



## I, that am curtailed

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## I, that am curtailed

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### ABSTRACT

The essay investigates desire in Shakespeare's *Richard III* as connected to Deleuze and Guattari's line of flight and war machine. By following the drawing of the line of flight of betrayal and the setting of Richard's war machine, and by investigating the constitution of his character as a Body without organs, it traces the production of the plane of immanence of a differential subjectivity where desire is free to *become*.

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## Introduction

We are in a field of immanence: everything, which comes about, does so without reference to an external or superior dimension. There is no transcendence.<sup>1</sup> Desire is the productive, affirmative force that, like a wave, creates something new in respect to the existent. We see this movement in *Richard III*, which I read, following Deleuze's insights on the play, as staging the insurgence of the Body without Organs, a non-formed, non-organised body, where this productive desire can express itself and give voice to a 'subjectivity of differential'.<sup>2</sup> What can it mean to read *Richard III* for us today? The play, which Shakespeare wrote presumably at the end of 1591 or within the first half of 1592, elaborates on the figure of Richard III, King of England from 1483 until his death in 1485, when he was defeated by Henry Tudor who became King Henry VII, thus opening to the Tudor's dynasty, of which Elizabeth I was the descendant, and ending the War of the Roses between the houses of Lancaster and York. Following Deleuze's insights on *Richard III* as expression of a 'line of flight' and a 'war machine,' this article proposes a reflection on the political power of desire as an affirmative force of a differential subject. In Richard, desire expresses itself so by way of treacherous acts (the line of flight) and the violent setting of a 'war machine' (a position of exteriority to the given setting of a State apparatus, and tending towards the undoing that apparatus).

For Deleuze, Richard III constitutes a war machine whose main line of flight is betrayal.

Lines of flights in Deleuze are figures of multiplicity whose incompleteness is constitutive.<sup>3</sup> They express the fleeing from what blocks us, the tracing of lines of becoming. The war machine is a form of pure exteriority irreducible to the State apparatus, which constitutes the form of interiority to which we are accustomed.<sup>4</sup> In *Richard III* the line of flight 'combusts', through betrayal, the structure Richard is inserted into; the war machine, in the anomaly that Richard is, constitutes his interiority, and

strives to produce a new plane of immanence: it strives to take out a subject trapped in repressed desire, by letting him produce a different subject and a new composition of events. By following Richard's construction of his line of flight and his war machine, my contribution aims to understand *Richard III* as an example of a teeming constitution of a different subjectivity, of desire struggling to produce a plane of immanence, free from subjectification and a conductor of the flow of becoming. A movement of becoming, instead of a fixed being, is what his anomaly calls for.

In *Superpositions*, writing on Carmelo Bene's *Riccardo III*, Deleuze asks whether we could not treat a major author like Shakespeare as minor literature, that is, whether it would not be interesting to find in him new potentialities of becoming.<sup>5</sup> An example of a potentiality of becoming is Richard III, whom Bene's *Riccardo III* develops towards a Body without Organs (BwO).<sup>6</sup> A Body without Organs in Deleuze's and Guattari's terms (after Artaud) indicates a matter which produces intensities, that is, that field of immanence of desire, where desire produces the new toward a plane of consistency, of composition.

If the constitution of Richard as Body without Organs is evident in Bene's *Riccardo III*, this is less so in Shakespeare. In Shakespeare we are a step before, but nevertheless in *Richard III* are present all the elements for the teeming constitution of a different subjectivity, which has the traits of the BwO; a matter which produces intensities. Line of flight, war machine and BwO are the three instruments through which we read a further potentiality in Richard III: the political potential of his anomaly. If we want to follow Deleuze's insight, I think that the political task of our reading today the play of Shakespeare as minor literature lies in understanding what Richard's character can tell us. We perceive how Richard cracks the codified plane of events (power, sovereign lineage, set relations) by inserting in their course his own anomaly as wedge, making of his anomaly a motor of a different course of nature and history.

## Deleuze's Richard III

Deleuze refers to Shakespeare's *Richard III* in a few passages in *Dialogues* and *A Thousand Plateaus*.<sup>7</sup> In both, the reference is brief, but it opens the possibility of a reflection on reading Shakespeare as minor literature, that is, of 'finding potentialities of becoming' in Shakespeare's text. In Deleuze, the character of Richard is both the construction of the 'line of flight' and the 'war machine'. By following Deleuze's insight we can attempt to articulate a reflection that, moving from Richard III as line of flight and war machine, develops a concept of affirmative desire: a desire which stops desiring to repress itself and creates, coming out of the movement of his becoming, a new plane of immanence.

The acts with which this desire tries to affirm itself are violent, made of treason and killing. But it is not so much treason or violence in themselves – a treason which is necessary, a deformity which poisons of itself all relations, a violence which is a force at once of destruction and of striving for affirmation – to be the core of our interest, it is rather a further layer. This is the reflection of a teeming, conflicting self – a selfless self – for whom it is not yet a matter of the outside (politics, power, sovereignty), but is rather a matter of nature, of the inside striving to agree, or rather to mix, even if in a negative modality, with the outside – to create a passage, an intensity<sup>8</sup> between the two.

This is what I<sup>9</sup> mean when I say that through the line of flight and the setting of the war machine, Richard tries to produce a new plane of immanence. This new plane of immanence of desire is the expression of a non-subjectified subject, which I would call a subjectivity of differential or a differential subject: the continuous movement of a constitutive becoming against what is set as 'given'. This constitutive mechanism is political and ethical: its tools are the 'war machine' [micro-politics<sup>10</sup>] and treason [the line of flight]. They aim at the destruction of the status quo. The production of a new plane of immanence, or of a subjectivity of differential, aims at composing in different relations the elements at stake.

