Territory and Subjectivity: the Philosophical Nomadism of Deleuze and Canetti

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Abstract

The paper's purpose consists in pointing out the importance of the notion of "territory", in its different accepted meanings, for the development of a theory and a practice of subjectivity both in deleuzean and canettian thought. Even though they start from very different perspectives and epistemic levels, they indeed produce similar philosophical effects, which strengthen their "common" view and the model of subjectivity they try to shape. More precisely, the paper focuses on the deleuzean triad of *territorialisation, deterritorialisation, reterritorialisation,* with regard to the role it plays in the forming of the subject and in connection with the fundamental deleuzean notion of *difference*; it furthermore concentrates on the characterization of the notion of territory in Canetti's work, also in the light of the mentioned deleuzean categories and with reference to the crucial canettian concept of *transformation*. Finally, the paper analyses both the political consequences of the "nomadic subjectivity" Deleuze and Canetti deal with and the critical and problematic aspects it involves.

1. Introduction

The philosophy of Gilles Deleuze can be defined, like most post-war French philosophy, in terms of a philosophy of difference. On the other hand, Elias Canetti's thought can be considered as an extensive reflection on the concept of "transformation" [*Verwandlung*]. The aim of the present paper is to show that these two concepts, namely difference and transformation, display a close affinity and, accordingly, that the fundamental philosophical implications contained in the works of Deleuze (not forgetting the fundamental books written together with Félix Guattari) and Canetti also reveal a strong kinship, although the relationship between the two authors is rarely direct or firsthand. Thus, I believe that is not only possible but also productive to attempt to trace a "map" of this common philosophical ground and to expound the structure and the mode of operation of the theoretical device that Deleuze and Canetti autonomously contribute to developing.

In a conversation with Catherine Backès-Clément, Deleuze and Guattari assert:

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> We're looking for allies. We need allies. And we think these allies are already out there, that they've gone ahead without us, that there are lots of people who've had enough and are thinking, feeling, and working in similar directions: it's not a question of fashion but of a deeper "spirit of the age" informing converging projects in a wide range of fields (Deleuze 1995, 22/36).[1]

Elias Canetti plays the part of an ally within the "theatrum philosophicum" erected by Deleuze (and Guattari). This obviously does not mean that their different views can simply be flattened out. On the contrary, it means that converging projects, although independent, can strengthen a common philosophical and political move, namely that of a "philosophical nomadism". With respect to this move, the semantics of territory plays a very important role both in the philosophy of Gilles Deleuze and in the works of Elias Canetti.

2. Territory and Identity

A territory is a space delimited by stable borders by fixed confines, at least when taken in its basic and common sense, which distinguish an inside from an outside and, in this way, set up at least two separated areas of reality: one inside the borders and one outside, this latter probably belonging to another territory. It is therefore a conceptual device which produces order, working as a function which organizes sets of elements otherwise indeterminate and confused: given a dominion of elements, of whatever kind they might be, and marking fixed limits which become the territory's borders, a territory arranges these elements in a set "A", which are placed into groups which share a common feature and, another set ¬A or B is distinguished when in contrast with the first set, this could be another territory or simply an unspecified and unorganized region of being. It is in this sense that a territory can be said to produce identity: every different territory marks a particular identity-set, labelling a well-defined group of elements.[2]

Basically, the logical structure of a territory therefore consists in marking borders using certain signs, which then form an inclusion-exclusion device and work according to a dialectic of recognition. This is true in the geopolitical sphere, where "territory" indicates a jurisdictional and administrative unity;[3] in the embryological field, where "territory" defines a part of an embryo, which is composed of cells that stand out on the strength of their

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common properties, and finally even in ethological vocabulary, where "territory" indicates an area defended by individuals or groups of an animal species through the use of visual, chemical or acoustic signs.[4] Yet, according to the views expressed by Deleuze and Guattari and Canetti, this logical-semiotic structure, namely the marking of boundaries using signs with the resulting production of an inclusion-exclusion mechanism, coincides with that of subjectivity. Subjectivity represents the first and principal form of territory.[5]

In the *Abecedary*, Deleuze claims that "territory is the domain of the having" and that it "has to do with property" (Deleuze 2004). The territory of a subject is namely represented by the region of being that it owns, by the domain over which it literally has power, and by the space inside the borders that define its identity. So, if we consider "territory" as a semiotic structure which delimits identities, and we accept that the basic and fundamental form of identity is represented by the subjective identity, we can claim that subjectivity is the outcome of the creation of a territory: it is the result of a territorial production.

The first tendency connected with a territory is the resolution to maintain it, to defend its boundaries. The second tendency is, to expand those boundaries as soon as is possible.[6] The concept of territory, and thus of subjectivity, is therefore logically traversed both by a conservative self-preventing movement and by an aggressive expansive instinct, which as we shall see, relate it to the phenomenon of power.

In the opening lines of his 1960's book, *Crowds and Power*, which he explicitly considers as his most important work, Canetti writes that:

> [T]here is nothing that man fears more than the touch of the unknown. He wants to see what is reaching towards him, and to be able to recognize or at least classify it. Man always tends to avoid physical contact with anything strange (Canetti 1981, 15/13).

Then, he further states that, in relation to this fear and tendency, "we are dealing here with a human propensity as deep-seated as it is alert and insidious; something which never leaves a man when he has once established the *boundaries* [Grenzen] of his personality" (Canetti 1981, 15/14 italics added). A few pages later, Canetti notices: "A man stands by himself on a secure

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and well defined spot, his every gesture asserting his right to keep others at a distance" (Canetti 1981, 17/16). He then adds,

> [a]ll life, so far as he knows it, is laid out in distances–the house in which he shuts himself and his property, the positions he holds, the rank he desires–all these serve to create distances, to confirm and extend them (Canetti 1981, 18/16).

