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Introduction to Lesbian and Gay Studies

Abstract

A Theory of the Affective Body

This lecture is going to be a kind of tangential swerve away from what we've been studying thus far. What I'm going to present today is less a theory of gender, sex, and more a way of thinking, a style of thinking in the way of Deleuze and Guattari's manifesto. **Who are Deleuze and Guattari?** Gilles Deleuze was a professor of philosophy at the University of Paris; and Felix Guattari, a psychoanalyst at the La Borde - an experimental psychiatric clinic - and activist who started the antipsychiatry movement in France. They teamed up in 1972 to write *Anti-Oedipe*, translated into English, *anti-Oedipus: capitalism and schizophrenia*, in 1977, followed by a sequel *Mille Plateaux*, 1980 the English version *A Thousand Plateaus*, where the reading for today is lifted, came out in 1988. I think it's important that the text is a kind of double text, written by two authors, a philosopher and a psychoanalyst, an activist - not one. There is no one voice which is significant. DaG continue to hold a certain currency in almost every faculty of the arts, from history, politics, anthropology, and social science, to art history, music, architecture, literature, photography, And for better or worse they have both infiltrated and spawned recent discourses on feminism and sexuality, on identity, subjectivity and the body. **Who can resist Deleuze and Guattari?**

Maybe you had problems reading DaG: But if you start asking yourself whether you're taking DaG too literally, too materially or not materially or literally enough, you are reading Deleuze and Guattari. They revel in this impossible materialising of abstract thought, theirs is a conviction in the materiality of thinking. Ideas are things, there is no separate realm of abstract ideas. If you think the concept you just read has turned into something or someone altogether different from what you thought, then you're reading Deleuze and Guattari. Their concepts change over time, an article, or a page. And yet, somehow there is a strange schizo-logic of connectivity in their work. Their most important idea which I will go into later is becoming, which informs their very construction of their concepts which they do not regard as having fixity or permanence. What always remains however, is the theory of flows and surfaces about which the flows traverse.

Anti-Oedipus is a perverse reading of Marx and Freud but *not* in the way of yet another Freudian/Marxist synthesis. Traditionally, such attempts have maintained the separation between the two economies: the political economy (the flows of capital and interest) and the economy of the libido (the flows of desire). Deleuze and Guattari's radical project is a proposal for the "one same economy, an economy of flows." [AO xviii] A flow is a passage of events, actions and productions which produce further events, actions and productions. In their economy, capitalist discourse functions as a production of desire. Foucault in his introduction to *Anti-Oedipus* describes this book [and I quote] as the "analysis of the relationship of desire to reality and to the capitalist "machine" . . . its questions are less concerned with why this or that thought than with how to proceed. [and

I hope you noticed this how to character in the essay] It is the connection of desire to reality (and not its retreat into the forms of representation) that possesses revolutionary force. How does one introduce desire into thought, into discourse, into action?" he continues to say that anti-Oedipus is an introduction to the non fascist life, an art of living the non fascist life. Deleuze and Guattari insist, in the way of Nietzsche, that the fascist is inside of all of us. That it is no longer possible to pretend that we are the good, [the innocent] that the fascist is outside of us, [big brother,] the deviant "other" [who persecutes us]—rather, there operates an unacknowledged desire for fascism inside of all of us that itself must be confronted before anything political can be accomplished. The desire to be enslaved and the fascist that resides within are flip sides of a political coin that Deleuze and Guattari wish to expose in their ambitious project.

DaG do not address the specifics of gender or sex within the context of these discourses we are familiarising ourselves with, but instead wish to reinscribe a discourse of desire and sex, in a political sphere where these are notably absent. Whereas other so called post modern authors have written about the body as an object and construct of the state, such as Foucault, Deleuze and Guattari, following Nietzsche, turn the persecution inwards, on each person, returning the agency partially to the individual her/himself. The fascist is not out there, the fascist if you and me.

The Body Without Organs appears repeatedly in many of their writings. It appears as an essay - first in anti Oedipus - called the BwO that I'm going to start with, and then resurfaces in Mille Plateaux as "How Do You Make Yourself a BwO?" [We're going to start with the BwO in Anti Oedipus which should shed light on the assigned reading.]

In Anti-Oedipus the BwO is at once the Marxian body of capital, and the body of the schizophrenic, as in Artaud, the disturbed poet and artist from whom DaG took the phrase BwO, who will return to later. The BwO is a critical concept for Deleuze and Guattari; in many ways it sets up their entire project, appearing as the second chapter in Anti-Oedipus, in a classic Deleuze and guattarian criticism of psychoanalysis that they then continued for ten years after this. The BwO is a model for Marx's criticism of capital and its fallacious inscription in capitalist society, as the true or natural cause of production. The BwO is capital itself, a production of desire that reinscribes social production on its surface. [and to quote Deleuze and Guattari:]

[Capital is the BwO,] constituting a surface over which the forces and agents of production are distributed, thereby appropriating for itself all surplus production and arrogating to itself both the whole and the parts of the process, which now seem to emanate from it as a quasi cause. Forces and agents come to represent a miraculous form of its own power: they appear to be "miraculated" by it. In a word, the socius as a full body forms a surface where all production is recorded, whereupon the entire process appears to emanate from this recording surface. Capital is indeed the BwO of the capitalist, or rather of the capitalist being. But as such, it is not only the fluid and petrified substance of money, for it will give to the sterility of money the form whereby money produces money. Everything seems objectively to be produced by capital as quasi cause. . . .