In *Dialogues*, Deleuze argues that with Richard's character Shakespeare depicts, not so much the 'tricksterkings, who came to the throne by trickery' so frequently in Shakespearean drama, but the one who 'does not simply want power, he wants treason' (Deleuze & Parnet, 1987, p. 40). This makes Richard's characterization what Deleuze terms a 'line of flight': 'A flight is a sort of delirium. To be delirious [*délirer*] is exactly to go off the rails (...) There is something demoniacal or demonic in a line of flight' (p. 40). Richard's 'absolute' treachery is his line of flight. In two passages, from *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari refer to Richard III as a 'war machine'. In the first passage, they state: 'Richard III, the deformed, the twisted, whose ideal is to betray everything (...) is unlike Shakespeare's other historical dramas, in which kings and assassins deceive in order to take power but then become good kings.' Richard is different because 'his ventures (...) derive more from a war machine than from a State apparatus. He is the traitor, springing from the great nomads and their secrecy. He says so from the beginning, when he mentions a secret project infinitely surpassing the conquest of power'. (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, pp. 125–126). Later in the text, referring to his 'secret close intent', they write: 'but a disturbing character like Richard III slips in, announcing from the outset the intention to reinvent a war machine and impose its line (deformed, treacherous and traitorous, he claims a "secret close intent" totally different from the conquest of State power, and another – an *other* – relation with women).' (p. 354)

The line of flight is 'betrayal', the texture of Richard's plotting, and the engine of his war machine, the 'secret close intent'. The line of flight (each act of Richard's betrayal) and the entire movement of the machine he sets forth (the 'war machine') prepare the production of a new field of immanence.<sup>11</sup> Two are, thus, the theoretical coordinates along which I want to read Richard's desire: (1.) the *struggle to produce a new subject* (what Deleuze and Guattari call the BwO), achieved through the *line of flight of betrayal* and through another tool, which I introduce, outside of a Deleuzian reference: the *combustion of representation*. And (2.) the '*war machine*' of *micro-politics*, the main traits of which are: the *constitution of a character as a new potentiality for the subject*, that is, the composition of a character not as a fixed subject but as a pure becoming, continuously born in metamorphosis and variation; and the *non-representative force always unstable which bursts out in the free space left by the subtraction of all stable elements of power*.

Deleuze underlines these traits of the war machine in Bene's *Riccardo III*, but they can be applied to Shakespeare as well. The non-representative force is the political element, it is the 'minor' as expression of the potential production of the differential.

## The struggle to produce a differential subject (BwO): line of flight and combustion of representation

What does it mean that Richard is a Body without Organs? And, in which relation are the BwO, the line of flight and the combustion of representation?

### **BwO**

The BwO is a matter which produces intensities. It is the passage of desire, or rather, the field of immanence of desire: 'The BwO is what remains when you take everything away. What you take away is precisely the phantasy, and significances and subjectifications as a whole' (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 151); 'it is matter that occupies space to a given degree – to the degree corresponding to the intensities produced' (p. 153). 'The BwO is the *field of immanence* of desire, the *plane of consistency* specific to desire (with desire defined as a process of production without reference to any exterior agency, whether it be a lack that hollows it out or a pleasure that fills it)' (p. 154). It is this field of immanence of desire that bursts out violently in *Richard III*. The features that Deleuze highlights are: the line of flight of betrayal and the war machine. Both aim to overflow the existing setting of relations by affirming a field of immanence of desire, a Body without Organs, made in between the total destruction (betrayal), the abyss of total de-subjectification, and the struggle to set a new plane of acting forces.

The Body without Organs, this field of immanence of desire, opposes in fact itself to the set structure of the organism, of signification, and of subjectification. These are the three 'great strata' that compose us, as Deleuze and Guattari write in *A Thousand Plateaus*, against which the BwO struggles, opposing disarticulation to the organisation of the organism, experimentation to the power structure of *significance* and nomadism to the repression of subjectification.<sup>12</sup> From a Deleuzian perspective, the 'self' of Richard III is the disarticulated, experimental, nomadic self of a BwO. Everything is taken away – structured organism, meaningful *significance*, power of subjectification – and what remains is the immanence of desire.

In Bene's *Riccardo III*, which develops a potentiality already *in nuce* in Shakespeare's Richard, this is strikingly expressed. The originality of Bene's *Riccardo III* lies in fact, writes Deleuze, in the subtraction, amputation or neutralization of all the elements of Power, or the State: what surfaces is a Body without Organs as 'texture' of the man of war; 'Richard was not about the conquering of a State apparatus but the building of a war machine, indissolubly politically and erotically' (Deleuze & Bene, 1978, p. 74). In Shakespeare's Richard III the same 'expropriation' occurs through the plotting of the line of flight and the setting of the war machine. The BwO, as that matter which produces intensities when everything is taken away, is the combined product of the subversion procured by betrayal and the violent outcome of setting the war machine to work.

To the interiorisation of the State apparatus, which Richard betrays with lines of flights ('Plots have I laid, inductions dangerous' [*Richard III*, I. 1, 32]), he counterposes a form of exteriority ('I am determined to prove a villain.' [I. 1, 30]) that, from the first lines of the play, is his own interiority ('I, that am curtailed of this fair proportion' [I.1, 18]). He will fully acknowledge it functions as a war machine in the monologue at the end of the play ('What do I fear? Myself? There's none else by./(...) Then fly. What, from myself? Great reason why', [V. 3, 183, 186 fl.]).

