex_radioheadi (Radiohead's Entomological Politics of Sensation)

by GUILLAUME COLLETT

Abstract

This article presents itself as a Deleuzo-Guattarian review of Radiohead's 1997 album *OK Computer*, re-released this year in an expanded form (as '*OKNOTOK* 1997-2017') including archival material bringing to light hidden facets of the album and recording process. As indicated by the title of the re-release, the album's prescience has taken twenty years to unfold. What I argue is that its relevance today and importance given our current political situation can be traced back to a logic of sensation operative in the work and training its sights at what Deleuze and Guattari call 'communication' or 'control societies'. To resist the global extension of the latter, it is incumbent upon art, as the discipline that thinks through sensation not communication, to construct a new or counter-earth. The album achieves this, I argue, by staging and enacting a becoming-moth. This becoming-moth is targeted precisely at the forces recoded as data in the 'dividual' of control societies, which this becoming materialises as sensation and, more fundamentally, which it expresses as a cosmic event or inorganic life.

1. From Discipline to Disciplinarity

Commentators have noted that Deleuze and Guattari's *What is Philosophy?* (1991) appears somewhat staid and cautious when compared with the delirious two-volume *Capitalism and Schizophrenia* project that preceded it.[1] Whereas the previous works endorsed connective multiplicity at the level of a 'rhizomatic', 'nomadic' mode of thought considered able to break with 'State' thought – that is, rigid binaries and hierarchies – *What is Philosophy?* reintroduces the very schemas condemned by the earlier works, as can be seen in the rigid (albeit non-hierarchical) tripartite distinction it maintains between the disciplines of philosophy, science/logic, and art. Each one of these disciplinary groupings operates according to an irreducible plane (of 'immanence', 'reference', and 'composition', respectively) on which are arrayed irreducible modes of thought: *concepts* (thinking pure or counter-actualised events) for philosophy, *functions* (thinking states of affairs as actualised events) for science, *prospects* (thinking subjects

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[1]   Stengers, 'Gilles Deleuze's Last Message' (http://www.recalcitrance.com/deleuzelast.htm last accessed 28/09/2017).

and objects as anthropologised events) for logic (a subset or application of science), *sensations* (thinking affects and percepts as embodied or realised events) for art.

Philosophy can *conceptualise* sensations or functions but they remain concepts (e.g. the 'concept' of differential calculus); likewise art can extract a sensation from the concept without doing philosophy (e.g. Kandinsky, Klee). And logic exists precisely as a functionalisation of lived experience which they term 'opinion'[2] (or conversely as an anthropologisation of the function): from 'inorganic life', from the 'nonhuman' (WP, p. 169) affects and percepts – which are impersonal and pre-individual 'becomings-animal' and hallucinatory visions/auditions, respectively – given to the aesthetic plane (in the broadest sense of the term, encapsulating sensory experience or sensation (*aisthesis*)), logic extracts subjectified (or humanised/facified[3]) affections (as 'feelings' (164)) and their strict correlate, objectified (or naturalised/landscapified[4]) perceptions (as 'states of affairs') (142-144, 174). Perceptions and affections are irreducible to percepts and affects to the extent that functionalisation alone has reference (word/thing and subject/object dualities) as its fundamental prerequisite.

What I would like to suggest is that these disciplinary distinctions are above all *political*, and that the methodological change in tack between *A Thousand Plateaus* (1980)[5] and *What is Philosophy?* reflects a need to think new forms of resistance against the new political forces that emerged in the intervening years. *What is Philosophy?* develops its arguments against the post-1989, 'post-ideological' background of the globalised unfolding of the neoliberal economic-political paradigm. Over the previous years, for instance in his 1987 lecture 'What is the Creative Act?' and particularly in the 1990 text 'Postscript on the Societies of Control', Deleuze had started sketching out the contours of the new post-'disciplinary' (or anti-Statist) forms of control which, if we are to follow Foucault, had been in decline since after the second World War and (to supplement Foucault with a Marxist perspective) particularly from the early-'70s due to a structural crisis of capital accumulation in the West – and which started becoming fully globalised from the mid-1980s onwards. Although he never developed his insights into a substantial work, this new political horizon does feed directly into *What is Philosophy?*, albeit as an underdeveloped if crucial dimension to it.

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[2]   Opinion is precisely the opposite of sensation: sensation materialises lived experience as affects/percepts, whereas opinion functionalises lived experience as affections/perceptions (see *What is Philosophy?* (WP), pp. 144, 174). This concept combines their later concern with communication with Deleuze's 1960s notion of 'common sense', which refers to the convergence of the faculties of thought on the forms of identity and recognition (see *Difference and Repetition* (1968), p. 177).

[3]   See *A Thousand Plateaus* (TP), pp. 185-211.

[4]   Ibid.

[5]   *Capitalism and Schizophrenia* Volume II.

In the introduction, philosophy is contextualised within the contemporary era's 'disciplines of communication' (as 'commercial professional training' (WP, p.12)): marketing, advertising, IT, design, and sales (also mentioned in the postscript). The task of philosophy and art – if through irreducible methods – is to challenge these 'shameful' rivals who (in the early-'90s) lay claim to philosophy and art's status as the disciplines alone capable of thinking-constructing the absolute: for philosophy and art, an absolutely deterritorialised or 'cosmic' earth (expressed by thought yet irreducible to it), for the disciplines of communication, 'universal capitalism' (12) or 'the world market' (106), which as global necessitate 'the universals of communication' (11) or at least the universal translatability of the 'concept' in marketing.

If philosophy emerged from Greece because the region provided the necessary and singular socio-political geo-historical conditions needed to satisfy philosophy's requirements – philosophy being first of all a discipline in need of a society of friends and lovers of wisdom (WP, pp. 87-88) – this '*milieu of immanence*' (87) was only the *relatively* deterritorialised launch pad for the construction of philosophy's *absolutely* deterritorialised plane of immanence.[6] This should be understood as a plane capable of extracting thought from its territorial assemblages and as such able to construct the thought of an (equally, absolutely deterritorialised) earth irreducible to territory. Indeed, the notion of a 'plane of immanence' prohibits the binary distinction between thought and earth, image and matter (38), such that thought 'becomes' immanent only to the extent that it absorbs the earth – or rather *ad*sorbs it, as Deleuze was fond of saying, i.e. via a *disjunctive* articulation, since thought and earth remain irreducible (the earth, as absolutely deterritorialised, is paradoxically and necessarily both inside and outside thought).