For those who aren't familiar with the Marx, I'm going to quickly take you through his classic formulation: What is Capital? Marx defines Capital in two very precise and different capacities: Capital is [and I quote] "the raw materials, instruments of labour and

means of subsistence USED in order to produce NEW materials, instruments of labour and new means of subsistence.” So a material/real notion of capital, that is the thing itself, rice cotton or wheat, are examples. But he also says that capital is “the sum of commodities,” the sum of EXCHANGE VALUES; how much something can be sold for - and that Capital remains the same whether it is rice, cotton or wheat as long as they all have the same exchange value. In this second account, capital as value, capital turns out to be a strange disembodied quality - value or meaning that is embodied somehow within the merchandise. The material/real conception of capital as product contrasts with the abstract or spiritual quality of price or value and it is this very conflict between the real and the abstraction of capital that is at the heart of Marx’s thinking.

How does a commodity becomes capital? He asks [Commodities are products which are exchangeable for others.] Simply, a commodity becomes capital, it becomes valuable, only through the labour power that converts it into one, but more importantly, he describes it as the power of a portion of society, that maintains and reproduces itself by virtue of its exchange for direct, living labour power. He says, quote: “The existence of a class which possesses nothing but its capacity to labour is a necessary prerequisite of capital.” So capital is produced through labour, through a labour class. Now here comes the argument: What Marx observed is that in the very process whereby a commodity becomes capital, i.e. in the specifically capitalist mode of production, where an item accrues surplus value, somehow in a strange inversion of what’s really going on, it appears as if it is capital itself, and not the labour class that is the cause of the productive powers of labour. “Capital thus [and I quote Marx] becomes a very mystic being since all of labour’s social productive forces appear to be due to capital, rather than labour as such, and seem to issue from the womb of capital itself.” The claim is that capital appears to be the magical inherent value in things, rather than the work and social structure that in reality is what makes possible the making valuable of things.

So the BwO as capital, has a materiality in the bodily product or material itself, but these serve simply to embody the mystical miraculating power of the constructed value, the exchange value of commodities which deterritorialises the labourers power—consisting in actual labour—and transfers the force of this labour as the cause of production from labour to capital. But it is a disembodied body, emptied of all real relations, a body without organs. The BwO, is the body, they claim, that Marx is referring to when he says that it is not the product of labour, but rather appears as its natural or divine supposition. So the BwO is capital itself, the empty and magical non-productive surface on which is inscribed all the productive social relations of labour.

The BwO seems to parallel Marx’s conclusions but there are certain aspects that serve to complicate the original version of Marxism. **The first is their idea of the non production or antiproduction of capital, or the BwO.** Deleuze and Guattari—in a dialogue with Marx’s notion of production: production of capital, production of social relations—distinguish between two forms of production desiring-production (capital or the Body Without Organs – capital is never attained or gasped, always pursued) and social-production (a full body that functions as a socius) They argue that forms of both desiring-production and social-production involve an element of **non-production, of**

anti-production that is the empty BwO. The BwO, is the unproductive the unconsumable (**in this way capital is unlike labour and labour power that gets used up over the course of someone's day, week and eventually lifetime**). This anti-production frames what Marx already says but as a positive term. So while Marx, speaks of capital as an absence, a social delusion, DaG reinscribe it as a production, albeit an anti-production.

The second way they complicate Marx is by saying that the construction of capital as the true source of production is itself produced as an inscription or recording—capitalism's inscription of itself. So again, rather than a loss, the construction of capital is itself a production, in what they describe as the surface of inscription on the, “[The BwO] The BwO they say serves as a surface for the recording of the entire process of production of desire, so that desiring machines seem to emanate from it in the apparent objective movement that establishes a relationship between the machines and the body without organs.” And “It is an enchanted recording or inscribing surface that arrogates to itself all the productive forces and all the organs of production, and that acts as a quasi cause by communicating the apparent movement (the fetish) to them.”

The next thing to pay attention to is their distinction between production and inscription; they observe that “production is not recorded in the same way it is produced...” [and quote]

we have passed imperceptibly into a domain of the production of recording, whose law is not the same as that of the production of production...when the productive connections pass from machines to the BwO (as from labour to capital), it would seem that they then come under another law that expresses a distribution in relation to the unproductive element as a “natural or divine supposition” (the disjunctions of capital)

So we have the actual production of a labour class, production of production, but in the shift of attribution of power from labour to capital, the re-inscription on the BwO of capital itself, is effected as a recording of production, a non-production as productivity itself – the construction of capital as the miraculating cause of social production, occurs as a record[ing] in the BwO's surface of inscription.