To counterpose this form of exteriority to the interiority imposed by the State apparatus makes space for the insurgence of desire as affirmative, productive force. The form of exteriority to the State apparatus, the main trait of the war machine, is inside Richard himself: his anomaly, his being deformed, out of 'fair proportion' makes his interiority an exteriority to a given norm of history, a given form of nature. From this interior-exterior, a flow of becoming pours out a different plane of the events.<sup>13</sup>

We have to understand this interplay of forces of the outside and inside in the production of the field of desire's immanence. As Deleuze and Guattari explain: 'The field of immanence is not internal to the self, but neither does it come from an external self or a nonself. Rather, it is like the absolute Outside that knows no Selves because interior and exterior are equally a part of the immanence in which they have fused' (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 156). The plane of immanence is the wave of becoming, it is 'like a section of chaos and acts like a sieve' (Deleuze & Guattari, 1994, p. 42); it is 'traversed by movements of the infinite filled with intensive ordinates' (p. 48). The differential subject to which we were hinting earlier is this: a field where interior and exterior compose, or de-compose, in a constant wave.<sup>14</sup>

I would say that in reading the anomaly of Richard III we make the clashing experience of the struggle to produce this field of immanence of desire, that is, of the absolute Inside, which, like the absolute Outside knows no Self: in him interior and exterior struggle as forces in that field of immanence that his character is. There is no 'internal lack, higher transcendence, apparent exteriority' (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, pp. 156–157) which desire refers to; the production of immanence is pure becoming. We witness Richard's extroflexion of his anomaly as production of the absolute Outside enacted from the absolute Inside throughout the entire play: 'But I, that am not shaped (...)/I, that am rudely stamped (...)/(...) Deformed, unfinished, sent before my time/Into this breathing world, scarce half made up/And that so lamely and unfashionable' (I. 1, 14–22). Inside and outside will be in a constant flow and a continuous weaving of immanence: he, who cannot but 'spy' his 'shadow in the sun/And descant' his own 'deformity' (I. 1, 26–27) and who tells himself: 'Dive, thoughts, into my soul' (I. 1, 41), will throw his deformity, like a net, onto the Outside: 'since I cannot prove a lover/(...) I am determined to prove a villain' (I. 1, 28, 30), plotting to set King and his brother Clarence one against the other, thus initiating the line of flight and the war machine.

In this sense, we can see in Richard a Body without Organs. If the 'three great strata' that 'bind us are: the organism, signifiante and subjectification. The surface of the organism, the angle of significance and interpretation, and the point of subjectification or subjection' (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 159); and if the traits of the Body without Organs are the struggle against them, Richard III then embodies all three: he is deformed and sent before time (organism), unfinished and so lame and unfashionable that dogs bark at him (signifiante), has no delight but to spy his shadow and to descant his own deformity (subjection). It is against all three that he chooses the line of flight and invents a war machine.

The BwO opposes *disarticulation* to the organisation of the organism: it 'invents self-destructions' (p. 160), which are not suicidal but tend to create new connections 'that presuppose (...) distributions of intensity' (p. 160). Richard embodies the disarticulation of the organism since the very first lines: in 'I, that am curtailed' (I. 1, 18) this disarticulation is opposed to the order of the sovereign lineage, to the law of 'fair proportion'. It is

along this disarticulation that the plane of immanence fusing inside and outside will be played throughout: deforming the external reality as is his internal, so to weave a plane of consistency ('I must be married to my brother's daughter,/Or else my kingdom stands on brittle glass.' (IV. 2, 59–60 fl.)).

In order to escape from signifiante, there is the plotting, the 'secret close intent': the net of lies, of betrayals, is the main weapon against signifiante, which is destroyed by subverting the terrain of the relation signifier-signified. The relation with Buckingham, intensified in the sublime staging in front of Lord Mayor and the citizens (III, 7, mainly 117–240), is one of the examples of Richard's constant plotting, a subversion of the relation signifier-signified. The subversion of signifiante can also be found in the relation with Lady Anne, with Queen Elizabeth, even in the dialogue that Richard has with himself towards the end of the play, where the subversion of signifier-signified ('My conscience hath a thousand tongues' (V. 3, 194)) meets the highest disarticulation: 'Soft, I did but dream/O coward conscience, how dost thou afflict me!/(..)/What do I fear? Myself? There's none else by/Richard loves Richard: that is, I am I/Is there a murderer here? No. Yes. I am./Then fly. What, from myself?' (V. 3, 179–192).

To 'unhook' from subjectification is the most difficult point to achieve. It is pivotal for a grammar of affirmative desire, being the 'subject' the main 'object of choice'<sup>15</sup> of the struggle: 'tearing the conscious away from the subject in order to make it a means of exploration' (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 160). Richard 'tears the conscious away from the subject' to explore new settings but he does not succeed in setting a new composition in place: 'And every tongue brings in a several tale,/And every tale condemns me for a villain./(..) And if I die, no soul will pity me./Nay, wherefore should they, since that I myself/Find in myself no pity to myself?' (V. 3, 195–196, 202–204).

The entire dialogue with Queen Elizabeth is an example of reflection on subjectification and unhooking from it. Elizabeth, like Anne, knows the 'devil' in Richard, knows his 'self': she mocks his 'love' for her daughter Elizabeth (IV. 3, 272–283); tells that the only way to win her would be for Richard "to put on some other shape,/And not be Richard that hath done all this' (IV. 3, 286–88), in a crescendo, up to: 'Thyself is self-misused' (IV. 3, 374).

But Richard enacts deterritorialization<sup>16</sup>: he lodges himself on the stratum of sovereign power and the subject of it, of which he is the lateral, exterior, anomaly. His advantageous place, from that anomaly, is the plot of betrayal and subversion. He succeeds in producing flows of conjunctions when he plots with Buckingham in the staging in front of the citizens (III. 7) to try a continuum of intensities segment by segment, as express his dialogues with Lady Anne (I. 2, 43–224), with Queen Elizabeth (IV. 3 all but mainly 289–432) or again with Buckingham (IV. 2, 20 fl.) – advancing piece-by-piece with small plots of new 'conquered' land (all the killings but mainly with Hastings [III. 5, 24–45]). At the end, though, he fails to unhook from subjectification, to construct a free desire in its differential subject because, like the Benjaminian dictator, Richard remains alone. If the BwO is ultimately a 'connection of desires, conjunctions of flows, continuum of intensities (...) necessarily a Place, necessarily a Plane, necessarily a Collectivity' (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 161), Richard does not manage to build the Place and the Collectivity. The Plane is there, woven by his treacherous acts, but the line of flight is consumed and the small war machine is blocked: they do not succeed in budding further. But important for us is that he sets the plane of immanence of desire: 'there is desire whenever there is the constitution of a BwO under one relation or

another' (p. 165). Richard constitutes his BwO in the relation with women (Lady Anne, Elizabeth), with his first 'accomplices' and traitors (Hastings, Buckingham), with his enemies (ghosts), and with himself ('Myself upon myself?' [V. 3, 187]).