Likewise, art is considered in *What is Philosophy?* – in what is clearly an application of the musically-privileging theory of the 'refrain' (*la ritournelle*) from *A Thousand Plateaus* to all of the artistic disciplines – to operate according to three stages: the chaotic, the terrestrial and territorial, and the cosmic.[7] Art shields itself from chaotic particles, perceptivo-affective mixtures (in which one cannot even distinguish an affect from a percept), by constructing a 'monument' – a territorial expressivity reacting back onto the chaotic mixtures and ordering them into series of affects and percepts through a process of selection. From perceptivo-affective mixtures, what is selected are only those traits or matters of expression capable of composing territorial relations with other matters of expression – which is to say, which are together capable of building a monument that holds itself up and can withstand a battering from the external wind and

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6   Deleuze and Guattari reveal the comparison they are above all alluding to here when they compare Greece's 'fractal' shoreline, benefitting the exchanges that birthed philosophy, to contemporary 'international markets' (WP, p. 87).
7   See WP, pp. 163-199. Compare with TP, pp. 342-356.

rain of these chaotic mixtures. Finally, from the side of the territory, by opening a window as it were, the art work can – in certain cases, which Deleuze and Guattari typically reserve for modernism – open itself up to the cosmos or the absolutely deterritorialised earth it constructs. This third moment of (absolute) deterritorialisation reconnects with the forces of chaos (bundled into territories by the terrestrial moment of the art work), yet without succumbing to them. This occurs through a refinement of the terrestrial and territorial operation of bundling forces (monument-building), extending it further such that the bundling operation (selection of matters of expression as affects and percepts) need no longer depend upon a terrestrial and territorial mode of expression (but can instead act directly, i.e. 'machinically', on them).

If both philosophy and art are able to construct a new earth capable of breaking with all territorial assemblages and milieus, Deleuze and Guattari consider them to be under threat in the early-1990s precisely because of the global reach of the disciplines of communication: 'We do not lack communication. On the contrary, we have too much of it. We lack creation. *We lack resistance to the present*' (WP, p. 108, emphasis in the original).[8] Like philosophy and art, the disciplines of communication are constructive and practical, rather than reflective and speculative ('We are the friends of the concept, we put it in our computers' (10)) – as we see for instance in the 'platform capitalism' of Silicon Valley, where the 'concept' of an 'app' like Uber or AirBnB is capable of creating and destroying regional markets globally – and they can lay claim to the construction of a new globalised (and, indeed, online) earth. Moreover, this earth can be considered to be relatively deterritorialised to the extent that the neoliberal economic-political paradigm favours exchange- over use-value, in Marxian parlance, or necessitates new delocalised forms of social control given the decline of disciplinary 'enclosures' of power ('hot desking' replacing factories in the West, etc.).

Now, here is where the key disciplinary distinction appears: if the disciplines of communication enable the construction of a relatively deterritorialised earth, this earth is nonetheless reterritorialised on what we can call a global capitalist (or more generally a 'controlled') plane of reference. The manner in which Deleuze and Guattari define the discipline of logic in *What is Philosophy?* shares precisely these characteristics: as opposed to philosophy and art, which are *singular* (even if capable of constructing a new, cosmic, earth), logic (following the scientific function) depends on universal or general concepts (signification), and calls on opinion to subjectify (or recode) affects and objectify (or reterritorialise) percepts – undergirding the possibility of a global 'liberal' or post-ideological society of communication and democratic consensus amongst subjectivated individuals. While communication nominally outstrips logic if we enlarge

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[8]   Deleuze and Guattari stipulate that a creation (as opposed to a communication) is a 'construction on a plane that gives it an autonomous existence' (WP, p. 7), i.e. blocks universal communicability.

the concept to include the landscape of Deleuze's 'postscript' (meaningless data sets, free-floating exchange rates, etc.),[9] the latter still share with logic a dependence on instantaneous universal communicability/translatability (conversely, Deleuze notes that 'speech and communication' today are 'thoroughly permeated by money' ('Control and Becoming', p. 175)).[10]

More strongly, I would argue that from a Deleuzo-Guattarian perspective, the plane of reference – as the functionalisation of lived experience – cannot be surpassed by, for instance, a purely 'algorithmic' model of social control. It is true that in his 'postscript', Deleuze considers the polarity of the 'individual' and the 'mass' of disciplinary societies to be replaced in control societies by the 'dividual' immanent to data sets (180). As these data sets are continuously and globally modulated or 'deformed', so too is the dividual indexed to their corresponding data (credit rating, marketing profile, etc.). And considering that control replaces disciplinary institutions, which Foucault showed act as power-forms for the integration of differential relations of force (or the coding of flows of desire, if we are to read it through Deleuze and Guattari), we must not forget that the dividual indexed to their modulated data is subjected to the reintegration/recoding of force relations by these new power-forms of control.[11] Nonetheless, what some commentators seem to ignore is that the dividual is still only a constraining jacket placed over lived experience and preventing access to its singularity, which itself remains irreducible to its quantification/digitisation and modulation, and to communication more generally, even if it is held prisoner by them so long as they are operative.

In short, the 'opinionated' individual of *What is Philosophy?* must be seen as working together with the 'dividual' of Deleuze's 'postscript', but as component halves of subjectivation in communication and control societies (as individuation/functionalisation and as dividualisation, or as 'in/dividuation').[12]

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9   As Rouvroy (2016) notes, algorithms (which instrumentalise the kinds of data of which Deleuze speaks, i.e. personal marketing profiles) lack any reference (or rather have an endo- or self-reference and no exo-reference).

10   David Harvey (1991) understands this global communicability/translatability required by post-1970s forms of flexible (de-disciplined/deterritorialised) accumulation in terms of an intensification of the 'time-space compression' Marx identified as resulting from the development of technology undergirding the functioning of capital.