In the translator's note, recording is intended as both the inscription of codes, such as the documentation of births, deaths and marriages—but also in the sense of a record that you listen to, a creative production, the documentation of a creative enunciation. In the beginning of *Mille Plateaux*, Deleuze and Guattari talk about their book as a record that can be started or listened to from any point and put away at any point and started again and again from whatever place is desired. So the surface of capital I think is also like this, it is the capitalist recording or inscription that effects the shift from labour to capital—the redistribution that makes the unproductive productive, through a natural or divine supposition. And to overstate the claim, it is that surface that re-orders what which is considered the source of production, *productivity* itself. Capital is rendered pure productivity.

However, the record is not simply the inscription of this inversion, in a simple reversal. In its place, on this surface all activity, all production, everything is inscribed, recorded on the surface of the BwO that Deleuze and Guattari say “swarms with them like a lion’s mane swarms with fleas.” So like the audible record, it has many starting points and can be read as many fragments and contradictions. So the surface is inscribed with both the actual social relations of labour, the full body, as well as the recording of the dominant discourse where capital is prioritised and comes to stand for pure productivity. They never actually come out and say anything as definitive as I just did; this is my reading of their project which I welcome you to challenge. In short, who knows what they were thinking.

In any case, it looks if anything, like they respect Marx’s basic tenet, but we need to understand the very different social contexts in which the two texts emerged. Deleuze’s capitalism, 1972 is very different to Marx’s 1850 1849(?) and again differs from what today might be called Late capitalism. DaG’s critique of capitalism complexifies Marx’s statements, but the basic perversion of social production to the desiring production of the BwO, the fetish body of capital, is retained and moreover framed as a recording: a production that is inscribed on the BwO.

What I want you to take note of is what this construction or - to use deleuzian phraseology – production, the Body Without Organs does to Marx’s basic formulation in its very enframing with a language of productions. Their Marxism is effectively communicated through a spatial language that engages the body, the emptying of the body, the social body. And a substitution of desire for what has been lost in the emptying, in a reinscription on the surface of the Body Without Organs. It deals in surfaces and bodies. This spatialising and sexualising of Marx’s language is an important part of their project. The way of thinking becomes the thinking itself.

Given this background in anti-Oedipus, what about the BwO in *A Thousand Plateaus* that you’ve read for today? Before we go into what is the BwO in *Mille Plateaux*, I want to briefly comment on the mode of writing that takes effect in “How To Make yourself a BwO.” Whereas Anti-Oedipus gives us a fairly reasonable description of the BwO, *How Do You Make Yourself A BwO*, as the title implies, rather than explaining the what of the BwO, is didactic, it insists on showing us how to *do* something. It is a performative, It’s name is the title of how to do something and somehow the essay itself accomplishes what it is a set of instructions for. But it also inverts this performativity by retracting what it offers in the injunctive. The How-to-Make of the title is actually an incorrect translation, because in French the phrase is intended to read: how to Fuck a Body Without Organs – so there is this double meaning lost in the translation. But it isn’t just a neutral set of instructions, How to make yourself a BwO is a violent injunction. Whereas Foucault and Derrida carefully mask their discourses as anti-narratives, in what I call a postmodern humility—in Deleuze, an ironic fascist tone takes over, theirs is almost always in the voice or scream of the injunctive (find your body without organs, find out how to make it). So we should hold Deleuze and Guattari against Ruben, Watney, Butler, Foucault and start to pay attention to the style, and voice that writers use to conduct their polemics.

As a footnote, we might wish to reassess Foucault or Derrida, et al and the almost ingenuous disclaimers, the writer's attempts to locate their particular statements as non-ideological, non-prescriptive and both outside of and inured to any meta-narrative. As you may have noticed, all the texts we've read for this class, are laden with ideology and disclaimers against ideology of one form or another. Deleuze and Guattari make no such humble claims. Their work is pure unadulterated self proclaimed ideology. And this is why I like to think of *A Thousand Plateaus* as a kind of manifesto. It parodies its nietzschean claims about the fascist embedded in the individual, by taking the stance of the injunctive, the fascist herself. So keep this in mind when you're writing the manifesto. The gamble with ideology that the postmodern author unwittingly enters into is exactly at the site of disjunction between the theory text and the manifesto. Somehow, Deleuze and Guattari have managed to produce both at once. Remember there is no manifesto without theory, and theory is of course an unacknowledged manifestation itself. I added this in for the purposes of your assignment, for which I think Deleuze and Guattari are a good model to study. They plagiarise a million writers as their own also with citation, and they produce their own ideology which is basically what you're being asked to do.