Twenty years later, in *A Thousand Plateaus*, written by Deleuze in "symbiosis" with Felix Guattari and considered by Deleuze himself as his most valuable work,[7] the authors write, with an evident affinity with the analyses conducted by Canetti, that

> [t]he territory is first of all the critical distance between two beings of the same species: Mark your distance. What is mine is first of all my distance; I possess only distances. Don't anybody touch me, I growl if anyone enters my territory, I put up placards (Deleuze, Guattari 1987, 319-320/393)

In this respect, they add, "it is a question of keeping at a distance the forces of chaos knocking at the door" (Deleuze, Guattari 1987, 320/393).

3. Territorial production and power effects

The production of a subject, insofar as it coincides with the making of a territory, entails both a conservative self-prevention and an aggressive expansive tendency. This is due to the fact that the subjectification process logically and necessarily generates power-effects.

In the perspectives expressed by Canetti and by the "philosophical pair" Deleuze and Guattari, the notion of power does not designate so much a fundamental notion of the modern political science but more a precise logical device.[8] As Philip Goodchild highlights, "[w]e may distinguish between two conceptions of power", as far as Deleuze is concerned, namely "a power of autoproduction, in which a relation causes itself, and a power of antiproduction, in which productive relations are prevented from forming" (Goodchild 1996, 73). To be more precise, these two distinctions do not represent two different sides of the same concept; indeed, they designate two clearly and absolutely separate concepts. Unfortunately, the English term "power" translates both the French words "puissance" and "pouvoir", which

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respectively correspond to the first (puissance) and second (pouvoir) meaning distinguished by Goodchild.[9] However, in the following pages, the English word "power" will always be used as a translation for the French term "pouvoir". This concept basically designates, with regard to both Deleuze and Canetti, a reduction process. This subjugates the phenomenical variety to an identity principle and, in this way, presides over what stands outside the subject's borders. So, first, one must defend one's own territory, maintaining its stable perimeter, and second, one must expand it when possible, incorporating new spaces so as to avoid the potential dangers and instability that could derive from outside factors, and also to assume an always increasing capability of control over whatever is different. In its fundamental scheme, power is the reduction of difference to identity, of plurality to unity, of otherness to selfness, of movement to stability. In the preface to the English edition of *Difference and Repetition*, Deleuze affirms that generally "[w]e tend to subordinate difference to identity in order to think it" and "[w]e also have a tendency to subordinate it to resemblance" (Deleuze 1994, XV) to what is already known to us, namely to what resides in our territory. Further, in the same book, he proceeds by asking himself: "On what condition is difference traced or projected on to a flat space? Precisely", he answers, "when it has been forced into a previously established identity, when it has been placed on the slope of the identical which makes it reflect or desire identity, and necessarily takes it where identity wants it to go" (Deleuze 1994, 51/73). In *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari write that "whenever we can identify a well-defined *segmented line"*, which we can associate with the frontiers of a territory, "we notice that it continues in another form, as a *quantum flow*" that we can instead relate to the unorganized multiplicity and to the undefined differences which lie beyond the limits of the territory. "And in every instance", they continue, "we can locate a 'power centre' at the border between the two, defined not by an absolute exercise of power within its domain but by the relative adaptations and conversions it effects between the line and the flow" (Deleuze, Guattari 1987, 217/264). So, power is a logical device, which converts a flow into a line, differences into identities, land into territories. Power is then something dynamic, an apparatus which constantly turns the nomadic "language" of difference into identity-making territorial codes. Accordingly, territory is the metastable organization of such codified fluxes. It is metastable, because of the constantly operative coding activity of power centres, on the one hand, and of the outer permanent pressures on its

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boundaries, on the other hand. A territory is therefore never definitively closed, but is always committed to a closing process, to an activity of reconversion.

Canetti focuses on the strong relationship between the phenomenon of power and paranoiac psychosis, defining the latter as the ruler's disease and therefore, insofar every subject represents a centre of power of something afflicting every personal subject, although at different levels. "It is difficult", he notes indeed in "Crowds and Power",

> to resist the suspicion that behind paranoia, as behind all power, lies the same profound urge: the desire to get other men out of the way so as to be the only one; or, in the milder, and indeed often admitted, form, to get others to help [one] *become* the only one (Canetti 1981, 462/549).

It is then clear why, according to Canetti, the basic and first form of power is the power of death, or at least the faculty to give death, and the survivor represents the archetypical model of power. Death represents both the highest expression and the extreme limit of the reduction process. Beyond death no further reduction is possible. The paranoiac is then the ruler and, to some extent, the personal subject, and

> may be defined as one who uses every means to keep danger away from his person. Instead of challenging and confronting it and abiding the issue of a fight which might go against him, he seeks by circumspection and cunning to block its approach to him. He creates empty space all round him which he can survey, and he observes and assesses every sign of approaching danger (Canetti 1981, 231/273).

The greatest danger is represented by death and death, in turn, is also the strongest weapon in order to create emptiness, to produce distances. These two aspects coexist in the figure of the survivor:

> The moment of survival is the moment of power. Horror at the sight of death turns into satisfaction that it is someone else who is dead. The dead man lies on the ground while the survivor stands. […] the essence of the situation is that he feels unique […] when we speak of the power which this moment gives him, we should never forget that it derives from his sense of uniqueness and from nothing else (Canetti 1981, 227/267).

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On the basis of these considerations, one can state that the phenomenon of power is something co-extensive with the subjectification process, it is something which always co-occurs with the creation of a territory and, accordingly, it is something all-pervasive and widespread. Hence, it is more appropriate to speak of powers and the effects of power rather than of Power, with a capital p.