11   See Lazzarato (2006).

12   Bernard Stiegler's use of these terms appears to clash with the manner in which Deleuze and Guattari use them. Stiegler conflates individuation with singularisation, considering contemporary society to side with the dividual and herd-mentality, whereas for Deleuze and Guattari the individual is a product of despotic and then capitalist forms of subjectivation (via faciality). My usage of these terms is intended to reflect Deleuze and Guattari's understanding.

Philosophy and art can absolutise the relative deterritorialisation of capital and control, and thereby resist the present, by engaging with and deterritorialising/decoding (as philosophical concepts or as artistic affects/percepts) the affections, perceptions, prospects, and dividual data sets, arrayed on the mobile and global plane of reference (or better of 'self/reference'). Turning to art in particular, which will now be the focus of this paper, it is at the disjuncture between communication and sensation that a 'politics of sensation' lies.[13] As Deleuze stated in his lecture 'What is the Creative Act?', art (to constitute itself as such) categorically distinguishes itself from communication thereby resisting societies of communication and control (322-324). Thus, Deleuze and Guattari's late writings suggest that resistance to global capitalism – which through its relative deterritorialisation and 'modulations' has co-opted at a global scale the nomadic 'war machine' of *A Thousand Plateaus* and therefore necessitates a rethinking of the meaning of resistance (pitted primarily against the State in the 1980 book) – can only take place at the level of art's (and as we saw philosophy's) disciplinary differentiation from communication, or of their contrasting modes of engagement with the earth.

2.   Becoming-Moth on Radiohead's *OK Computer*

Radiohead lie at the juncture between communication and sensation, and between postmodernism and resistant/revisionary forms of modernism, because while their work unfolded precisely against the backdrop of the emergence of globalised control societies and the postmodern culture associated with it, they seek to draw attention to and mitigate its dampening effect on their music.[14] Thom Yorke, the band's lead singer, lyricist, and principal song writer, notes in an interview:

> Sentimentality is being emotional for the sake of it [...] We're bombarded with sentiment, people emoting. That's the letdown.[15] Feeling every emotion is fake. *Or rather every emotion is on the same plane, whether it's a car advert or a pop song*. (quoted in Randall, 2000, p. 155, emphasis mine)

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[13]   Alliez (2004) was the first to develop this notion: 'Logic of Sensation means that any true immanence is aesthetic – and that it is the work of art to express it in a politics of sensation [...] Because Art is not an end, but a way to draw lines of life' (108).

[14]   Speaking of the 1990s postmodern/retro 'Britpop' they were occasionally wrongly identified with, Jonny Greenwood notes 'It just leads to pastiche. It's you wishing it was another era', and Yorke adds 'It was backwards-looking, and I didn't want any part of it', quoted in Greene (2017) (http://www.rollingstone.com/music/features/exclusive-thom-yorke-and-radiohead-on-ok-computer-w484570 last accessed 27/09/2017).

[15]   Cf. 'Let Down'.

Partly for this reason, Radiohead seek in their work to dramatise and draw attention to the distinction between a plane of pre-packaged affection/perception, on the one hand, and on the other a plane of singular sensation.[16] For instance on the track 'There, There', from 2003's *Hail to the Thief*, Yorke sings plaintively 'Just cause you feel it / Doesn't mean it's there'. Moreover, I would claim that Radiohead approach this distinction between two planes in terms of a bifurcation between two earths, as we find clearly enunciated on 'Dollars and Cents' from 2001's *Amnesiac*, where Yorke hopes to 'wander the promised land' where 'we can be free', in contradistinction to the 'business world' of the 'dollars and cents and the pounds and the pence […] and the mark and the yen', noting sardonically 'We won our goals in a liberal world' adding 'All over the planet's dead'.

Throughout Radiohead's music, lyrically one finds references to absolute deterritorialisation, usually via a subterranean and/or aquatic vector,[17] and conversely instances of being trapped within constricting forms and corresponding means of escape.[18] Tellingly, during the nervous breakdown suffered shortly after the release of their 1997 masterpiece *OK Computer*, Yorke recounts:

> I had this thing for a while where I was falling through trap doors all the time into oblivion – like acid flashbacks. I'd be talking to someone and then …falling through the earth. (quoted in Randall, p. 176)

Yorke also notes, for instance, having visions of their tour bus – on which the band extensively crisscrossed the States from 1993-1998 (relative deterritorialisation) – plunging off a cliff (absolute deterritorialisation).[19] Indeed, transport as collective vehicle (the art work itself) for the facilitation of absolute deterritorialisation appears prominently in their lyrics. These themes come together particularly strikingly on the track 'Sail to the Moon', from *Hail to the Thief*, which also references Noah's Ark and the Biblical Flood ('Or in the flood / You'll build us an Ark / And sail us to the moon'), an allusion mobilised repeatedly in their music (including the 'rain down' section from *OK*

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[16] Despite prioritising the visual and plastic arts in their account of art in *What is Philosophy?*, at least in terms of space devoted to them, it is arguable that music has a greater capacity to resist being folded back onto communication (i.e. it is more deterritorialised – a point Deleuze and Guattari themselves make in *A Thousand Plateaus*, p. 333). David Stubbs addresses this issue in *Fear of Music: Why People Get Rothko But Don't Get Stockhausen* (2009).

[17] Typically the aquatic vector points to absolute positive deterritorialisation and the subterranean one (which occurs often via a portal) to absolute negative deterritorialisation – Deleuze and Guattari's 'black holes', or as Radiohead put it on 'Pulk/Pull Revolving Doors' from *Amnesiac*, 'trapdoors / That you can't come back from'. Sometimes the two vectors are combined (e.g. on 'Lift', an *OK Computer* B-side, and on 'Weird Fishes / Arpeggi', from 2007's *In Rainbows*).

[18] Yorke sings of being trapped in tins of sardines, cages, boxes, the human body, and mentions numerous modes of transport and portals (cars, planes, boats, lifts, trapdoors, plugholes).

[19] Quoted in Greene (2017) (http://www.rollingstone.com/music/features/exclusive-thom-yorke-and-radiohead-on-ok-computer-w484570 last accessed 27/09/2017).