The other shift in the BwO when we get to *Mille Plateaux*, is in the capacity of an open sexuality very much operative in the writing. In *anti-Oedipus*, the discussion of the surface of inscription is suggestive—seductive even, but the erotic remains covered, covert. The emptied body becomes a surface of inscription, a surface for writing on, which reminds us of body inscription practices, tattooing, piercing; and, Peter Greenaway's film *the Pillow Book*, where the main character requires that her lovers write calligraphy all over her body, and definitely Kafka's short story *a Penal Colony*, [? check] a torture machine that cuts the prisoner's sentence in blood, as an inscription onto his skin. But all of these erotic and violent connotations remain implicit. In "How To Make A BwO," dead is this coy suggestion. In the latter we have a surprisingly pornographic description of what is to be done to the body, to the surface. We are told to sew it up. "(3) you begin sewing, you sew up the hole in the glans; you sew the skin around the glans to the glans itself, preventing the top from tearing; you sew the scrotum to the skin of the thighs. You sew the breasts, securely attaching a button with four holes to each nipple." unquote [151] All orifices must be sealed, in order to rid the body of the dreaded organism. This can be read very directly as a means of evacuating the body, dismantling its centralised and thus deeply fascistic structure. [remember Nietzsche and the fascist within] But this sewing up is described in a certain passivity, an anti-violence, a masochistic path to violence that takes the stance of absolute banality, or in the words of Hannah Arendt, who talked about the banality of evil in her account of the Adolph Eichman trial. But what is being suggested is that an extreme violence and refusal, refusal in the passive stance of the masochist, must be undergone to rid the body of itself. So with this essay, they enter into a new politics which eschews subjectivity but at the level of the subject herself.

[BODY]

Of course what is important about this essay is Deleuze and Guattari's radical conception of the Body and moreover, the body's central position in their overall philosophy. The BwO is a theory of the *affective body* based on the 17th century philosopher Spinoza. Like Deleuze and Guattari, Spinoza was a marginal figure, born in 1632, as Baruch Spinoza, the son of a Jewish merchant from Amsterdam, his father and grandfather were originally Spanish crypto-Jews -- that is, Jews who were forced to adopt Christianity in post-Islamic Spain, but secretly remained Jewish. He was educated in traditional Jewish Curriculum but his theological speculations were to prompt conflict with Jewish leaders after which he converted to Christianity, changing his name from Baruch to Benedict. In another construction of mistaken identity, Spinoza's Ethics is sometimes described as remaining Jewish in style despite his conversion. Maybe we can return to this question at the end.

Spinoza was a contemporary of Descartes, who died 1650. The Ethics written around 15 years later, 1663 is a fundamental negation of cartesianism, radical for its day. What we need to consider is the kind of thinking that we may have thought was scarcely possible for Spinoza at a time of theoretical and religious conservatism - Postmodernism's criticisms of Descartes or so called cartesianism constructs a certain Cartesian epoch, that it renders philosophically primitive and inferior to its own theoretical illumination—and yet what is uncovered in the *Ethics* is the most rigorous critique of cartesianism, centuries ahead of its time. In Spinoza there is no primacy of mind over body as in Descartes. Spinoza rejected the Cartesian mind body divide. This is not to say he recast the body as having primacy over the mind, rather according to the ethics, [and I quote] “what is an action in the mind is necessarily an action in the body as well, and what is a passion in the body is necessarily a passion in the mind.” There is no primacy of one series over the other. (we might add that something like this Spinozan view of the body can be found in Asian philosophy 2 thousand years ago. Deleuze and Guattari make reference to Taoism but I'm not going to go into this because their main source is Spinoza).

Another thing I want to draw your attention to is the format in which Spinoza's Ethics was written. Spinoza knew he was taking a risk which is why the *Ethics* is written in a non digital version of what can only be called hypertext. There are two books. The first has general axioms, for each axiom, and an expanded version with all the dangerous material was published in a second book. Further every axiom is followed by a list of axioms and definitions that can be cross referenced throughout the text. And before showing anyone the *Ethics*, and anticipating controversy, Spinoza wrote and “published anonymously his *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* (1670) a treatise in which he defends the liberty to philosophise in the face of religious or political interference.” I think what is interesting here for later discussion, is again the style of writing, the format that a text takes and the political conditions under which it is produced. So think about not just what you want to say in your manifesto, but how you want to manifest? How the manifesto is produced is perhaps no different to what the manifesto says. Can we use Spinoza's textual format, where the text becomes a kind of formal object, and think of the manifesto in this way as not simply text that communicates but as a body itself.