This evidently links the reflections produced by Deleuze and Guattari and Canetti with the ones proposed by Michel Foucault in his analytics of power relations, even though they obviously do not coincide.[10] However, in a talk given in 1974 (after the publication of *Anti-Oedipus*, where Deleuze and Guattari aim to shift the focus of "political philosophy" away from the concept of power onto that of desire) during a conference in Milan and now published with the title *Two regimes of madness*, Deleuze asserts that "[t]oday, we're not asking what the nature of power is, but rather, along with Foucault, how power exerts itself, where it takes shape, and why it is everywhere" (Deleuze 2007, 11/11).[11] Foucault, for his part, frequently acknowledged, his well known proximity to Deleuze and, with regards to Canetti, he wrote this dedication on a copy of *The Order of Things*, which he sent to Canetti: "To Mister Canetti, to let him know what a pleasure it is for me to be his humble twin".[12]

So, territory is basically a semiotic structure – what Deleuze and Guattari call a "regime of signs" – and the reduction process of power is the logical tool through which a territory is established, preserved and expanded, therefore the regulating principle of the territory itself. It is then clear why one can define the analyses of powers produced by both Canetti and Deleuze and Guattari as semiotic and why, accordingly, the theme of language becomes, in this respect, of particular importance. Although the production of signs which mark a territory is not at all limited to linguistic formulations, as ethology, for instance, clearly reveals, it is however undeniable that language probably represents the most powerful semiotic system, and therefore one of the most efficient tools to create a territory. This is the reason why language plays a crucial role in the politics of subjectification. According to Canetti, language represents the main instrument to transmit power functions and to impose power relations. In this connection, he focuses in particular on the role of commands in their linguistic form. The original form of command is the flight-command. Flight is always, at

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least originally, a flight from death. In a power relation, he who has power is always the one that has the faculty to give death to others, to literally nullify them. In this sense, the command is always originally a flight command because it always reacts to a threat of death. Power at its core is always the threat of death and flight represents the only alternative to death.[13]

> The oldest command– and it is far older than man – is a death sentence, and it compels the victim to flee. We should remember this when we come to discuss human commands. Beneath all commands glints the harshness of the death sentence (Canetti 1981, 304/358).

Although command is always originally a death-command, it reveals itself mostly in a tamed and weakened form and relegates death to a final possibility. Death is the *extrema ratio*, the always delayed outcome of command.[14] The domestication of the command consists of a conversion of the threat of death into a promise of life. Those who have power waive the death of the enemies and become the only guarantors of their life. The enemy becomes submissive, a slave, a son, and totally dependent on the ruler's care.[15] As Canetti writes,

> … a master feeds his slave or his dog and a mother her child. A creature which is subject to another habitually receives its food only from that other. No-one but their master feeds slaves or dogs; no-one else is under any obligation to feed them and actually no-one else ought to feed them. (A child, of course, cannot feed itself and must cling to its mother's breast) (Canetti 1981, 307/362).

Canetti closely relates paranoiac psychosis, power and language: "Perhaps", he writes, "the most marked trend in paranoia is that towards a complete seizing of the world through words, as though language were a fist and the world lay in it" (Canetti 1981, 452/521). Language is indeed a strong instrument to define identities, to create dialectics of recognition and exclusion, to produce the "stranger", which is simply someone who does not understand the subject's language, namely its territorial code. The fortuitous biographical and linguistic "nomadism" of Canetti,[16] assumes then a clear and aware philosophical and political meaning: the refusal of a territorial code, even of a mother language, in order to try to avoid any possible identification, any kind of cultural stabilisation, which would inhibit the possibility of transformation. Moreover, he chooses German as his own literary language; this is the language of the Nazis, of the Enemy, in order to be able to achieve the highest

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possible degree of deterritorialisation: "The language of my intellect", he writes in *The Human Province*, "will remain German *because* I am Jewish" (Canetti 1985, 53/73, italics added).

For their part, Deleuze and Guattari consider language as one of the strongest vehicles to transmit a set of rules, to establish "the order of discourse", to produce territorial codes.[17] As Ronald Bogue summarizes, "[l]anguage is a mode of action that is fundamentally social, a coding that imposes power relations" (Bogue 2001, 81). It is in this sense that, according to Deleuze and Guattari

> [l]anguage is neither informational nor communicational. It is not the communication of information but something quite different: the transmission of order-words, either from one statement to another or within each statement, insofar as each statement accomplishes an act and the act is accomplished in the statement (Deleuze, Guattari 1987, 79/100).

Therefore, "it is impossible to define semantics, syntactics, or even phonematics as scientific zones of language independent of pragmatics […]; pragmatics becomes the presupposition behind all of the other dimensions and insinuates itself into everything" (Deleuze, Guattari 1987, 77-78/98). Indeed, using a language always implies the transferral of a semiotic order, its confirmation and justification: "A rule of grammar is a power marker before it is a syntactical marker" (Deleuze, Guattari 1987, 76/96).

On this point, Deleuze and Guattari explicitly refer to Canetti's analyses of command. "Following Canetti's suggestions", they write,

> we may begin from the following pragmatic situation: the order-word is a death sentence; it always implies a death sentence, even if it has been considerably softened, becoming symbolic, initiatory, temporary, etc. Order-words bring immediate death to those who receive the order, or potential death if they do not obey, or a death they must themselves inflict, take elsewhere. A father's orders to his son, "You will do this," "You will not do that," cannot be separated from the little death sentence the son experiences on a point of his person (Deleuze, Guattari 1987, 107/135).[18]

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Unlike Deleuze and Guattari, however, Canetti does not consider command or, as the other two authors call it, order word, as the essence of language. Canetti simply remarks that power reveals itself through commands and these come to light through language. Nevertheless, since power is, according to Canetti, something which pervades the entire social field through the structure of command, the link between command, power and language is very close.