### **Line of flight**

The line of flight is the initial front line of Richard's struggle. In order to affirm the field of the immanence of desire, he has first to destroy, to betray, to produce the crack in matter. Lines of flights are in fact lines of breaking, of rupture, and express the irruption of the resistance to power, the fleeing from what encroaches on us, and cages us, blocking us from a free becoming. Fleeing means to produce a different 'real', to 'create life', to find one's own 'weapon'. In this, the lines of flight are 'deterritorializing': 'deterritorialization' means the 'going out' of a territory, which captures and codifies the flows that traverse it.<sup>17</sup>

The line of flight runs along tensor lines,<sup>18</sup> which are the expression of force vectors at stake in that pushing to the extreme that the line of flight enacts. These tensor<sup>19</sup> arcs build the texture of the line of flight throughout the entire time of the play. Let us pause briefly on the relation with Lady Anne and with Buckingham.

The fast dialogue with Lady Anne (I. 2, 33 fl.) functions emblematically as litmus test of the line of flight, because she knows the level ('Foul devil' [I. 2, 50]) at which Richard is deforming reality and cheating, even if at the end she will surrender. To his lie ('But, now thy beauty is proposed my fee (...)') [I. 2, 169 fl.] she keeps firm: 'Arise, dissembler; though I wish thy death/I will not be thy executioner' (I. 2, 184–85). And Richard: 'That was in thy rage./Speak it again' [I. 2, 187–188]). Richard keeps on weaving a constant deterritorialisation, subtraction from what can codify his acts: Lady Anne, 'I would I knew thy heart' (I. 2, 192), to which Richard replies, 'Tis figured in my tongue' (I. 2, 193); and she: 'I fear me both are false' and he: 'Then never was man true' (I. 2, 194–95).

In the relation with Buckingham, the line of flight of betrayal is more tangled.

That relation was of trust, when Richard has Hastings killed (III. 5, 24–33) and again (III. 7, 23–51) when Buckingham tests the citizens for Richard and stages with him, for the Governor, a theatrical scene (III. 7, 45–51 and fl.).

Having subverted the settings with this theatrical staging, Richard lets surface the mechanism of his using the line of flight as ontological device: he wants to set a new situation, a different plane of immanence and moves away, fictitiously, with the accent on something else, so that he can be made the object of choice. The construction of the tensor line between Richard and Buckingham can be followed easily throughout IV. 2. From the peaceful start 'Give me thy hand' (IV. 2, 2), yet also the trembling one ('But shall we wear these glories for a day?/Or shall they last, and we rejoice in them?' (IV. 2, 5–6)), to Richard's first feeling of Buckingham 'betrayal' ('Tut, tut, thou art all ice, thy kindness freezes./Say, have I thy consent that they shall die?' [22–23]). This is a feeling already prepared by: 'Shall I be plain? I wish the bastards dead,/And I would have it suddenly performed./What sayst thou now? Speak suddenly, be brief.' (IV. 2 18–21). Richard insists, chases Buckingham, looking for a firm support in him. And Buckingham delays, in a typical act of resistance, of subtraction to power: 'Give me some little breath, some pause, dear lord,/Before I positively speak in this.' (IV. 2, 24–25). Richard: 'Highreaching Buckingham grows circumspect.' (IV. 2, 31); 'The deep-revolving witty Buckingham' (IV. 2, 42).



In Richard's anxiety at others' loyalty, the first litmus-test, Buckingham, is taken out, at the same pace of the clock's striking.<sup>20</sup> And from this moment on the tensor grows (IV. 2, 49–65, 94–99, 100–106, 116–119) to V. 1, when Buckingham re-enters and knows: '(...) Wrong hath but wrong, and blame the due of blame' [V. 1, 11–30]. He re-enters as ghost at V. 3, 168 fl., after which Richards starts out of the dream, in the apex: 'Give me another horse, bind up my wounds! Have mercy, Jesu! – Soft, I did but dream' (V. 3, 178 fl.).

In Shakespeare, we can see the drawing of the line of flight surfacing vividly as a tool of desire struggling to liberate itself from its own repression. Desire here is production of a new differential subjectivity, unhooked from the processes of subjectification and signifi-ance which define power and against which the BwO struggles. The construction of the line of flight comes about through betrayal. In other terms, treason expresses that desire which, struggling with its own repression, bursts out, until it finds, through cracks in the plane, through lines of flights, its liberation.

It is helped, in this, by the combustion of representation.

### **The combustion of representation**

Representation and power go hand in hand. The content of the combustion of representation is power itself. Representation is a fake, it is a play. Shakespeare speaks of power and questions us: his characters bring transcendence in the whirlpool of their own nature, on earth, in the tempestuous field of immanence that they are: sounded out, fathomed, desired, uncaught, and yet teeming. Richard voices this movement.