To continue, the Ethics is remarkable not just in its very contemporary view of the body, but in the very conception of the body as central to his philosophy. This is where Deleuze and Guattari's project echoes Spinoza's. Spinoza offers philosophers in the late 17th century a new model: the body. He proposes to establish the body as a model, and I quote Spinoza "We do not know what the body can do..." This declaration is a provocation. "We speak of consciousness and its decrees, of the will and its effects, of the thousand ways of moving the body, of dominating the body and the passions—but we do not even know what a body can do..." As Nietzsche will say, "we stand amazed before consciousness, but the truly surprising thing is rather the body..." Today, the discourse on the body is well established, and even to the point of excess as Foucault argues, but in the time that Spinoza is writing, the claim that it is the body that is the correct subject of a moral philosophy, is truly radical and I want you to consider the historical conditions in which the ethics arises and ask what this does to the status of his theory? We can discuss this later.

The Ethics elaborates a theory of the *affective body*, which is the unsaid topic of this lecture. It is the idea that the body is not mine, and it is neither constructed nor natural, instead, it is the sum total of its capacity to affect and to be affected by other bodies. The body is not separable from that which lies in a fictional outside of it, and that which belongs to a "me" but the body is that which has things happen to it and that from and through which other things have things happen to them.

Spinoza says [and I quote:] . . . beings will be defined by their capacity for being affected, by the affections of which they are capable, the excitations to which they react, those by which they are unaffected, and those which exceed their capacity and make them ill or cause them to die. In this way, one will obtain a classification of beings by their power; one will see which beings agree with which others, and which do not agree with one another, as well as who can serve as food for whom, who is social with whom, and according to what relations. A man, a horse, and a dog; or more to the point, a philosopher and a drunkard, a hunting dog and a watchdog, a racehorse and a plow horse—are distinguished from one another by their capacity for being affected, and first of all by the way in which they fulfill and satisfy their life. (Ethics III 57)

In this conception Spinoza distinguishes between two sorts of **affections**: [open quotation:] "actions, which are explained by the nature of the affected individual, and which spring from the individual's essence; and passions, which are explained by something else, and originate outside the individual. Hence the capacity for being affected is manifested as a power of acting insofar as it is assumed to be filled by active affections, but as a power of being acted upon insofar as it is filled by passions." Remember to suspend judgment about the kind of language he is using, essence and nature of the individual, (again, given the time he is writing when we don't have people like Watney) which if we read this seriously, is in fact a negation of an essentialist or natural thinking of identity.

\Af*fec"tion\, n. [F. affection, L. affectio, fr. afficere. See [Affect](#).] 1. The act of affecting or acting upon; the state of being affected.

And in turn DaG's notion of the body is, just this, the sum total of its affections: its actions and passions. It is neither a bodily history nor a social construct nor an essential, natural body – but an affective body. (this is not unlike Foucault's notion of power to rather than power over).

In class, we've looked at criticisms of the two dominant paradigms of the body: objectification, or subjectification of the body: so firstly against objectification, theories against a natural biological genetically determined body, give way most convincingly in Foucault to the idea of the body as historically and politically determined. The body in this criticism is a social construction, an object of the state. We have seen this model of the body taken up in discourses on identity, where it is argued that if the body is a construct, then it can be made into whatever you want it to be. So the collective and social notion of the foucauldian body, is collapsed and an individual idea of the subject's mutable body emerges. If the body is constructed then it can be reconstructed. Of course this has been criticised, as itself objectifying the body and ignoring certain facts of the so called "lived" body, that are not necessarily determined externally.

DaG's notion of body, the BwO is neither pure construct nor biological artifact, but a body without organs which turns out to be a process or set of processes. In the BwO, there is no *I* that passively receives a constructed body from the Other – society - at birth, nor is there a powerful *I* that constructs my body and makes me what I am. All there is is a multiplicity of affects or in Spinoza's language affections (things that bodies do to each other and get done to them), the sum total of everything my body does to its outside and everything that comes to pass on the body itself. This is the BwO. They say I do not own "my" BwO because I happen on the BwO. What does this mean? If my body is the sum total of its capacity to affect and to be affected, then the body is no longer centralised by an internal "I" embodied in a centralised organic system attached to my notion of such an independent organism that is *my* self. Hence, the Body *Without* Organs. As you can see, this is radically different to any notions of the body you will have heard of, unless you have already heard of this.

In *How to Make yourself a BwO*, the BwO is also described in terms of what they call the *field of immanence*, or the *Plane of Consistency*, another ubiquitous Deleuze-guattari-ism that appears on almost every page of *Mille Plateaux*. The Plane of consistency here that plays the role of BwO is another way of elaborating the surface of inscription. If the affective body is no longer mine, but a multiplicity of affections involving other bodies and distributed over a surface, then this surface is the plane of immanence. The field of immanence, they explain, is 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"). Immanence is also a really important term for Deleuze and Guattari because they use it in opposition to the notion of transcendence. Transcendent means beyond the real world, so a transcendent notion of god is a god is beyond the world of things, an external ephemeral agency. Immanence by contrast means in-dwelling, so an immanent notion of god is such that god dwells inside everything, every person every substance. They are against a transcendental philosophy, thus the statement: "the field of immanence that is the BwO, is not internal to the self, but neither does it come from an external self or a nonself." The body is the ultimate reality and is its own reality, but I do not own it, there is no "my" body. They finish by saying that the plane of consistency is the totality of all BwO's.