4. Difference and Transformation: Nomadism

In the preface to the American edition of *Anti-Oedipus*, Michel Foucault claims that "[t]he individual is the product of power" and therefore "[w]hat is needed is to "de-individualize" (Deleuze, Guattari 2000, XIV) if we want to free ourselves from power. In a paper written in 1982, *Why study power? The Question of the Subject*, Foucault then writes that

> [m]aybe the target nowadays is not to discover what we are but to refuse what we are. We have to imagine and to build up what we could be to get rid of this kind of political "double bind," which is the simultaneous individualization and totalization of modern power structures […] We have to promote new forms of subjectivity through the refusal of this kind of individuality which has been imposed on us for several centuries (Foucault 1982, 785).

These words perfectly express the aim of the work of both Deleuze and Canetti, which basically consists in the production of a *new* form of subjectivity, a non-territorial subjectivity or, better still a deterritorialised subjectivity able to elude, or at least, to decrease the effects of power it would otherwise originate. This *new* form of subjectivity corresponds to what Deleuze calls "singularity" and it can be said to be based on the concept of difference, as far as Deleuze is concerned, and on the concept of "transformation" [Verwandlung], in the vocabulary of Canetti. It is therefore clear that the concepts of "difference" and "transformation" show a deep structural kinship, although the Canettian notion of transformation is fundamentally anthropological, while the notion of difference shows rather a logical-ontological nature; nevertheless the concept of transformation implies an ontology of pure difference such as the one offered by Deleuze.[19]

In *Difference and Repetition,* Deleuze maintains that "every time we find ourselves confronted or bound by a limitation or an opposition, we should ask what such a situation

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presupposes. It presupposes", he answers, "a swarm of differences, a pluralism of free, wild or untamed differences" (Deleuze 1994, 50/71). Hence, "[i]t is not difference which presupposes opposition but opposition which presupposes difference" (Deleuze 1994, 51/73). Every identity and every territory are secondary products, superstructures imposed on the anarchic and free heterogeneity of reality. Subjectivity in itself is a superstructure. When one marks the borders of a territory and defines the limits of one's own identity, one carves oneself a portion of being and, in this way, inevitably produces an inclusion-exclusion device, an inside-outside dialectic, in short, power effects. "It's too easy to be antifascist", write Deleuze and Guattari in *A Thousand Plateaus*, "and not even see the fascist inside you, the fascist you yourself sustain and nourish and cherish" (Deleuze, Guattari 1987, 215/262). The territorial identity subject is always, in some sense, a micro fascist,[20] but one must affirm, according to Deleuze and Guattari, that there is first a common Land and then territories, first a univocal being and then distributed identities, and being in itself, coincides with the pluralistic play of pure differences in constant becoming, where everything differs from everything, where everything is a singularity, a unique event. Singularity should then be a *new* form of subjectivity, namely a deterritorialised subjectivity built on the notion of difference rather than on the concept of identity.

Canetti, for his part, describes transformation as the deepest human capability. It consists basically in the process of becoming other, of changing form, of varying the borders of a territory and therefore of deconstructing identities. It is then clear why, according to Canetti, transformation logically contends with power, which is based on reductions and identifying processes, and why this latter often arises through prohibitions of transformation. "Power at its core and its apex despises transformation" (Canetti 1981, 206/241). "No hierarchy can be maintained without prohibitions which make it impossible for members of one class to feel equal or related to members of a higher class" (Canetti 1981, 380/450). When the transformation process is stopped, the product is what Canetti calls a "figure", that is "an entity which is not susceptible of further transformation and which manifests itself only after transformation has been completed. Its shape is clear and limited in every respect" (Canetti 1981, 373/442). In this sense, the territorial personal subject can therefore be seen as a figure.

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Yet, a big question seems to arise, endangering the train of thought so far considered. It actually seems not possible to be able to follow the Deleuzian concept of singularity without retreating to a complete schizophrenic indifferentiation; it also seems impossible to maintain the flux of transformation perpetually open. It is at this point that the issue of nomadism takes its fundamental role, and that the triad of territorialisation, deterritorialisation, reterritorialisation becomes essential. To this end, two assumptions must be admitted: 1. It is impossible to think of a form of subjectivity able to completely remove power effects, without retreating into a state of sterile indifferentiation (consider for example the question of the deterritorialising effects of alcohol and drugs or the Deleuzian analysis of Nietzsche's or Artaud's mental diseases).[21] 2. Singularity, as a form of subjectivity based on the logic of difference and on the capability of transformation, must be understood in terms of a living process, of a continuous practice, of a way of life. In his 1965 introduction to an anthology of Nietzschean texts, Deleuze writes accordingly that "modes of life [should] inspire ways of thinking" and "modes of thinking [should] create ways of living. Life activates thought, and thought in turn affirms life" (Deleuze 2001, 66). Singularity consists then in a double movement, a sort of "leaping in place", as Deleuze calls it in *The Logic of Sense*; as soon as it reaches a stable equilibrium it must open itself again to the processes of transformation, in order to break its limits and to restrain its production of power. Create a territory, step out of a territory, re-establish a territory, and yet refuse every kind of established belonging: in one word, nomadism. Singularity is this nomadic subjectivity; it is a subjectivity that has realized that the movement of deterritorialisation must be continuously reactivated, that the flux of transformations must always be turned on again as soon as a figure is accomplished, in order to escape those crystallizations which produce stable power configurations. "If the nomad can be called the Deterritorialised par excellence", claim Deleuze and Guattari in *A Thousand Plateaus*,

> it is precisely because there is no reterritorialisation afterward as with the migrant, or upon something else as with the sedentary […] With the nomad, on the contrary, it is deterritorialisation that constitutes the relation to the earth, to such a degree that the nomad reterritorialises on deterritorialisation itself. It is the earth that deterritorialises itself, in a way that provides the nomad with a territory. The land ceases to be land, tending to become simply ground or support (Deleuze, Guattari 1987, 381/473).