In a Shakespearean perspective, Richard's anomalous self is his major burden, and it is by following his '*becoming*' that we can experience the contradictions of the revolutionary act of the constitution of a BwO in *feri*: destroying, burning the three strata (the organism, signifi-ance, and subjectification) against which the BwO struggles (we can decode Richard's 'secret close intent' as such) and yet, trying not to collapse under the deconstruction, to set the liberated desire free to produce a new field of immanence. Trying to push further Deleuze and Guattari's reading of Richard III as war machine and example of a line of flight in order to imagine one 'potentiality of becoming' in Shakespeare, to read him as minor literature, meets indications of Shakespearean scholarship, I think namely of Kiernan Ryan's insight of 'alternative potential' (2015, p. 72)<sup>21</sup> and Simon Ryle's political potential (2014, p. 12), which I read through Walter Benjamin's concept of allegory understood as tool of combustion of representation<sup>22</sup>: one potentiality of becoming in Shakespeare is that anticipation, as a working with history that undoes it from within and opens in it spaces of becoming that exhale 'futurity', vantage points of new disclosures.<sup>23</sup> This one potentiality lies for me in the combustion of 'representation', which, for Shakespeare's architecture of texts is almost a technical tool (think of the figures of the Fool in *King Lear*, of the Weird Sisters in *Macbeth*, of Richard himself and his asides in *Richard III*): an outside element which disrupts the course of the events, functioning as inner swerve (the *clinamen* of Lucretius which Deleuze's cites often) of the story and which makes us read history in counter-light: it went like this but it could have gone completely differently.<sup>24</sup> It brings the potentiality of the differential in retrospect and thus, in a revolutionary way, forward.

The space of power (of the State, of the law, of human relations) that Richard combusts is, at once, a political and an ethical space: the 'ethical' field, i.e. the relation

with Lady Anne, with Elizabeth, with Buckingham, with the citizens, even with himself, is combusted through betrayal; the 'political' field is composed by his making of himself a war machine. We have thus the 'two-poles' modality of the war machine<sup>25</sup>: the 'negative' which, we will see in the section on the war machine, is the lever of destruction, but which then crosses over into the other 'creative pole': a principle of self-production made free to become.

Along the line of flight thus, another tool which Shakespeare uses, is the staging of the combustion of representation as knowledge voicing a relation of signifi-ance. This is a place where Deleuze<sup>26</sup> meets Walter Benjamin. We are no longer in the field of signifi-ance but in the one which dismantles the relation of signifi-ance itself. An example of this dismantling of signifi-ance can be found in the difference between symbol and allegory that we find in Benjamin and in Deleuze's reading of him: in a symbolic world, relations of signifi-ance still have a consistence; in a world that is being traversed and shattered by the allegory, representation, in all its expressions, no longer subsists. Rather, it is a form of knowledge already combusted by its own enactment. This is what Benjamin figured as the 'allegory'. And of this combustion of representation by its own enactment Shakespeare is master: he capsizes the given, overturns sky and earth, life and death, physics and metaphysics in the most engaging embrace.<sup>27</sup>

### The war machine of micropolitics

We saw that the traits of the war machine that interest us are: the *constitution of a character as a new potentiality for the subject* and the *non-representative force always unstable which bursts out in the free space left by the subtraction of all stable elements of power*.

*The constitution of a character as a new potentiality for the subject* is desire as production of a differential subject: no longer a fixed subject but a pure becoming, in continuous metamorphosis and variation. This is Richard's 'war machine' as a micropolitics. Richard III invests the power setting, which surrounds him, and wherein he is the anomalous minority, with the force of treason, with the line of flight of betrayal, through the combustion of power as representation, as his choice of object, thus *undoing* the due course of the events in a tempest of destruction. Out of this movement, an entire new setting comes about, the plane of which he opens but he does not ultimately belong to.

The non-representative force is the political element, where we can see the 'minor' coming in as productive force of differential. To detect this non-representative force, let us do a brief incursion in chapter 9 of *A Thousand Plateaus* dedicated to Micropolitics and segmentarity<sup>28</sup>: 'we are all segmented from all around and in every direction' (p. 208). Of the various segmentations (linear, binary, etc.), we are interested here in the one molar-molecular: 'Every society, and every individual, are thus plied by both segmentarities simultaneously: one molar, one molecular.' They are distinct, because use different terms, and inseparable, because they constantly cross over into each other.

Molar and molecular distinguish themselves for the nature of the system of reference they are in: 'segmented line' for the molar, 'quantum flow' for the molecular. There is always a connection and correlation between the two, because segmentation occurs where there is a flow: 'That is why power centers are defined much more by what escapes them or by their impotence than by their zone of power' (p. 217). This is exactly the space of Richard's action: where the pure flow crosses the rigidity of the 'given' of history and of

nature. The segmented, rigid line 'implies an overcoding that substitutes itself for the faltering codes; its segments are like reterritorializations on the overcoding or overcoded lines'; a flow, instead, 'implies something tending to elude or escape the codes; quanta are precisely signs or degrees of deterritorialization in the decoded flow' (p. 219).

Flows are always flows 'of belief and of desire' (p. 219). This is the map of Richard's micropolitics.<sup>29</sup> The quantum flow of desire is the non-representative unstable force, which bursts out in the space left free after the line of flight of betrayal has detected its 'prey' and the combustion of representation has been consumed.

What is Richard's 'molecularity', then? It is his particular desire, the creative pole of the war machine, the production of the field of immanence, the eruption of a differential subjectivity, which, all, form his force of political potential of the Anomalous.

### ***The 'political potential'<sup>30</sup> of the anomalous***

Shakespeare's figures embody a tempestuous immanence, the expression of a teeming subjectivity, moved by desire. Desire traverses and shakes them as earthquakes crack the earth. And as a break in the earth's crust, desire, when it finds expression, erupts. Desire achieves its expression, which is a continuous movement of constitutive becoming, in the folds of this teeming subjectivity, which we called 'differential subjectivity' (Deleuze's individuation of being, opened here by folds and lines of flight<sup>31</sup>). The movement of this constitutive becoming is exemplified in Richard III<sup>32</sup>: in him we see the eruption of desire in a teeming subjectivity and the techniques adopted by desire to affirm itself. Richard wants treason, and from the first lines of the play we can see at stake the plotting of his line of flight, which is betrayal. The line of flight that betrayal draws, shows the movement of desire to produce a differential in the composition of the subject, in the process of his individuation of being.<sup>33</sup>

The hypothesis we saw at the beginning, that is, to read the traits of the Body without Organs in Richard III (his deformity being the disarticulation of the organism; his being unfinished, lamely and unfashionable as what opposes signification, his actions and reflections as struggle to unhook from subjection) finds here its 'political', constructive dimension: to free desire from its own repression thus liberating its productive nature. If Richard III tells us something today, I believe this to be the force of a desire, which wants to be set free to produce the new.