Computer's 'Paranoid Android'), and in Yorke's own solo recordings (for instance the album art of *The Eraser*). Radiohead appear to see themselves, consciously or not, as modern-day Noahs using the music itself as collective vehicle for escape from the contemporary malaise of late capitalist life.[20]

Turning now to *OK Computer*, I would argue that absolute deterritorialisation occurs on this album through a cosmic becoming-animal, more specifically a becoming-moth. Speaking of modernism in particular, in music, Deleuze and Guattari note:

> The insect is closer, better able to make audible the truth that all becomings are molecular (cf. Martenot's waves, electronic music). The molecular has the capacity to make the *elementary* communicate with the *cosmi*. (TP, p. 340, emphasis in the original)[21]

They add that insects are 'instrumental' rather than 'vocal',[22] having much more 'molecular vibrations', namely 'chirring, rustling, buzzing, clicking, scratching, and scraping' (TP, p. 340). What Deleuze and Guattari mean by 'molecular' in this context is a flow of 'particle-signs' that cannot be discretely reapportioned to either a linguistic or musical stratum of expression, on the one hand, or to a 'disciplined' or organised bodily stratum of matter, on the other. It thereby has close ties with the refrain's – or as we saw art's more generally – machinic and cosmic vector broken free from territorial assemblages and strata. Although they consider becoming-insect to be a more powerfully deterritorialised species, all music expresses a becoming-animal, for Deleuze and Guattari. Becoming-animal is the specific 'content' corresponding to music's form of 'expression',[23] and it is always fundamentally angled towards its inscription on a plane of consistency or composition broken free from discursive and non-discursive formations. As such, music, as the 'operation that consists in deterritorialising the refrain' (TP, p. 331), tends towards the refrain's cosmic pole, and towards the machinic and the molecular. More importantly, building on the framework used earlier, it is music's *sensational* basis that allows it to break free not only from discursive and non-discursive formations, but also from control and communication. As we saw, the definition of affect given in *What is Philosophy?* is precisely that of the '*nonhuman*

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[20] Elsewhere they see their music as a 'weapon' which can be mobilised against this malaise, for instance at the start of 'Dollars and Cents': 'There are weapons we can use / Be constructive with your blues [meaning both depression and a musical genre]' – a theme which also connects to 'Let Down' as discussed below (resistance through one's self-awareness of the connection between subjective interiority and capitalist exteriority).

[21] We should also note Radiohead multi-instrumentalist Jonny Greenwood's affinity for the *Ondes Martenot*.

[22] We will see below that this holds true for the becoming-moth on *OK Computer*.

[23] See 'musical expression is inseparable from a becoming-woman, a becoming-child, a becoming-animal that constitute its content' (TP, pp. 329-330), and 'the *refrain* is properly musical content' (330). The reason I privilege becoming-animal is because of the patently zoological or rather ethological (or 'onto-ethological') basis of the refrain in their conceptualisation of it (TP, pp. 342-386).

becomings of man' (169, emphasis in the original), such as 'Becoming animal' (169), and the definition of percept is that of the '*nonhuman landscapes of nature*' (169, emphasis in the original).[24]

OK Computer as a whole is haunted by an inorganic non/digital vitality, which can be heard first of all throughout the album in its array of often fine-grained or microscopic noises which blur the distinction between the acoustic and the electronic, the organic and the technological: humming, beeping, fluttering, creaking, grinding, whirring. For Deleuze and Guattari, to become is always an unending process involving at least two terms. For music to become-moth is thus for it not to literally grow wings and take flight, but to construct an entity which is no longer simply musical to the extent that it has moved beyond a musical form of expression, and whose content is no longer reducible to the initially bio- or zoo-semiotic basis of the refrain (see footnote 24). In particular, I would argue that we find this becoming-moth activated on the album's centrepiece track 7 ('Fitter Happier'). This track must firstly be understood in the context of the rest of the album but particularly the first half, and especially tracks 2 'Paranoid Android' and track 5 'Let Down'.

'Paranoid Android' establishes itself through a discrete break with the previous track, 'Airbag', which opens the album. The digital morning alarm clock sound appearing at the end of 'Airbag' feeds through into the beginning of 'Paranoid Android',[25] effectuating a kind of awakening from track 1 which concentrates the album's more accelerationist tendencies and stages an ambiguous embracing of the album's infamous 'technological' themes, which I would argue extend far beyond computers and modern transport to the modes of in/dividuation which these technologies give rise to as well as depend on. The electronically manipulated drumming at the beginning of 'Airbag' – inspired by DJ Shadow's mid-'90s practice of making music entirely consisting of samples of 1970s records (as found on his *Endtroducing*)[26] – indicates at the outset of the album a self-conscious awareness of the historical context of the album's production, namely the unholy alliance between late capitalism and the postmodern self-digestion or 'recycling' (to use Simon Reynolds' term) of genres displaced from a rooted time and place before

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[24] Radiohead's 2000 album *Kid A* is also particularly amenable to an analysis along the lines of this distinction between affect/percept and affection/perception, the entire album oscillating between these two poles (see Letts, 2010).

[25] This is mirrored in the transition from the daydreaming apolitical escapism of track 3, 'Subterranean Homesick Alien' (self-consciously trivialising Bob Dylan's beat-infused and politically aware 'Subterranean Homesick Blues') to the first line of track 4, 'Exit Music (For a Film)': 'wake from your dreams' – itself providing an additional layer of self-distancing through the acknowledgement that its own imaginary space, loosely based on *Romeo and Juliet*, is '(For a Film)', having been commissioned for Baz Luhrmann's 'postmodern' 1996 retelling of the play, and thus also equally guilty of using framing devices to avoid waking up to that which undergirds subjective individuation.

