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## REVIEW

**Éric Alliez and Andrew Goffey (eds.), *The Guattari Effect* (London & New York: Continuum, 2011), ISBN: 978-1-441-13680-0**

Can the name of Félix Guattari be separated from that of Gilles Deleuze? Maybe, or at least this is one of the effects that reading *The Guattari Effect*, edited by Éric Alliez and Andrew Goffey, seems likely to induce. The volume includes fourteen essays, two interviews, and a photo-art-essay. The contributors—Éric Alliez, Andrew Goffey, Jean-Claude Polack, Peter Pál Pelbart, Anne Querrien, Barbara Glowczewski, Gary Genosko, Isabelle Stengers, Antonio Negri, Anne Sauvagnargues, Franco “Bifo” Berardi, Stephen Zepke, Raymond Bellour, Pascale Criton, Annie Ratti, as well as Guattari himself—together form a “collective assemblage of enunciation” that re-animates the Guattarian corpus for a new generation.<sup>1</sup>

The name “Guattari” is today attached to major works: *Molecular Revolution: Psychiatry and Politics* (1984); *The Three Ecologies* (1989); *Chaosmosis: An Ethico-Aesthetic Paradigm* (1992); *The Anti-Oedipus Papers* (2004); and, recently translated, *The Machinic Unconscious* (2011). *The Guattari Effect* operates as a *machine* on the Guattarian corpus, mining its resources and tracing its possible effects. These effects are here conceptualized less as lines of “influence” (a perhaps dubious concept), and more as spontaneous affinities, belatedly revealed debts, and bits of enunciation. As the volume makes clear, Guattari, a militant “schizoanalyst,” continues to generate transversal effects that course through contemporary political, social, economic, and psychoanalytic thought as well as radical activism.

In preparing my review, I found myself asking: How *should* one review this book, a book about Guattari? To take the usual approach—a study of each essay and each contributor—would move in the opposite direction that the ethics of the *collective assemblage of enunciation* demands. It would re-present the volume as what Guattari-Deleuze define as a “root-book,” a book as traditionally defined, having a rooted thesis, logical progression, and singular author(s).<sup>2</sup> Not wanting to do that, I have instead chosen to take the volume’s introduction as an invitation to experiment in finding ways that the “polyphonic theoretical practice of the collective assemblage of enunciation [can] be attained.” (Alliez and Goffey, 1) Hence I’ve opt-

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<sup>1</sup> The idea is taken up in practically all of Guattari’s work. But it appears to have first surfaced in Deleuze and Guattari’s work on Kafka. See Deleuze and Guattari, *Kafka: Towards a Minor Literature*, translated by Dana Polan, foreword by Réda Bensmaïa (London; Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986).

<sup>2</sup> See Deleuze and Guattari, “Introduction: Rhizome,” in *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, vol. 2, translation and foreword by Brian Massumi (London; Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987).

ed to dispense with over-arching discussions of each essay and author, and to instead trace out in part what the collective assemblage enunciates and what effects this brings, or may yet bring about.

Guattari was a force. I mean that he, like anyone, was animated by (and subjected to) forces that operate on the transpersonal plane. There were the forces, for example, of psychoanalysis—the unconscious, the drives that would become “machines” in the schizoanalytic framework that is now virtually synonymous with the name “Guattari.” There was the force of May 1968 in Paris—the conjuncture out of which *Anti-Oedipus*, the first volume of *Capitalism and Schizophrenia*—“was born.” (Negri, 160) There were the forces of La Borde—the experimental psychiatric clinic—in which Guattari worked for most of his professional life. La Borde was animated by schizophrenia, anti-psychiatry, political radicalism, institutional critique, Lacanian and Freudian revisionism. These forces opened “lines of flight” that brought Guattari-Deleuze exhilaratingly close to the abyss of madness. Whereas Foucault (who wrote the foreword to *Anti-Oedipus*) genealogized madness, Guattari-Deleuze sought in it a practical, aesthetic, political, and philosophical framework. The scope (and perhaps near impossibility) of this task at times is felt in the scars of intelligibility that mark each volume of *Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. Reading those texts, one sometimes wonders if “in those chapters, the authors were not going mad” themselves. (Negri, 159)