The fact that, as Deleuze writes, Richard does not want power, but treason, gathers in itself two instances: that there is no external object of desire (power) but an inner force of destruction (treason), and that this force, the line of flight, lands, though, into the 'other pole' of the war machine: the creative nature of desire.<sup>34</sup>

The political potential of the Anomalous is the creative nature of desire.

Richard's teeming *constitution of his character* and the *unstable non-representative force* emerging when all stable elements of power are subtracted, ebb into the political aspect of desire, to free being into becoming.

### **Desire is creation**

'Desire is not connected to the law and is not defined through any essential lack. (...) We have been trying to show that desire is outside similar coordinates of persons and

objects' (Deleuze, 1990, p. 36, my tr.<sup>35</sup>). Desire is 'not inside a subject as it does not tend towards an object': the subject of desire cannot but be shattered, and the object lost since the beginning. 'It seemed to us that desire would be a process and that it would deploy itself in a plane of consistency, a field of immanence, a "body without organs" as Artaud was saying, traversed by particles and flows which escape objects as well as subjects. . . Desire is not inside a subject as it does not tend towards an object: it is rather strictly immanent to a plane to which it does not pre-exist, a plane which should be built, where particles are emitted, where flows conjugate themselves. There is desire only inasmuch as there is deployment of such field, propagation of such flows, emission of such particles. Far from presupposing a subject, desire can be caught only in the point in which someone does not look for and does not catch any longer an object as well as it does not catch itself as subject.' (p. 37, my tr.).

Desire as productive engine is thus a differential<sup>36</sup> of potential, something immanent to a plane which should be built, the construction of which is political. 'Even if individual, the construction of the plane is a politics, it implies necessarily a "collective", some collective assemblages, an assemblage of social forms of becoming' (p. 38, my tr.<sup>37</sup>). In this assemblage there is no space for representation, there is no subject to represent (p. 45).

The construction of this plane, where the material production of desire teems, is prepared by Richard's line of flight. Richard embodies a movement of 'deterritorialisation', that is, a going out of the territory in which the codifying laws of power set him. He weaves his 'secret project' through a constant breaking of the plane, the tool of the line of flight, which in his case is betrayal. He becomes thus a war machine, a nomadic force, which subverts the codification that power exerts on it – be it the power of the Crown, of the course of history, of his own nature.

Richard is an 'outsider'. In his 'anomaly' he embodies the capacity and the force to overthrow the status of things, thus constituting the wedge of political potential: with his plots he opens a crack in the plane of immanence. The line of flight, betrayal, is the plot, the texture of the movement, the engine of the war machine. The combustion of representation is one of its tools, here expressed as consummation of the object of choice.

All this sets the immanence of the potential power of the 'Anomalous', which urges underneath all system of signifier-signified and irretrievably subverts it. Betrayal, treason, the demoniac are instruments for the power of subversion in the rupture of the plane which originates the new. This plane is a plane of consistency, which, in the case of Richard, defines the plane of the Anomalous<sup>38</sup>: Richard's struggle for the univocity of his being has to traverse this all. The 'Anomalous' is the throwing of the hazard of the die, it is Richard's walking the tightrope: 'I have set my life upon a cast' (V. 3, 361–362). It seems that betrayal, treason and univocity of being cannot be together, one aiming at, or producing, the other. The point of the political potential of the Anomalous is, I believe, that the univocity of being revolves into the univocity of becoming, that is why treason is its initial line of flight.

The demoniac that Deleuze was detecting in the line of flight, composed of betrayal – the betrayal of 'a simple man who no longer has any past or future' (Deleuze, 1987, p. 41) is embodied in Richard in all folds of the process, of the movement of his own self. He betrays the 'fixed powers', but also the anchoring to his nature which makes of him the anomalous. So in a sense the entire drawing of the line of flight aims, ultimately, at betraying his own deformed nature: 'We betray the fixed powers which try to hold us back, the established powers of the earth.' (p. 41).

In Richard we can see this: he is abandoned by all – the wonderful soliloquy (V. 3, 178–207) voices it. He is, exactly as Deleuze writes, ‘A traitor to the world of dominant significations, and to the established order. This is quite different from the trickster: for the trickster claims to take possession of fixed properties, or to conquer a territory, or even to produce a new order. The trickster has plenty of future, but no becoming whatsoever. The priest, the soothsayer, is a trickster, but the experimenter is a traitor. The statesman or the courtier is a trickster, but the man of war (not a marshal or a general) is a traitor.’ (pp. 40–41). And Richard is a man of war (‘Perjury, perjury, in the direst degree,/All several sins, all used in each degree,/Throng to the bar, crying all “Guilty! Guilty!”’ (V. 3, 197–200). The main treason, though, is of himself (‘I shall despair. There is no creature loves me;/And if I die, no soul will pity me.’ [V. 3, 201–202])).

The special function of the demonic in him is ‘the function of the *Anomalous*. The Anomalous is always at the frontier, on the border of a band or a multiplicity; it is part of the latter, but is already making it pass into another multiplicity, it makes it become, it traces a line-between. This is also the “outsider”’ (Deleuze, 1987, p. 42).