[26] See Randall, 2000, p. 150.

being digitally reassembled in a nowhere space.[27] The drumming has been sampled and then cut up and digitally glued back together on a Macintosh computer (long before such practices were common), indicating the tendencial acceleration of recycling into the self-digestion of the very here and now. Moreover, one finds 'scratching' all over the track, as can be clearly heard during the bridge (3:48-4:12), as if the 'original' track were already being manipulated on a turntable by a DJ. This 'recycling' is a key pillar of the album's understanding of 'noise', as that which hinders artistic production or originality (our era lacks creation not communication…).[28]

'Airbag' also introduces a second pillar of the album's 'noise', this time through the quality of its texture which is particularly reminiscent of data and the digital (if not reducible to it, as we have seen – its third, inorganically vitalist, pillar). This can be identified in particular during the bridge, whose dense noisescape is nonetheless not undifferentiated and random but precise and detailed, if microscopic or molecular and unstable. This is also particularly evident in the written presentation of the lyrics (and album art more generally),[29] which are integral to and cement the work's overall aesthetic. For instance, each track title (crucially, *apart from* 'Fitter Happier') has a corresponding 'barcode' (for instance '7yuc zhd2**paranoid android.').[30] As François Hugonnier notes, describing the presentation of the lyrics and artwork:

> the general feel we get is that of a piece describing, as well as being the victim of, a multi-layered encoding of data. […] The recasting of capital letters and the use of numbers representing the serial namelessness of contemporary identity, or else the

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[27] As Reynolds (2012) puts it 'Even when it is not based on sampling, the pop culture we have today mirrors the way that so much of the economy in the West is no longer based on production. R&B, funk, reggae these major musical forms were created by people whose everyday life was surrounded by the making of things (industry) or growing of produce (agriculture). Think of the connection of Motown to Michigan's auto industry […] Today's postproduction pop is far more white-collar. It involves a different skill set (information processing, editing, framing, packaging)' (418) – paralleling the 'information services, "signification" (style, entertainment, media, design, etc.) and, most unrooted of all from the real, the finance sector's manipulations of monetary value' (418), of today's communication/control societies. See also Harvey (1991), for a more general account of the relation between postmodern culture and post-1970s forms of flexible accumulation.

[28] Indeed, Yorke's notebooks from the period (reproduced in the *OKNOTOK* 2017 box set) show he wanted DJ Shadow himself to 'scratch over' the most overtly political (and 'noisiest') track on the album, 'Electioneering', which decries New Labour's neoliberal third-way politics and the confusion it causes at the level of oppositional politics (but which we can extrapolate from this also decries the problem of escape from neoliberalism posed by a globalised world), a track also featuring heavy use of the graphic compression I discuss below in terms of computer code/noise. Furthermore, it is clear that Radiohead went into the recording of this album fully aware of the difficulty today of producing anything original, as can be gleaned from Yorke's notebook from the period reproduced in the *OKNOTOK* box set.

[29] What is most noticeable about the album art in general is the iconic white scribbling (as visual representation of 'white noise') almost drowning out the montage of images, photos, and diagrams of contemporary life – including, not coincidentally, over institutions threatened by neoliberalism such as a 1960s-70s-era photo of a nuclear family.

[30] See also the album's Naomi Klein-esque 'No Data' logo.

use of a language randomly generated by the machine, [is] as if the produce [sic.] of the system itself.[31]

What Hugonnier does not emphasise in the above, however, is the reverse aspect of this. It is true that integral to *OK Computer* is the use not only of noises conjuring up the digital but actual computers to produce some of the sounds and to visually format the lyrics, yet even so this should be understood as the staging of a herculean attempt to prise sensation from the very apparatuses and technologies of communication.[32]

The character on 'Paranoid Android', the second track, complains about not being able to sleep because of 'all the unbornchikkenVoicesin my head', whereas the character on 'Airbag' sings of being saved by an airbag and of being reborn ' > in the neon sign scrolling up and down', and ' > in a deep deep sssleep of tHe inno$ent / completely terrified ' – only the portion prior to the forward slash being sung and the cynicism coded in the lyrics appearing only at a distance from the track itself.[33] Track 2 thereby makes manifest the latent content of the previous track in its more overt jibes at late capitalism ('k i c k i n g s q u e e l i n g g u c c i l i t t l e p i g g y', 'the yuppies networking '). However, this is more deeply the case because of its recognition of the process of in/dividuation on which communication or control societies depend. Track 1 is sonically busy, densely textured and layered, and 'noisy', whereas track 2, 'Paranoid Android', demarcates distance from this space via an initially more austere, acoustic, and minimalist sound.[34] The character in track 2 complains initially about the 'noise', immediately after the end of track 1, but later elaborates that the noise refers to 'unborn'

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[31] From his conference paper abstract, given at the 2017 conference '*Ok Computer*, Twenty Years On: Radiohead's Musical, Cultural, and Political Legacies', Rennes, France (https://radiohead.sciencesconf.org/resource/page/id/3 last accessed 25/09/2017).

[32] Although less effective than the final form taken, an earlier draft of the lyrics to the penultimate and most triumphant track on the album, 'Lucky', had the chorus as 'Pull me out of the computer' (rather than '… of the air crash').

[33] I am referring to each track's 'character', rather than to Yorke who sings the lyrics (as either fictional persona or real singer), in keeping with the shift in song-writing approach taken between the earlier more directly introspective *The Bends*, and *OK Computer* in which Yorke has claimed he was acting as a detached observer reporting, bearing witness to the world around him, likening it to 'Polaroids in my head' (https://citizeninsane.eu/media/uk/q/08/pt_2011-02_q.htm last accessed 27/09/2017). We find this for instance on 'Paranoid Android', whose lyrics were inspired by a singularity, 'a look' in a disgruntled woman's eye, Yorke adding 'Whether that was down to me being exhausted and hallucinating…no, I know what I saw in her face […] it seems to be happening to me a lot' (quoted in Randall, 2000, p. 152). Likewise, 'Let Down's lyrics came from a vision Yorke had of being in a bar and the floor suddenly caving in, the clientele having only their bottles suspended from the ceiling preventing them from falling in (https://citizeninsane.eu/media/uk/select/03/pt_1997-07_select.htm last accessed 27/09/2017). If understood in terms of a Deleuzo-Guattarian aesthetics, this new approach taken is central to the album's ability to tap into affects and percepts, nonhuman becomings and hallucinatory visions/auditions.

[34] This pattern repeats itself again in ever more intense couplings, between the sonically expansive (as opposed to sonically dense) track 3 and the even more severely austere beginning of track 4, and between the sonically open track 5 and the oppressive atmosphere of the following two tracks. This creates a dynamic tension throughout the first half of the album between internal and external space, leading to the progressive collapsing of this very distinction.

voices or noises inside the character's head. Whereas the character on track 1 is repeatedly 'reborn' through technology, track 2's character wishes to distance himself not only from external noise – the techno-capitalist space mapped out on the first track – but internal noise as well.