The charge, the force that is (and was) Guattari, however, is today “threatened by an academic reterritorialization.” (Stengers, 152) Indeed in the US, the name “Deleuze” is sadly too often the very machine of this reterritorialization. The US academy has tried “to separate Deleuze from Guattari to save the former from the abyss into which Félix pushes him and to reinsert him in the sacred history of philosophy.” (Negri, 170) Hence, one of the aims of *The Guattari Effect* is to effect a re-radicalization of Guattari and Deleuze’s thought.

But the radical dimension, the force, of this thought shows up perhaps less in the rarefied discourse of academic commentary than in the everyday world such as that of “semio-capitalism,” that contemporary form of “immaterial labor,” in which today’s office workers, for example, find themselves “enslaved by network life, propped up by Prozac, and primed for competition by corporate spirit building exercises.” (Genosko, 125) The world of telecommuting, “flex-time,” and the like is entirely rhizomatic in nature. But it is a rhizome that everywhere re-directs the flow back to capital. With its incessant talk of flows, networks, and rhizomatic connections, Guattari’s work might appear to affirm the worst aspects (are there any good ones?) of contemporary techno-capital.

But the crazy, mixed-up map of immaterial labor is not what Guattari’s work dreams for. It dreams of a new “cartographic assemblage” that would diagram the way out—*the line of flight*—beyond the world of exploitation and enslavement. (Glowczewski, 106) It strives to help re-define individuals in relation to “reference points that are at once individual and collective.” (Querrien, 92) Schizoanalysis resists explaining one’s emotional problems as deferred effects of childhood trauma, a haunting from some primordial past. It instead seeks out the forces of psychical distress in the collective spheres of society, economy, and politics. It will not tell you that your problem is that you lust after your mother and want to kill your father. It will tell you that the problem is capitalism, racism, homophobia, nationalism, corporatism, colonialism and the like. It will tell you that you live in a schizophrenic world, but one which

is everywhere seeking to “normalize” itself through “appropriate” outlets—commodities, wars, for-profit education, mental institutions, prisons, etcetera. Schizoanalysis recommends a therapy of splitting and splintering, a becoming-multiple in order to ride through the maelstrom of our increasingly ungrounded life-worlds.

But one of the problematic aspects of schizoanalysis, and Guattari’s work as a whole, is that it also seems to try to outpace capital, even out-desire it, certainly out-crazy it. The “velocity of the text[s]” bearing Guattari’s name—in their very style and speed—seem to want to accelerate the system, to hasten it towards its demise, to make it outrun and overrun itself. (Pàl Pelbart, 71) One senses this in the linguistic play of Guattari’s work, in which “word games express at times a great freedom, intermediated with fragments of ‘jargon’ and hardenings which testify before anything else to a true suffering in writing.” (Pàl Pelbart, 71) Such hardenings of text mark moments when the whirring machine of Guattari’s thought crashes. Such moments should perhaps provoke us to ask if schizoanalysis demands that we live at an “unlivable velocity.” (Pàl Pelbart, 80)

Guattari was, however, never a pure theorist. He was an activist in the streets and in the clinic. As he freely admits in an interview: “I only read theoretical corpora as a thief... taking things that can be useful.” (Johnston, 28) The pragmatic concern was always foremost in Guattari’s work. But sometimes one needs time to reflect, to mull things over, to wait it out, before one (or so one) can take the “schizo-analytic exit from signifying imprisonment.” (Guattari, 23) Sometimes micropolitical practices can only make their “way by means of hesitant experiments, through an infinite production of softness” (Alliez and Goffey, 7)