The power of Shakespeare as minor literature is that this metamorphosis, the force of the irreducibility of the anomalous, the force of its exteriority to the form of the State, of power lineage/assets, of a given nature, is to be found in the first affections of the self, in the contradictory, struggling, war machine which starts with one’s own nature as insistence of the disarticulating BwO inside our own organism, as vector of a desubjectification inside a codified subjectification, which translates in us the code of external power forces, as combustion of representation inside a system of signification (be it sovereignty, identity, normalcy).<sup>39</sup>

It is as if, in Richard III, we could see the State-form as a form of interiority (apparatus of identity), in reverse, from the inside, under the strokes of the metamorphosis that his war machine pushes the ‘State-form’ (here the sovereign lineage) to: ‘The law of the State is not the law of All or Nothing (...) but that of interior and exterior. The State is sovereignty. But sovereignty only reigns over what is capable of internalizing, of appropriating locally. (...) The State-form, as a form of interiority, has a tendency to reproduce itself, remaining identical to itself across its variations (...) But the war machine’s form of exteriority is such that it exists only in its own metamorphoses’ (p. 360); ‘It is in terms not of independence, but of coexistence and competition *in a perpetual field of interaction* that we must conceive of exteriority and interiority, war machines of metamorphosis and State apparatuses of identity.’ (pp. 360–361).

From the lever of his ‘exteriority’, Richard’s ‘power of the anomalous’, the political potentiality of his war machine, reaches the war machine’s ‘creative pole’: ‘We have tried to define two poles of the war machine: *at one pole*, it takes war for its object and forms a line of destruction prolongable to the limits of the universe (...) *The other pole* seemed to be the essence; it is when the war machine, with infinitely lower “quantities” has as its object not war but the drawing of a creative line of flight, the composition of a smooth space and of the movement of people in that space. At this other pole, the machine does indeed encounter war, but as its supplementary or synthetic object, now directed against the State and against the worldwide axiomatic expressed by States’ (p. 422).

## Minor literature

In Deleuze’s terms, micro-politics analyses the flows and investments of desire and defines the role played by the minorities, or all that is minor in groups or individuals. It supposes

a collective or individual 'war machine': a machine tied to nomadism, constantly displaced and with a relation of exteriority to the state, that is, which opposes itself to the major institutions, as, for example, the State. Micro-politics forms a field of actions whose aim is the production of a new field of immanence. The task of a micro-politics, as well of a minor literature, of which micro-politics is the political philosophy, is to liberate desire from the '*desire of its own repression*',<sup>40</sup> which is the cast it is trapped into when we understand it as lack. Micro-politics aims at subtracting itself from the dominant traits of power, as a minor literature subverts, from within, the major literature it lives in.<sup>41</sup>

Minor literature provides us with the tools to this unhooking from the dominant power. The trait of a minor literature is to constitute the 'revolutionary conditions of all literature within that called major (...). The "true great authors" are those who make of life, or of language, a minor treatment (...), that is, those who are able to subtract, from it, all that raises from Power, especially under its state form (...) to give justice to an author considered major such as Shakespeare it is to reserve him "a treatment as minor author, to find again (his) potentialities of becoming"' (Deleuze & Bene, 1978, p. 74).

The 'potentialities of becoming in Shakespeare text' which Deleuze refers to, can be found in Shakespeare's capacity to disclose the space of one's own causality at the moment when it is encroached by power and it struggles to break free. This is Shakespeare's capacity of creation: he brings us into the *mechanism* of that affirmative invisible engine, which breaks through the codified setting, the given, and originates the new. Think of Cordelia and the way she loves: it opens a new level of the relation between love and power, the love of a daughter for a father, who is also her King. Her affect of love enters as wedge into the texture of the power relation between a father King and a daughter, and overthrows the setting, it subtracts the relation from the codifications of power, and according to her own free causality, sets a new plane, a liberated plane of the relation which, like a magnet, will attract the entire course of the events.<sup>42</sup> Shakespeare's work is so revolutionary because it subverts the dominant traits of power by irrupting in history and nature as 'given', as codes, and liberates in them another substance, one's own principle of self-production made free to become – this is the creative pole of the war machine. That space of causality inherent to all production, and mainly of subjectivity, is set free from its possession on the part of power – in whatever form this power will present itself to us and with all the consequences of letting free one's own causality: a *series* of affects, deformations, mirroring reflections, deviations, forces coming about as expressions of a teeming matter. Setting free one's own causality, which subtracts the affects from within their given course and let them surge in their teeming becoming, to open new planes and give course to new events even at the price of destruction, is the disclosure of the principle of creation, of which Shakespeare, in literature, gives us the key. He depicts that liberation from all forms of encroachment of destructive forces on life, by giving voice to these same forces, and letting free on stage the very formation of affects, of thought, of actions, in their constituent turmoil.

Within this perspective, *Richard III* explores a politics of affirmative desire, that is, the individuation of a plane of actions, secret close intents, or desire's expressions, which is opened by 'lines of flight' and constitutes the seed for an overthrow of that given actual situation, which oppresses, or represses, us. This plane of action, highly political, Shakespeare seems to whisper to us, is ourselves.