Noise will recurrently appear during the album's early tracks as a foreign, intrusive, element which needs to be contained in order to maintain a line of demarcation between the inner and outer (the subjective and the objective along one axis, as well as communication and sensation along another when we reach 'Fitter Happier').[35] One cannot underestimate the influence on the narrative progression of *OK Computer* of Yorke's realisation (recounted in interviews) that his 'blues', explored on the introspective *The Bends*, were not endogenously generated but stemmed from the late capitalist *milieu* in which he was embedded; *OK Computer* appears to explore precisely this psycho-socio-technological interface, as well as the binary communicative individuations (subjective/objective) and non-binary (communicative) dividualisations and (sensational) singularisations to which it gives rise.

The presentation of the lyrics 'unbornchikkenVoicesin' provides another clue as to what this noise entails, alluding to nonsensical computer code as well as, intratextually, to other instances in the written lyrics where the same graphic compression is used, for instance the opening of track 6, 'Karma Police', in which the character instructs the titular police to 'arrest this man he talks in maths he buzzesLikeAfridge hes like a detuned radio'.[36] This pivot between inside/outside, nature/technology, and sense/nonsense finally reveals itself on the album's centrepiece track 7, 'Fitter Happier', which uses the SimpleText application, also known as 'Fred', included with the 1990s-era Macintosh LC II desktop, to read out Yorke's lyrics in a stilted computerised voice. The use of this program to 'sing' Yorke's lyrics makes manifest what is only latent on the rest of the album, namely, as we have seen, the use of the computer keyboard to type out the lyrics sung by Yorke on the rest of the tracks,[37] and draws attention to and makes ambiguous the distinctions natural/artificial, electronic/acoustic, voice/computer, and so on, intensified by its use of *musique concrète*.

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[35] Drawing on Attali, Letts (2010) notes how the disruptive presence of noise also structures Radiohead's follow-up album, *Kid A* (2000). More generally, throughout their music, Osborn (2017) identifies a formal structure balancing pop-rock predictability and surprise (17), which one can argue works to unsettle the listener precisely at moments in a song where they are lulled into consuming it as a generic commodity.

[36] This line in turn intratextually relates to track 9, 'Climbing Up the Walls', which literally begins with a detuned radio and which, in the written lyrics, signals a total i.e. psychotic break with sense, being the most violently nonsensical including three lines composed entirely of random letters.

[37] We have seen that sense can only be fully made of the album by reading the typed out lyrics *alongside* Yorke's singing, speech not having priority over writing here (cf. Stiegler's (2014) 'grammatisation').

There are a number of fascinating yet concealed relays established by the band between tracks 2, 'Paranoid Android', and 7, 'Fitter Happier'.[38] The 'unbornchikkenVoicesin', like the 'detuned radio' buzz and 'talking in maths' or computer code, undoubtedly refer to the presence of 'Fred', who is present in the mix of 'Paranoid Android'. Immediately after the 'unbornchikkenVoicesin' line, the lyrics are presented as: '□□□□□□□□ huh what's that??'. These nine boxes cover over the presence of 'Fred' saying 'One day you'll find out that I may be paranoid but not an android'. The narrative development of the album prohibits the character on the second track from reaching the understanding arrived at only on track 7, 'Fitter Happier' ('One day…'). Of course the irony of these lyrics is that Fred precisely *is* an android. Moreover, the paranoia should not be attributed to the android, who is not capable of such emotion (on 'Fitter Happier', Fred instructs 'no paranoia'), but rather to the character of track 2 who is trying to 'get some REST' from, precisely, Fred. The character cannot protect himself from the external noise (track 1 and the late-capitalist *milieu* it sums up) precisely because it manifests itself as the join or cinematic frame connecting his interior space with the outer world, hence generating his paranoia.

This point is reiterated on track 4, 'Exit Music (For a Film)', in which an initially austere, acoustic, minimalist, and cavernously intimate interior space, gives way around two-thirds of the way through to the intrusion of a violent explosion of noise. However, rather than appearing as if from the outside, as we find in the segue between tracks 1 and 2 (literally framed as 'asleep/awake', or 'outside/inside'), the ambiguous location of the site of this noise or violence is prepared for by two musical features. Firstly, sampled choral singing echoing the melodramatic 'rain down' section from 'Paranoid Android' is played on a Mellotron during this transitional stage on track 4 (1:27). The abruptness of the attack of each note (like the clipped first note of the guitar strum at the very start of track 1) manifests its reproducible artificiality and remove from the direct rawness of the associated emotion on 'Paranoid Android',[39] and particularly its *digital mediation*, so as to draw attention to and bypass oppositions such as natural/artificial, acoustic/electronic, as well as, more deeply, inside/outside.

Secondly, the ambient noise tape-loop sequence at 2:18 expresses what can best be described as a sonic Möbius strip, the distorted sound conjuring up children playing outside in an urban space, planes taking off, as well as the aforementioned when *rewound* on a tape, and twisting the outer into the intimate interior space carved out by the first half of the track. These unsettling elements give way to the apocalyptic intrusion of Colin Greenwood's fuzz bass at 3:22 (building up from its introduction at

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[38] This is possibly 'coded' in the complete title of the track '7yuc zhd2**paranoid android.'.
[39] Though, to add yet another layer, the 'rain down' vocals on 'Paranoid Android' are themselves melodramatically parodic.

2:50), now combined with the Mellotron choral voices, and this time tangibly manifesting the drama by breaking through the earlier layers of literally 'synthesised' emotion. This sensation breaking through semblance can no longer be framed according to a logic of inside/outside or natural/artificial – indeed the Mellotron accompanying the bass the second time takes on a surprisingly haunting quality at the end of the track combined with some more ambient noise.