So, the BwO is, the affective body, a distribution or inscription of forces and actions on the plane of immanence, which finally leads us to the question: How to Make for yourself a BodywO. How to make the BwO turns out to be how to prepare the BwO such that it can maximise its affective potential. Deleuze and Guattari say: “what comes to pass on the BwO is not the same as how you make yourself one. [152] There are 2 phases: flogging and sewing. (pain and emptying) one phase for fabrication of BwO the other to make something circulate on it or pass across it.” Now if you’ve been paying attention, you may notice that this distinction is identical to the one drawn in anti-Oedipus when they say that production is different to the inscription of production. So the pain, I take to be increasing the affective capacity of the body literally through blows and the emptying procedure, the sewing up is the preparation and production of a continuous surface on which things come to pass on it.

The prime exemplars they mention, for the affective body, are Drug users, masochists, schizophrenics, lovers - all ways of making the BwO. The masochist is their first example. [Quote:] “The masochist body is poorly understood in terms of pain; it is fundamentally a question of the BwO. . .the masochist is not looking for pain but also not looking for pleasure in a suspensive or roundabout way. The masochist looks for a BwO that only pain can fill, or travel over. . .” [unquote] He takes pain to subvert the desire as lack principle, that desire is lack of object of desire, or desire is pain in the absence of the object of desire. What this conception of desire fails to understand is the pleasure of desire itself. It isn’t that pleasure interrupts and discharges desire they claim; and the masochist is an attempt to subvert this by seeking pleasure in pain. What is really desired is desire itself not pleasure or pain which are effects of desire. [and I quote:] “The masochist’s suffering is the price he must pay, not to achieve pleasure, but to untie the pseudobond between desire and pleasure as an extrinsic measure” [155] Take note, this is another theory of immanence, pleasure is not an external agent that ends desire, rather pleasure arises immanently through and of desire.

I wanted to extend their analysis of the masochists aims or motives and ask what is at stake in the very use of the masochist as their prime example? I think the reason for the masochist is it exemplifies not just a subversion of the construction of desire as the absence of pleasure but for its fascistic overtones. By taking the role of both master and slave, the self-appointed recipient of pain, the masochist directly engages with Deleuze and Guattari’s nietzschean project to rid the body of the organism, or the inner fascist. In Deleuze’s book, *Coldness and Cruelty*, a preface to Masoch’s, *Venus in Furs*, that they republished, Deleuze explains that the sadist and masochist are not diametric opposites of each other in a simple reversal. Masoch seeks out women to administer the pain and torture that he pursues. The woman in this role is not the same as the sadist, who seeks out a recipient of pain. The masochist has a special kind of passivity that Deleuze is particularly interested in, it is the master slave paradox, of the desire to enslave and be enslaved, the fascist. The masochist, externalises the fascist, in a reinscription on her body that becomes a BwO. So the masochist serves two purposes: the subversion of the lacanian notion of desire as lack, and also as a political project. Here we can see the double thinking that is characteristics of Deleuze and Guattari.

But Deleuze and Guattari also suggest that the masochist has failed in what is starting to read as a stock postmodern disavowal, a disclaimer. The junkie exposes himself to a danger. But what is this danger and where have they failed? It seems that although the junkie, (by emptying the BwO of sensation) and the masochist (by filling the BwO with pain) have subverted the structure of pleasure and desire, and perform a reinscription of the organic body, it appears that their activity is singular, rather than expansive, increasing the body's potential for affectivity, the methodology is ultimately reductive. I think these are models for bodies that are lived according to a very intense affectivity. In going about our daily business we often forget our bodies; the junkie and the masochist cannot afford this forgetting. Such characters live in a hyper bodily state, their bodies take on a certain affective value. That being said, I think it would be to misinterpret Deleuze and Guattari to think that the BwO is an instruction to go out and take drugs or to engage in masochism. This is not their intention. The masochist and the junkie only give us a glimpse of something like the BwO that I think is a more ambitious project only implied in the essay. It begs the question, is their project feasible and if not do they have something else in mind?

Question to the class: Can you use Deleuze and Guattari to criticise Rofes?