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Therefore, as Deleuze writes in *Difference and Repetition*, "nothing pertains or belongs to any person, but all persons are arrayed here and there in such a manner as to cover the largest possible space" (Deleuze 1994, 36/54). In the *Human Province*, Canetti notes that

> [m]otion is most likely a remedy for incipient paranoia. The intensity of this kind of confusion makes you static. You act as if a certain place were threatened, the place you're standing in, and you cannot leave this place no matter what. The overestimation of this random standing-place is often very ludicrous; the place can be worthless and wrong […] This kind of rootedness, which can become so dangerous, is often healed the moment one destroys the roots quickly and harshly (Canetti 1985, 59/81).

It is in this sense that, according to Canetti, "[n]ationalism cannot be overcome by internationalism, as many people have thought, for we speak languages. The answer is plurinationalism" (Canetti 1985, 57/79), that is the ability to transform oneself into any possible population, the awareness of the fictitious and secondary character of every supposed identity. It is for this reason that the "nomad" Jewish Canetti refuses to acknowledge every kind of fixed territorial belonging, of whatever nature it may be. That is also why he refuses to feel Jewish and powerfully rejects the Zionist cause. On the contrary, what concerns Canetti about Judaism is precisely its essential diasporic nature, its fundamental de-territorialised character, and not its potential reterritorialisation in a supposed promised land. In a well-known note of 1944 Canetti writes:

> The greatest intellectual temptation in my life, the only one I have to fight very hard against is: to be a total Jew […] I scorned my friends for tearing loose from the enticements of many nations and blindly becoming Jews again, simply Jews […] The new dead, those dead long before their time, plead with one, and who has the heart to say no to them? But aren't the new dead everywhere, on all sides, in every nation? […] Should I distance myself from the Russian, because there are Jews, from the Chinese, because they are far off, from the German, because they are possessed by the devil? Can I not further on belong to all of them, as before, and still be a Jew? (Canetti 1985, 51/71).

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5. Political Nomadism

There are some important political consequences and significant problems that arise from this philosophical nomadism, although it is indeed extremely complicated to distinguish and isolate a strictly political domain within the work of Deleuze and Canetti.[22] Anyway, this sentence of Deleuze could maybe function as a general programmatic premise and, in one sense, as a declaration of intent, as far as politics is concerned: "There is no general prescription", he claims, "[w]e have done with all globalizing concepts" (Deleuze 1987, 144/173).

First of all, the philosophical nomadism of Deleuze and Guattari and Canetti implies a constant work on subjectivity and a deterritorialising practice towards personal identity, which again linked these perspectives with Foucault and, particularly, with the late Foucaultian analyses on the self-technologies and on the care of the self; this deterritorialising practice should finally produce a new form of subjectivity able to handle and to reduce the potential power effects it could otherwise involve.[23]

"Freedom", writes Canetti in *The Human Province*, "[…] is a freedom to *let go*, a giving up of power" (Canetti 1985, 127/142). This implies, in the first place, the search for and the creation of the conditions of possibility for escaping the mechanisms of power, for becoming, somehow, "slimy" and smooth, and therefore able to slip out of the grip of powers as much as is possible. This is, in a sense, a negative and reactive way, because it consists, basically, in finding, from time to time, an effective escape strategy, the right "line of flight" in the face of the different "apparatuses of capture". Indeed, "[C]anetti understands liberation only as an exodus, a lateral escape, a journey towards an indeterminate place, towards an unnamed land" (Marramao 2008, 49 my translation).

However, it is essential to point out that this escape is not merely passive; on the contrary, it also involves an active creation of lines of flight, a production of new spaces, possibilities and alternative territories and entails the cutting on the "sticky" surface of the majoritarian

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semiotic orders and the creation of new semiotic configurations, which, in turn, must obviously not be absolutised.

Moreover, this view entails a refusal of every identitary political structure, of every territorialised form of political action, such as those represented by institutional parties or factions. These are inclined to stop the transformation fluxes and the various processes of becoming, and tend then to ossify in identitary configurations, which have a propensity for reconverting transformation energy into power stabilisation. As Paul Patton observes, Deleuze and Guattari "are less interested in the capture of state power than in the qualitative changes in individual and collective identities that occur alongside or beneath the public political domain" (Patton 2010, 138).[24] It is in this respect that Deleuze and Guattari introduce the dichotomy "molar/molecular": "molar" concerns, namely, well-defined identities, territories with clear boundaries, stable institutions, whereas "molecular" refers to variable differences, metamorphic processes, deterritorialising movements and unstable configurations. "Molar entities", Adrian Parr writes, "belong to the State or the civic World. They are well defined, often massive, and are affiliated with a governing apparatus. Their molecular counterparts are micro-entities, politics that transpire in areas where they are rarely perceived" (Parr 2005, 172). The opposition between "molar" and "molecular" is not, then, a quantitative one, but is rather qualitative: "molar" implies time permanence, survival (which, not by chance, is considered by Canetti as one of the main features of the phenomenon of power) and conservation of an invariable identity, whereas "molecular" indicates a process, coincides with the metamorphic becoming of differences and therefore implies always a certain degree of movement. In this sense, "molar" refers to powers, states, political parties, institutions, interest groups, while "molecular" pertains to those movements which deconstruct and deterritorialise the molar and territorial configurations. According to Deleuze and Guattari, for instance, May '68 was, without a doubt, a molecular event: "May 68 was an explosion of such a molecular line, an irruption of the Amazons, a frontier which traced its unexpected line, drawing along the segments like torn-off blocks which have lost their bearings" (Deleuze, Parnet 1987, 132/159).[25]