By the time we reach track 7, 'Fitter Happier', the distinctions on which the dynamic tension of the preceding tracks depended have been fully infolded or bypassed. Like tracks 2, 4, and 6 (as well as track 9, 'Climbing up the Walls'), track 7 begins with an austere, reflective or introspective mode of expression; except that it has reversed the typical use of a natural human voice and acoustic elements to delimit this space at the beginning of the track, using the android 'Fred' to read Yorke's lyrics. This track nonetheless manages to continue the pattern of shocking the listener through abrupt changes to the space initially created, only this time it is no longer done by redrawing the dividing line between the inside and the outside, this having been fully realised by the first four tracks which work to progressively confront the vicissitudes of maintaining sovereign individuality and subjective interiority/objective exteriority (as superposable onto the binaries human/machine and natural/artificial).

The space initially constituted by the track is that of excess: both quantitatively as the repetition (or cybernetic 'redundancy') of order-words[40] directing action, and as the excessive quality of their content (demanding always *more*). The key elements to stress here are 'fitt*er* happi*er* *more* productive' (emphasis mine), which sets the tone for much of the rest of the track's lyrics.[41] The point of the track is that an affectless, machinic voice repeating vapid order-words provides the unconscious, latent 'code' of late capitalist subjectivation or in/dividuation (being made ready for the generation of surplus value), and that this code depends on its redundancy, as facilitated by developments in information technology. If track 7 accounts for the process of in/dividuation presupposed by the characters inhabiting earlier tracks, and more generally the bypassing of the distinctions natural/artificial and inside/outside, what allows track 7 to continue surprising the listener is the dimension of dis-in/dividuation

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[40] Or 'machinic statements', as Deleuze and Guattari call them in their chapter on the refrain (TP: 365), indicating their ability through repetition to express territory.

[41] This is also indicated in the presentation of the lyrics: every track on the album has a 'barcode' appended to its title except for 'Fitter Happier' which is the 'bar code' of the album as such, what is transcendentally coded in each track. This is reflected in the use of blue and white ink in the titles: each title is in blue with a white bar code (the 'white noise' underlying it or covering it over), and for 'fitter happier more productive' (as it is presented), it is 'more productive' that is in blue (the coded 'truth' behind the injunction 'fitter happier'). Indeed, this track does not have a title, the blue/white text being in fact the first line of the lyrics rather than the title (and the track's title is in much smaller type than the others in the track listing), showing again it is not a track in the sense that the rest on the album are, having a transcendental status with respect to them.

or singularisation running alongside the former. Put in other terms, if track 7 maps out the refrains or 'machinic statements' underlying the *milieus* inhabited by the previous tracks it also does more than this, simultaneously drawing a line of flight away from these statements.

This is prepared for by track 5, 'Let Down', in relation to which one can understand the deterritorialising/singularising function of 'Fitter Happier'. 'Let Down' does not inhabit the same space as the preceding four tracks, there is something of a break imposed at the end of track 4 prohibiting a return to themes of inside/outside examined in the same way as before. Track 5 instead is able to comfortably explore this Möbian space bypassing the distinctions. Indeed, track 5 concerns itself primarily with becoming, in the 'first' Deleuzian sense of the term as developed for instance in *Logic of Sense* (1969), which is as the simultaneous affirmation of contrary predicates (such as up/down). The song hinges on the transvaluation of dissatisfaction with the contemporary world (being 'let down') and self-constriction within organic forms ('crushed like a bug in the ground')[42] into an 'upwards' or ecstatic experience of becoming ('one day.   i am goiingtogrow wings').[43] This occurs precisely by affirming being 'let down', in other words by resisting the injunction to be 'happier more productive' – which leads to the in-built failure to be either, as witnessed by the paranoia of the first tracks on the album – as well as by resisting pre-packaged affection (sentimentality).[44]

Moreover, the track's dramatic apex (3:41) also affirms non-self-identity – the individual colonised or haunted by computerised order-words as found on 'Paranoid Android' – with Yorke's voice now split into two overlapping channels (left and right speakers) using double-tracking. One voice repeats the line about growing wings, the other non-ironically sings 'you know where you are with', the musical space dividing the

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[42] This track initially echoes the concern with being 'uptight' on 'Subterranean Homesick Alien', that is, overly bound to the constraints of the individual body (echoed on 'Bodysnatchers' from the 2007 'sister album' *In Rainbows,* where Yorke sings 'I'm trapped in this body and can't get out'), and thus unable to be 'abducted' vertically upwards by aliens (becoming-moth). Yet unlike the former, the character on 'Let Down' does manage to break away (this time by being 'let down', which is transvaluated into 'bouncing back' up from the void left by the collapsed-in floor – a movement arguably preserved and intensified, but ultimately extinguished, on 'Fitter Happier'). This is in contrast to the first half of the track which speaks conversely of 'taking off & landing'.

[43] As Nathan Wiseman-Trowse puts it, adopting a Kristevan lens, "'Let Down's assurance of transformation out of the crushed insect body ('one day I am gonna grow wings') suggests a means of escape from the material. The insect as a transitional body, abject and destroyed, becomes a site of flight from the symbolic order", from his Rennes 2017 conference paper abstract (https://radiohead.sciencesconf.org/resource/page/id/3 last accessed 25/09/2017). The leaking or 'flowing' of 'juices' from the bug's 'smashed' outer shell could equally be compared to Bacon's portraits and read in terms of the body without organs escaping the in/dividual body as 'controlled' codification of the body's forces.

[44] Randall describes the track as 'a victory over the very emotionlessness it depicts' (2000, p. 156).

doubled individual from itself being itself personified ('where' instead of 'who' you are with, also reflected in the spatial presentation of the written lyrics). This spatial persona – as dis-in/dividuation, singularisation, or becoming – is figured musically as the quasi-cosmic electronic sounds of a 1980s-era ZX Spectrum desktop computer (first appearing at 3:27 and accompanying the rest of the track), this time (contra the paranoid Macintosh of 'Fitter Happier' and 'Paranoid Android') embracing or *affirming* the disintegration of sovereign individuality.[45]