So we have some limited examples of BwO, but still no How to Make Yourself a BwO. For this, Deleuze and Guattari introduce a third character, the French artist poet playwright philosopher, Antonin Artaud who as I mentioned earlier is the one to first speak of ridding the body of organs. Artaud spent the duration of WWII in a succession of lunatic asylums. "Artaud experienced delusions of buckets that contained mud that fucked, saw first hand the extracts that lay behind in dealing with carnal waste and the hand of God whose skin was beauty and who walked with a prosthetic limb occasionally." Here he suffered and gained from all the aspects of starvation and underwent a myriad of bizarre treatments for his behavior including coma-inducing insulin therapy and electroshock therapy for these hallucinations. "Artaud is best known for his "Theater of Cruelty," a project based on his vision of cruelty as truth and as a transforming experience." Antonin Artaud's last work produced after his release between 1946 and 7, was a radio broadcast called *To Have Done With The Judgment Of God* in which he speaks about the BwO.

Reading from the last page of *To Have Done With The Judgment Of God*, Artaud says:

From whatever angle one approaches you, you are mad, mad enough to be tied down.

—By having him undergo once more but for the last time a
session on the autopsy table in order to remake his anatomy.

I say, in order to remake his anatomy.

Man is sick because he is badly constructed.

We must decide to strip him in order to scratch out this

Animalcule which makes him itch to death,

god,
and with god
his organs.

For tie me down if you want to,
But there is nothing more useless than an organ.

When you have given him a body without organs,
Then you will have delivered him from all his automatisms and
Restored him to his true liberty.

Then you will teach him again to dance inside out
as in the delirium of our accordion dances
and that inside out will be his true side out.

For Artaud the BwO demands a stripping away program; the ridding of organs is a ridding of everything civilising and organising about the body. Artaud aimed to reach The Body directly, to establish an existence for The Body in which all influence, all nature and all culture are torn away. Artaud wanted The Body to be by itself, honed to only bone and nerve, without family, society or religion. Deleuze and Guattari, extend Artaud's monologue, explaining that the BwO is not the opposite of the organs. The organs are not its enemies. The enemy is the organism. The BwO is opposed not to the organs but to that organization of the organs called the organism." And "The BwO is not opposed to the organs; rather the BwO and its "true organs," which must be composed and positioned, are opposed to the organism, the organic organization of the organs . . . the organism is not at all the body, the BwO; rather, it is a stratum on the BwO, in other words, a phenomenon of accumulation, coagulation, and sedimentation that, in order to extract useful labour from the BwO, imposes upon it forms, functions, bonds, dominant and hierarchicized organizations, organized transcendences." [158] Again the word labour here should remind you of the BwO in anti-Oedipus, which operates through the inscription of social codes as a means of extracting useful labour.

Deleuze and Guattari say that the three great enemies: are Organism, subjectification, and significance. So far we've looked at the limitations of the body as organism, as well as their criticism of the body as subject, the idea of "my" body. Their polemic against signification already begun in anti-Oedipus is the artaudian project to rid the body of its capitalist inscription. They ask what does it mean to disarticulate, to cease to be an organism? [and I quote] "dismantling the organism means opening the body to connections that presuppose an entire assemblage, circuits, conjunctions...levels and thresholds, passages and distributions of intensity, and territories and deterritorializations measured with the craft of the surveyor". Whereas this stripping the body of all signification might at first appear to be a reductive and nihilistic procedure, what is intended is an expansive dismantling, where everything encoded is dissolved and what remains is the BwO as a pure asignifying affective surface. The removal of codes and inscriptions they claim, leaves nothing to interpret; there is only the real. And I quote then: **"The removal of text is a removal such that the body can no longer be restricted by the significatory constructions that it lives by."**

And:

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. Psychoanalysis does the opposite: it translates everything into phantasies, it converts everything into phantasy, it retains the phantasy. It royally botches the real, because it botches the BwO.

The organs distribute themselves on the BwO, but they distribute themselves independently of the form of the organism; forms become contingent, organs are no longer anything more than intensities that are produced, flows, thresholds, and gradients. It is not at all a question of a fragmented, splintered body, of organs without the body (Owb). The BwO is exactly the opposite. There are not organs in the sense of fragments in relation to a lost unity, nor is there a return to the undifferentiated in relation to a differentiable totality. There is a distribution of intensive principles of organs, with their positive indefinite articles, within a collectivity or multiplicity, inside an assemblage, and according to machinic connections operating on a BwO. [164]

So they're not talking about an emptying of the body but instead, erasing the dominant inscription of its surface → by the indefinite article they mean, pure possibility, making it pure flow without the blockage of signification.

Now, in their formulation of taking everything away, the body becomes maximum potentiality or what they call pure becoming. The concept of becoming is arguably the most important concept in Deleuze and Guattari and takes many forms in *Mille Plateaux*. In this essay it functions as a new model for identity, *becoming-other*. They start with becoming-animal. It is this becoming that is the key to the BwO. So, what can becoming-animal, becoming-dog even mean? When the schizophrenic becomes dog, it isn't that he actually becomes a dog or that he is in a relation of representation with the dog, a metaphor for dog, rather what Deleuze and Guattari intend for becoming-dog is critical a participating in 'dogness,' in what it means to be a dog. So the patient takes on specific rituals that the real dog enters into, inverting the structure, becoming-dog. Similarly, they say the man becoming-horse implicitly states, quote: "what happens to a horse can also happen to me . . . [they claim] the masochist effects an inversion of signs: the horse transmits its transmitted forces to him, so that the masochist's innate forces will in turn be tamed." Becoming-animal for Deleuze and Guattari is a direct mode of engaging with the BwO. If this makes no sense, another more general example they use of becoming is the wasp and the flower. The wasp is becoming-flower and the flower becoming-wasp at the moment of transaction where the wasp collects the flowers pollen. They form what DaG call a desiring machine. It's the idea of shared identity and identity based on actions/passions.