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Deleuze and Guattari and Canetti think politics in terms of possibility of creation, of a field of action for singularities, for nomadic and molecular subjectivities. It is for this reason that, according to Canetti, crowds and mass movements, insofar as they are molar, cannot represent an effective alternative to power and powers. This because, as molar structures, by the time they fight a power apparatus, they have already induced a new production of power effects.[26]

However, since "there are no general prescriptions" and no definitive liberation from powers is thinkable, the opposition between "molar" and "molecular" could not be a close one. In other words, it is impossible to break the circle formed by the triad of territorialisation-deterritorialisation-reterritorialisation: just as no absolute deterritorialisation is indeed possible, so no absolute territorialisation is possible. On the contrary, every movement of deterritorialisation presupposes a territory to deterritorialise and produces, in turn, a new territory. What is important is, as far as possible, to keep the deterritorialisation movements open and the possibility of the line of flight. It is in this sense that Deleuze speaks of the danger of the molecular and considers prudence as one of the fundamental dimensions of politics.[27] The danger is namely to absolutise the line of flight one has chosen and so to block movement and the becoming processes: Indeed, if we do so,

> [w]e have left behind the shores of rigid segmentarity, but we have entered a regime which is no less organized where each embeds himself in his own black hole and becomes dangerous in that hole, with a self-assurance about his own case, his role and his mission, which is even more disturbing than the certainties of the first line: the Stalins of little groups, local law-givers, micro-fascism of gangs (Deleuze, Parnet 1987, 138-139/167-168).

"In this respect", as François Zourabichvili notes, "Bartleby is the emblematic character of the Deleuzian Politics: the Resistant par excellence" (Zourabichvili 1998, 349 my translation). Bartleby is the main character of a very famous short story of the American writer Hermann Melville, namely *Bartleby, the Scrivener: A Story of Wall Street*. Bartleby is a scrivener, who one day suddenly decides to decline every single request of his superior. Bartleby's famous formula: "I would prefer not to" (Melville 1987, 13-47), represents the most extreme expression of the refusal of every order-word, of every command and it embodies the line of

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flight carved within the language itself. Bartleby literally escapes the semiotic set of rules instilled by language and the power effects it involves; not only does he refuse to fulfil the order, the command, but he also destroys the condition of possibility of the order itself. As Jacques Rancière observes, Bartleby's formula is:

> the mechanical that disorganizes life, a particular life. The formula erodes the attorney's reasonable organization of work and life. It shatters not just the hierarchies of a world but also what supports them: the connections between the causes and effects we expect from that world, between the behaviours and motives we attribute to them and the means we have to modify them. The formula leads the causal world that rules what we'll call, in Schopenhaurian terms, the world of representation, to its catastrophe (Rancière 2004, 146-147/180).

Bartleby does not choose to simply disobey, he chooses not to choose, he chooses to ignore both the order and its logic.[28]

> The formula is devastating because it eliminates the preferable just as mercilessly as any nonpreferred. It not only abolishes the term it refers to, and that it rejects, but also abolishes the other term it seems to preserve, ant that becomes impossible (Deleuze 1997, 71/92).

In this way, Bartleby not only takes position against the order – this would indeed imply a mutual identification between those who express the order and those who obey, a sort of master-slave dialectic – but he also becomes completely impermeable to the order itself, because Bartleby simply does not lie in the place he is expected to be, he is not subjected to the territorialisation and semiotic coding produced by language: he is a nomad of language, a deterritorialised subject, a singularity.[29] In this sense, we can consider the Deleuzian analysis of the figure of Bartleby as a reply to what Canetti writes in the epilogue of *Crowds and power*, significantly entitled "The End of the Survivor". "The system of commands", he claims, "is acknowledged everywhere […] If we would master power we must face command openly and boldly, and search for means to deprive it of its sting" (Canetti 1981, 470/559). "[T]he 'free' man", writes Canetti in another passage of his 1960's book, "is not the man who rids himself of commands after he has received them, but", like Bartleby, "the man who knows how to evade them in the first place" (Canetti 1981, 306/361), the man who knows

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how to depart from the logic of power and from the system of commands and order-words it involves.

"Bartleby is the man without references", writes Deleuze, "without possessions, without properties, without qualities, without particularities: he is too smooth for anyone to be able to hang any particularity. Without past or future, he is instantaneous" (Deleuze 1997, 74/96). Bartleby is the man without territory, the one who escapes and, at the same time, the one who creates a line of flight, the one who, inasmuch as he is impermeable to the logic of power, is free and is able to free. "[E]ven in his catatonic or anorexic state, Bartleby is not the patient, but the doctor of a sick America, the *Medicine-Man*, the new Christ or the brother to us all" (Deleuze 1997, 90/114). In this respect, there is an important difference between the Foucaultian paradigm of resistance and the paradigm of creation proposed by Deleuze and Guattari and — in a different way — by Canetti.[30] According to Deleuze and Guattari, lines of flight are not "phenomena of resistance or counterattack" but "cutting edges of creation and deterritorialization" (Deleuze, Guattari 1987, 531/175-176). Canetti, as already seen, "understands" for his part "liberation only as an exodus, a lateral escape, a journey towards an indeterminate place, towards an unnamed land" (Marramao 2008, 49). "In Foucault, on the other hand", as Thoburn remarks, "because *dispositifs* of power are primary, and there appears to be no equivalent of the line of flight in his work, politics can only be a 'resistance' to power" (Thoburn 2003, 42).[31] As far as Deleuze and Guattari as well as Canetti are concerned, it is not a question of developing strategies for opposing and fighting powers but, instead, "it is a question of creativity, of the arising of thought within oneself: the inventions of new modes of existence, new possibility of life" (Goodchild 1996, 134). It is for this reason that the figure of Bartleby represents the "emblematic character of Deleuzian politics", whereas it could not be regarded as the emblem of Foucaultian politics. Bartleby is the "Resistant par excellence" precisely because he does not resist, he does not oppose power, but he simply ignores its logic and produces a new regime of signs, a new way of life, a new kind of subjectivity.[32]