## Notes

1. For a different reading, see Heller (2002, pp. 274–5, 154, 253 fl).
2. With ‘subject’ I refer to, and extend, Deleuze’s concept of ‘individuation’. See here section II.
3. For the notion of line of flight see Sasso & Villani (Ed.) 2003, p. 210.
4. See Deleuze and Guattari (1987, pp. 351–423).
5. See Deleuze and Bene (1978, p. 74).
6. See Deleuze and Guattari (1987, pp. 149–166) and here later.
7. And in *Superpositions* – here we refer to the Italian edition.
8. With intensity, I mean a differential of the matter, the actual production of a difference, which gives birth to the new. See Deleuze (2004, p. 280 fl).
9. Deleuze refers to *Richard III* only with brief annotations in the passages we quote. This further reading is mine.
10. See Deleuze and Guattari (1987, pp. 208–231).
11. The production of the field of immanence expresses Deleuze’s concept of ‘individuation’, the articulation of the relation between the univocity of being and the multiplicities of the becoming. Giulio Piatti has a beautiful, concisely clear text on it, see Piatti (2016). On individuation see also Sauvagnargues and Roffe (2012, pp. 57–70); Bogue (1989, pp. 62–63 fl).
12. See Deleuze and Guattari (1987, p. 159 fl).
13. See, from another perspective, Pugliatti (1996, p. 45 fl, 53).
14. This is the univocity of being which Richard’s BwO challenges into a univocity of becoming – see here later.
15. The object of choice reveals the presence of betrayal and the tendency of the trajectory of becoming. It is also the relation where the combustion of representation is played out. See here p. 15 fl.
16. See Deleuze and Guattari (1987, p. 161).
17. See Deleuze (1990, p. 46).
18. See Boundas and Olkowski (1994), Note 7.
19. We have a fabric of many tensors: the relation with time (IV. 2, 108–113, IV. 3, 387, 395–396; up to V. 3, 276–278, 283–288); with some characters, Anne, Buckingham, Elizabeth, the audience. See IV. 3 all but mainly 289–432, IV. 2, 49–63, V. 3, 309–342; even with Richard himself (V. 3, 348, 361–365).
20. See IV. 2, 106–113. Time is Richard’s anchoring, the timing of his thoughts made fall into action.
21. I found Shakespeare’s ‘futurity’ (Ryan) in Carmelo Bene’s *Riccardo III* and Roberta Torre’s *Riccardo va all’inferno*: there it is vividly clear desire as production of new fields of immanence. A ‘polyphonic’ reading of history as ‘retrospective possibility’ is in Pugliatti (1996).
22. With ‘combustion of representation’ I indicate that moment when the form of knowledge that representation is, comes to be blown up, as it occurs, for example, with the figure of the allegory in Benjamin. I read this together with Foucault’s notion of representation as a rupture in the system of knowledge of the Renaissance, in Pascucci, *Philosophical readings of Shakespeare*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2013, pp. 17–19; 97; 108 fl. For Benjamin in Shakespeare’s characters, we find a mixture of elementary and allegory. In the *Origin of the German Baroque Drama* Benjamin refers to Richard III as an example of allegory object of the theory of the *Trauerspiel*. See Benjamin (1998, pp. 227–229). I find Shakespeare’s characters not to be allegories but to function as allegory: they are very material characters, open to their flow of becoming, which registers all tempests, metamorphosis of revolting subjects in constitution. In his anticipation, I find one feature of Shakespeare’s art to be the ‘combustion of representation’ (in all its aspects, one for all the relation signifier-signified at the crossing with history) and the capacity of letting explode, at its place, the space of a becoming, that is, the plane of immanence to processes (be it the constitution of one’s own free subjectivity [Hamlet], of affects [Cordelia], of power [Macbeth]). The Benjaminian figure of the allegory plays, in seventeenth-century baroque drama, the same role: it combusts representation (transcendence) to open, in it, a teeming tempestuous immanence. See also Deleuze, 2006, pp.143–145.
23. Figures like the Weird Sisters (*Macbeth*) and the Fool (*King Lear*) express a synchronic use of time that opens what history gives us as ‘destiny’ to its own future becoming, that is, it

liberates, through knowledge, 'fate' from its destined path. Please allow me to refer to Pascucci 2013, p. 62, pp. 143 fl.

24. See Greenblatt (2011, pp. 242–243 fl).
25. See Deleuze and Guattari (1987, p. 422).
26. Deleuze and Guattari (1997, p. 23).
27. Example of how the combustion of representation is set vividly in front of us are all the passage where Richard stages his lies: when he is in front of Anne [I. 2, 49, fl.], of Hasting's head [III. 5, 24–32], of the Governor [III. 7, 141–173], etc. For the relation with Buckingham, see III, 5, 24–33, III. 7, 23–51, 117–140, 159, 165–167, 171–173 and IV, 2. Usually, representation as device is uncovered by someone which acts as 'external' chemical reagent (as the Scrivener, III. 6. 1, 14, or the Fool in *King Lear*, etc.), here it is mainly achieved by Richard's own self.
28. Here I take just one aspect, that of the quantum flow, which Richard's character is in respect to the rigid codified segmentarity of the system he is in.
29. See *A Thousand Plateaus*, pp. 354–356.
30. See Ryle (2014, p. 12, fl). for a further understanding of the political potential and its relation to desire.
31. Fold and line of flight are not the same conceptual figure (see Sasso & Villani, 2003, pp. 212–213) but I find that, if we read Shakespeare through a Deleuzian prism, often his characters combine both.
32. See Bogue (2013, chap. 5).
33. This process is unachieved, as with all lines of flight, but it opens to our experience of its constitution in becoming.
34. See Deleuze and Guattari (1984, p. 107).
35. Deleuze (1990, pp. 31–59). Desire is a keystone of Deleuze's and Guattari's philosophy and marks the passage from what was the 'schizo-analysis' in *Anti-Oedipus* to micro-politics in *A Thousand Plateaus*. See Sasso and Villani (2003, p. 350); Sibertin-Blanc (2010).
36. See Deleuze (2004, p. 291 fl).
37. See Deleuze (1990, pp. 39, 44).
38. See Deleuze and Guattari (1987, p. 270).
39. For a different reading of Richard III as expression of a tyrant power and of monstrosity, see Greenblatt, 2016 and Greenblatt, 2018, positions: 755, 770, 805, 835, 1175.
40. See Sasso and Villani (2003, p. 251 fl).
41. See Deleuze and Guattari (1997, pp. 29, 42). See also Sasso and Villani (2003, p. 216).
42. The same occurs if we think, for example, of Lady Macbeth and her thirst for power; of Hamlet and his oscillating self; of Timon and money as texture of the social relation.

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