This 'one day.   i am goiingtogrow wings' intratextually recalls the 'unbornchikkenVoicesin' (in its literal compression but also in terms of a shared content, namely birth or rebirth) as well as the '*One day* you'll find out that I may be paranoid but not an android' (emphasis mine), of track 2. This implies that it is in fact not on 'Let Down' that the track's character (this time perhaps close to Yorke himself) becomes-bug ('grow[s] wings'), but, like the 'unbornchikkenVoicesin' of Fred on 'Paranoid Android', we must wait till track 7 ('Fitter Happier'), where the chickens hatch as Fred, and where I would argue the crushed bug grows wings the precise moment Fred narrates 'No killing moths' (0:52).[46] At this moment, an electronic wail or scream is produced (Fred's soul exiting his body through his mouth), followed by what can only be described as the digital flapping of wings following an upwards trajectory ending in death (as a moth to a flame of cybercapital) as the musical line bursts open releasing a stream of what appear to be digital 'coin' sounds, or alternatively evoking the ZX Spectrum from 'Let Down' (1:09), as well as more distantly the escapist guitar pulses from the abduction-fantasy 'Subterranean Homesick Alien' (from 1:29), before disappearing completely as the line of flight transforms into the cosmic silence of a becoming-imperceptible.[47] This becoming-moth is not designed to mimic either an organic moth or a digital computer (or cybercapital) but precisely to 'engineer' in music a real becoming, i.e. *using*

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[45] To hear an extended 'ZX Spectrum Symphony', see the 'white cassette tape' in the 2017 reissue box set.

[46] There are further indicators to suggest this is a becoming-moth angled towards a cosmic flame. Radiohead keep returning to a three-to-four note melodically ascending motif (in varying keys) in their work when conjuring up absolute positive deterritorialisation. We find it, for instance, throughout 'Subterranean Homesick Alien'; on 'Sail to the Moon' (0:27); and on 'All I Need' (3:01) from *In Rainbows*, where Yorke sings earlier (now in a monogamous rather than cosmic register) 'I'm a moth / Who just wants to share your light / I'm just an insect / Trying to get out of the night'. On 'Let Down', this upward motif is interwoven with a downward motif through counterpoint between two guitars in different time signatures, as is particularly noticeable at the start, musically expressing the lyrical theme in a more analogue register before a similar pattern is then redoubled on the ZX Spectrum digitally. On 'Fitter Happier', we find this motif at the very start of the 'becoming-moth' musical figure which is then absorbed into a much longer continuous flow indicating real becoming not merely its musical theme.

[47] Lyrically, around the time that this musical figure is unfolding and in tension with it, 'Fred's accompanying narrative speaks constrictingly of 'ring roads' (and later of 'no chance of escape') – i.e. the imaginary space of the first half of 'Let Down' – as well as seeming to criticise the second half of 'Let Down' ('nothing so ridiculously teenage and desperate'). More generally, the separation between Fred's referential or communicative lyrics and the non-referential or 'creative' becoming-moth is quite close to the first example Deleuze gives of art's 'resistance' to communication in 'What is the Creative Act?', namely the 'disconnection of voice and visual image' in the Straubs (323).

computers from which to release inorganic life (as we find in different ways both with the Macintosh on 'Fitter Happier' and the ZX Spectrum on 'Let Down').[48]

Fittingly, this electronic sound (the 'becoming-moth') was produced using an AMS Sampler to distort one of the guitar lines from 'Paranoid Android'.[49] It is precisely what Deleuze and Guattari call a 'component of passage', which is how they account for their mature (or 'second') conception of becoming in *A Thousand Plateaus*,[50] namely a matter of expression found in a territorial assemblage (here, 'Paranoid Android' and Fred's order-words) deformed to enact a passage to a new assemblage or away from assemblages altogether (here, 'Fitter Happier', and becoming-moth). Moreover, it is not coincidentally a *parodic element* which is deterritorialised (a guitar solo from 'Paranoid Android' which is parodic in tone), or from a different angle a self-referential component (again sampling the band's *own music*), using this matter of expression to effect a break from communication – in short *absolutely deterritorialising the postmodern refrain*, that is to say converting self-reference into sensation (turning self-reference *against* itself to break free from it).

This is moreover a twofold break from communication, both from the individual and its order-words, and from the dividual and its encoded forces. I mentioned earlier that *OK Computer* as a whole is haunted by a becoming-moth. It is more accurate to say that it is impregnated by the becoming-moth *of the dividual*. *OK Computer* attains the insight that resistance through art to communication and control societies must take place at the level of the differential between the dividual and sensation. If the dividual amounts to the encoded, constrained, forces released from disciplinary power but re-captured by control societies, then art's role as politics of sensation is to decode these forces through the artist's process of embodying and materialising them as sensation. On *OK Computer*, Radiohead have intentionally worked on and with the matters of expression of communication and control societies – from computers to marketing techniques, design, and postmodern irony – in an attempt to release from them the forces they encode. Their mass-market appeal does not necessarily subdue these forces at the level of the work's reception and might even intensify it,[51] but in any case it then becomes the listener's task to repeat the process of attempting to prise sensation from

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[48] Yorke notes more generally regarding 'Fitter Happier' how the use of 'Fred' 'brought out something that I thought was essentially flat, it brought it to life in a really fucking eerie way' (quoted in Randall, 2000, p. 158).

[49] See the white cassette tape studio sessions mix tape included in the 2017 *OKNOTOK* box set.

[50] See the two definitions of becoming given in TP, p. 337.

[51] Furthermore, its perception at the level of the collective (a new people for a new earth, as Deleuze and Guattari would say), satisfies what Stiegler (2014) identifies as the primary political dimension of art, namely its ability to create a shared ground at the level of a coming together of singularities commonly resisting the technologies which perform this social, dividualising (i.e. particularising rather than singularising), function in societies of control (2). One can hear this for instance in the spontaneous chanting of 'Oh Jeremy Corbyn' during Radiohead's live performances in the UK following the June 2017 general election.

communication. This endless cycle is perhaps the earth-refrain specific to our era, that is the endless oscillation between the two and between two corresponding earths.[52]

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[52] This struggle or oscillation is indicated a number of times on *OK Computer*, namely: the 'finite' acoustic guitar strum at the very end of 'Let Down' re-containing the released cosmic singularities of the ZX Spectrum; and the re-descent (after an initial ascent) of the 'becoming-moth' at the end of 'Fitter Happier', turning into the musical figure of a black hole (absolute negative deterritorialisation), thereby also flouting Fred's injunction 'no washing spiders down the plughole'.

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