BwO → affections/affects → becoming other → becoming woman → OwB
 Anti-Oedipe and *Mille Plateaux* → Spinoza → → Artaud → Elizabeth Grosz → ?

I'm going to read out an analysis of Artaud's art work to give you an idea of the becoming other that he entered into in quite an intense way. In drawings titled "The being and its foetuses" and "Never real and always true" the figures appeared acutely disjointed, manipulated with precision to occupy a space of dismemberment. Sections of metal, insects, child-like female faces, internal organs, spilled out in painful dispersal across the scorched surface of the paper. Superannuated machinery and propeller shapes intersected with incandescent human shapes and lacerated faces. As the drawings developed Artaud often surrounded and penetrated them with phrases from an invented rhythmic pre-Babel language, which he continually elaborated, inserting it as an enraged incantation into his work. In a Deleuzian construct Artaud's drawings produce images of sensations and forces. Artaud makes patent an experience of the body that leads one beyond the phenomenological "lived body" to the chaotic "body without organs". The body in Artaud's work is always in a process of becoming other – becoming-animal, becoming-molecular, becoming-imperceptible – Artaud is illustrating sensations in the sense that he depicts the un-organized and non-organic sensations of the body without organs. The encircling force of the field isolates the

figure, disconnects it from any latent narratives and consequently empties it of purely figurative/representational content.

So to recap: The BwO starts with an affective theory of the body: the sum total of all its affections, its actions and passions. But the affective body exists in a permanent state of pure becoming, since its potential for affection is great. The BwO is becoming-other a state that is reached by uninscribing the surface, refusing the organisation of the body around its organs, instead existing according to all the affections and affects that it does and can potentially enter into. Deleuze and Guattari say that the subject is a process of multiple becoming, in which anything can be connected to anything else. Deleuze proposes an alternative notion of subjectivity—becoming-other, but we can only be freed to become other if the BwO is rendered a blank surface of asignification that receives affection but never inscription. In this idea of identity as becoming, Peter asked a good question: was Spinoza becoming Christian when he converted? Can we think about becoming-other in relation to Paris is Burning? Was Venus Extravaganza becoming-woman or something else? Is drag-performance a becoming woman, what about becoming-family and the houses of extravaganza, La Beija, etc.

[don't read this out]

But the key term of *Mille Plateaux*, *devenir*, [Becoming] is problematic in its translation as *Becoming*. *Devenir* is the infinitive form of the verb. Infinitive means unlimited, without temporal or logical restriction, that is, without a “tense” or a “mood.” Now in French the infinitive form can be used as a noun whereas this is not the case in English: we don't say “a to-become” or “a to-be.” English, obviously cannot do this, so Massumi translates *devenir* with “becoming.” “Becoming,” on the other hand, is a verb that functions as a noun: “a becoming” or in other cases a present participle, a verb form that functions as part of a verb phrase: “the wasp is becoming the orchid,” or as a modifier: “the wasp, becoming the orchid ...” In these latter cases of becoming as a present participle, there is a temporal restriction to the present. This is important to recognize because, as Deleuze/Guattari explains an infinitive, even though it is not temporally restricted, is not “indeterminate” with regard to time; rather it expresses the “floating, pure event or of becoming.”

This idea becoming-other culminates in a controversial notion of DaG's called Becoming-Woman, the ultimate form of becoming-other, that was both widely criticised and embraced among feminist writers.

Iragaray expresses the suspicion that “becoming-woman” is an excuse for yet another male appropriation of whatever is radical or subversive in feminist politics.

Rosi Braidotti asks “whether feminists, at this point in their history of collective struggles aimed at redefining female subjectivity, actually afford to let go of their sex-specific forms of political agency? [she asks] is the bypassing of gender in favour of a dispersed polysexuality not a very masculine model which claims to get rid of sexual difference. What results is the dissolution of the claim to specificity voiced by women. . . Only a man would idealize sexual neutrality”

Elizabeth Grosz claims that the metaphor “becoming woman” is a male appropriation of women's struggles theories knowledges insofar as it borrows from them while depoliticising their radicality. . . she goes on to say that they not only neutralize women's

sexual specificity, but more insidiously, they also neutralise and thereby mask men's specificities...

Deleuze and Guattari do not specify what a feminine becoming-woman might be.

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