Perhaps, then, a strange effect of *The Guattari Effect* is that it slows down the reader. This machine-text does not whiz along as does the maddening velocity of *Anti-Oedipus* or *A Thousand Plateaus*. The volume takes time for remembering, reflecting, but also for extending and enriching the work, multiplying the effects, for what was, and still could be, Guattari. This involves—as the volume demonstrates—far more than “close reading.” It tries to think how new subjectivities, new modes of living and resisting, come, and can come, into existence. It rides the wave of Guattari’s enunciation beyond the text to what gives (or gave) life to it. It directs us beyond the classroom, beyond the lecture hall, out, perhaps even into the streets.

As the volume shows, passing from text to action can go by many routes in a rhizome. One might begin with music, for example, even a minor refrain. The registration of this sound can suddenly bring one into an awareness of a space of hearing that is also always a political, social, psychical, and/or economic space. To recognize one’s own rhizomatic inscription is to become radically attuned to the power of sensation—of sensing—“forces and excitations of all sizes... apprehendable at multiple points.” (Criton, 242) Even this simple experience demands an important schizoanalytic question: “How is one to inhabit a space in a plural way?” (Criton, 242) How can a body become multiple?

Guattari always returned thought to the body—the body of sensation. He thus notoriously rejected “the theoretical and conceptual turn of art” that marked his generation (the sixties). He never wavered in his belief that “art is always a question of sensation.” (Zepke, 213) Art for Guattari was a way of teaching one to expand the powers of sensation; a way of coming to grips with the speed and intensity of living *sensationally*. The key for Guattari is that art inhabits the body. Interpretation or criticism in a schizoanalytic frame therefore seeks to un-

derstand the “formation of images [or] sounds and their effect as bodies and on the body.” (Bellour, 224) “Instability” — a lesson gleaned through the sensation and interpretation of art — for Guattari became a “mainspring” for re-thinking subjectivity as a “processuality that is continually questioned by the existential, the ethical, by a transitive subjectivity that is invented and is discovered while it is being expressed.” (Criton, 235) That is, the experience of art can teach us how to live the productive instability of our own multiplicities.

However, one of the critical questions, it seems to me, that schizoanalysis must face is: how does one retain a quanta of necessary stability, necessary for the development of concrete politics? How does one “preserve the open weaving of relations and avoid restrictive frameworks,” and at the same time keep oneself moored in the harbor of the Real?<sup>3</sup> (Criton, 244) The answer may lie finally in a therapeutic effort to psychically produce a more “inclusive consciousness,” unafraid of “experimentation [and] by the work of an active disjunction” that cuts one off from the safety nets of the entire *logos* of individualism. (Criton, 248) “To follow Guattari’s path,” to follow-up or develop the effects of his thought, requires that we learn to stand in more than one place at the same time. (Criton, 248) It means not reducing psychical suffering to a game of Mommy-Daddy-Me, but rather holding onto, and holding open, spaces for escape and resistance in our increasingly complex networked world. Nothing is perhaps more difficult and more necessary. For if indeed, “[d]esire is the motor of the movement that traverses society as well as the trajectory of singularity,” then the question remains: how can desire *desire* differently? (Beradi, 188) What can keep desire on a trajectory that will lead it beyond the plane of exploitation and commodification? What form(s) of desire should be desired? Looking to (looking at) Guattari is one way to begin to theoretically answer these questions. This perhaps simple point is literally and materially rendered in the pages of Ratti’s photo-art essay. The silence of these images speaks of what remains, and is yet to be said, in the name and in the spirit of Guattari. This is perhaps finally the most significant effect of Guattari’s thought today: it spurs the desire to look again at Guattari’s life, work, and legacy. The generosity of his texts invite us “to come back to it, not so as to conclude, but to start again.” (Alliez, 260)

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<sup>3</sup> I want to thank my supervisor, Dr. Sharon Sliwinski, for this insight. See Sharon Sliwinski, *Human Rights in Camera* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011).