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It is only in his already mentioned later books that, according to Deleuze, Foucault abandons the paradigm of resistance and adopts a paradigm of creation, focusing on the production of new forms of subjectivity.[33]

5. Conclusion

In this paper I have tried to show the close affinity between the philosophical and political implications of the works of Deleuze and Canetti. Indeed, by way of a criticism of the idea of individual and "territorial" subject, both Deleuze and Canetti try to shape a new model of subjectivity based on the concepts of difference (Deleuze) and transformation (Canetti), namely a deterritorialised and nomadic subjectivity able to "jam" the mechanism of power.

The greatest problem is then to think how to politically and practically organize a form of effective action based on this new form of subjectivity, which is thought of as a common space, as a common "land", in opposition to the enclosed territories of identity; an action which should not be structured as a molar and hierarchic institutional action but rather as a network of fluid deterritorialising movements. It is then a question of giving an effective and operative political form to what Foucault calls, in the introduction to *Anti-Oedipus*, essential principles of a free everyday life and that are, among others, the following:

> Free political action from all unitary and totalizing paranoia […] Prefer what is positive and multiple, difference over uniformity, flows over unities, mobile arrangements over systems. Believe that what is productive is not sedentary but nomadic […] The group must not be the organic bond uniting hierarchized individuals, but a constant generator of de-individualisation,

and above all, "[d]o not become enamoured of power" (Deleuze, Guattari 2000, XIII-XIV) which ultimately means, do not become enamoured of yourself.

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NOTES

[1] In all the quotations, the second page number refers to the non-English, original edition.

[2] As Bernhard Waldenfels notes, "[t]hings are what they are by separating themselves from other things – such as stones, plants, animals or human beings, as natural or artificial things" (Waldenfels 2005, 71/23).

[3] "Modern political theory tends to understand geography entirely as territorial: the world is divided up into contiguous spatial units with the territorial state as the basic building block from which other territorial units (such as alliances, spheres of influence, and empires) derive or develop" (Cox, Low, Robinson 2008, 100).

[4] "The broadest and perhaps still the best definition of "territory" in animal behaviour is "any defended area" […] Most commonly a territory is an area of more or less fixed boundaries from which the individual or individuals in possession exclude all rival conspecifics, or at least attempt to do so, by means of territorial advertisement (vocalizations, chemical signals), threat, and, if necessary, territorial fighting […] Territorial exclusion may apply only to conspecifics of the same sex (with the possible exception of same-sex offspring), but in some cases the exclusion includes all conspecifics and may even extend to members of other species" (Immelmann, Beer 1989, 310).

[5] In contrast with the ethological concept of territory, the concept of territory used here also includes the ethological notion of "individual distance", which in the ethological vocabulary is instead defined as the following: "Individual distance is distinguished from territory in that it has no reference to anything, stationary or moving, apart from the animal's own body" (Immelmann, Beer 1989, 310-311).

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[6] "Territoriality always has two features: blocks of rigidly bordered space and domination or control as the modality of power upon which the bordering relies". (Cox, Low, Robinson 2008, 101).

[7] In issue 1619 of *Le Nouvel Observateur*, among other by that time unreleased confidences, one can read the following words about *Mille Plateaux*: "This book is the best book we, Felix and I, wrote together. And this is the best book I ever wrote. Yes, I can state that it is certainly the best book I have written" (My translation).

[8] "Gilles Deleuze does not conform to the standard image of a political philosopher. He has not written about Machiavelli, Hobbes, Locke or Rousseau and when he has written on philosophers who rate as political thinkers, such as Spinoza or Kant, he has not engaged with their political writings [...] Despite his lack of engagement with issues of normative political theory, Deleuze is a profoundly political philosopher" (Patton 2000, 1).

[9] This difference is common in the Roman languages. See, for instance, the Italian distinction between "potere" (pouvoir) and "potenza" (puissance), or the Spanish one between "poder" (pouvoir) and "potencia" (puissance).

[10] In an important footnote of *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari express at the same time their closeness and their distance to Foucault: "Our *only* points of disagreement with Foucault are the following: (1) to us the assemblages seem fundamentally to be assemblages not of power but of desire (desire is always assembled), and power seems to be a stratified dimension of the assemblage; (2) the diagram and abstract machine have lines of flight that are primary, which are not phenomena of resistance or counterattack in an assemblage, but cutting edges of creation and deterritorialization" (Deleuze, Guattari 1987, 531/175-176 italics added). For Deleuze's differences from Foucault see the contribution of Krause and Rölli in Buchanan, Thoburn 2008; Grace 2009; Hallward 2000.

[11]In a conversation with Catherine Backes-Clement, dated 1972 but also subsequent to the publication of the *Anti-Oedipus*, Deleuze claims with reference to Foucault: "our method's not the same, but we seem to meet him on all sorts of points that seem basic, on paths he's already mapped out" (Deleuze 1995, 22/36). According to Goodchild, "[t]he extent of their mutual influence [of Deleuze and Foucault] is immense and difficult to disentangle" (Goodchild 1996, 131). For a precise and detailed reconstruction of the problematic and ambiguous relationship between Deleuze and Foucault see Dosse 2010.

[12] I could personally find and read this dedication during a visit to Canetti's personal library, which is now conserved at the *Zentralbibliothek Zürich,* the central library of the city of Zurich. The original dedication in French, is the following: "Pour monsieur Elias Canetti, pour lui dire mon plaisir d'être son humble jumeau".

[13] "The flight-command, which contains a threat of death, presupposes a great difference in power between the protagonists: the one who puts the other to flight could kill him" (Canetti 1981, 307/362).

[14] "The command as we know it, has developed a long way from its biological origins; it has, as it were, been domesticated. It is part of our general social structure and also of all the more intimate human relationships; it is as important to the family as to the state. It usually looks quite different from what we described as the flight-command" (Canetti 1981, 307/362).

[15] With regard to this, Canetti's argument seems to be very close to what Foucault claims with reference to what he calls "pastoral power". See Foucault 2009, 72/130-131: "However, pastoral power is, I think, entirely defined by its beneficence; its only raison d'être is doing good, and in order to do good. In fact the essential objective of pastoral power is the salvation (salut) of the flock [...] Salvation is first of all essentially subsistence. The means of subsistence provided, the food assured, is good pasture. The shepherd is someone who feeds and who feeds directly, or at any rate, he is someone who feeds the flock first by leading it to good pastures, and then by making sure that the animals eat and are properly fed. Pastoral power is a power of care. It looks after the flock, it looks after the individuals of the flock, it sees to it that the sheep do not suffer, it goes in search of those that have strayed of course, and it treats those that are injured".

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[16]"Already at biographical-anecdotic level, Canetti's life is the opposite of what can be included in territorial boundaries. During his life he had two passports: one Turkish and one British. However, in 1981, the Nobel Prize was assigned to Canetti as an "Austrian author", although he never was an Austrian citizen and during his long life he lived in Vienna for only 17 years (1913-1916; 1924-1938), until he was expelled. On the occasion of the unexpected awarding of the Nobel Prize, in 1981, though, at least seven states felt that this concerned them and felt, more or less, honoured: England, Germany, Austria, Switzerland, Bulgaria, Spain, Israel and, probably, Turkey. A French critic resorted to this formulation: "M. Canetti, Espagnol juif allemand de Londres à la sauce bulgare, I presume?" (Stieg 2002, 174 my translation).

[17] "It seems, then, that it is precisely the following that DG [Deleuze and Guattari] mean, when they speak of the "order-word" and identify the political matrix of every language practice, understood as order-word, in the enunciation itself: the sovereignty, one is tempted to say, as the transcendental condition of the production of every speech-act" (Rametta 2012, 159 my translation). I have also addressed some of these issues in Author: 2012a.

[18]In a footnote Deleuze and Guattari notice that "Elias Canetti is one of the rare authors who has dealt with the psychological mode of action of the order-word, or "command"" and that "In this respect, Canetti's analysis seems essential" (Deleuze, Guattari 1987, 525/107-108).

[19] For a more detailed comparison between the notions of "difference" and "transformation", see Author: 2012b.

[20] It is not by chance that, according to Buchanan, the "primary objective [of *Anti-Oedipus*] was (as Michel Foucault astutely points out in his highly influential preface to the English translation) to caution us against the fascist inside, the desire to seize power for oneself" (Buchanan, Thoburn 2008, 14).

[21] See Deleuze 2004, 179/184: "Each one risked something and went as far as possible in taking this risk; each one drew from it an irrepressible right. What is left for the abstract thinker once she has given advice of wisdom and distinction? Well then, are we to speak always about Bousquet's wound, about Fitzgerald's and Lowry's alcoholism, Nietzsche's and Artaud's madness while remaining on the shore? Are we to become the professionals who give talks on these topics? Are we to wish only that those who have been struck down do not abuse themselves too much? Are we take to up collections and create special journal issues*? Or should we go a short way further to see for ourselves, be a little alcoholic, a little crazy, a little suicidal, a little of a guerrilla – just enough to extend the crack, but not enough to deepen it irremediably?"* (italics added). See also Deleuze 2004, 182-183/189: "We cannot give up the hope that the effects of drugs and alcohol (their "revelations") will be able to be relived and recovered for their own sake at the surface of the world, independently of the use of those substances".

[22] See Deleuze 2007, 180/166: "That's why it feels like we're doing politics even when we're discussing music, trees, or faces". See also Buchanan, Thoburn 2008, 6-7: "it would be a mistake to reduce Deleuze's political thought to a circumscribed 'Deleuzian politics' or to the elaboration of a particular political practice, agent or subject" and Rametta 2012, 165: "it would be fanciful, as well as philologically untenable, to separate a Deleuzian 'political philosophy' from the fundamental theoretical framework (I would be tempted to say ontological) which presides over it" (my translation). As far as Canetti is concerned, see Esposito 1988, 176: "If there is an author who interprets politically every segment of the psychological, anthropological and social reality, it is certainly Canetti" (my translation).

[23] "In this as in other respects, Deleuze's conception of the political task of philosophy is close to that of Foucault, who describes the aim of his genealogical criticism as the identification of limits to present ways of thinking, acting, and speaking to find points of difference or exit from the past" (Patton 2010, 160).

[24] On the same page, Patton also reminds us that "[t]heir rejection of the organizational and tactical forms of traditional Marxist politics is definitively expressed at the end of *Dialogues* when Deleuze and Parnet abandon the goal of revolutionary capture of State power in favour of *revolutionary becoming* […] This new concept

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encompasses the multitude of ways in which individuals and groups deviate from the majoritarian norms that ultimately determine the rights and duties of citizens".

[25]Although in smaller measure, the Prison Information Group (GIP) created by Foucault with Deleuze at his side was also, according to Deleuze, an example of a form of de-territorialised and molecular political action. See Dosse 2010, 310/369: "As a form of organization, it immediately appealed to Deleuze for its practical and effective resistance and because it broke with all forms of centralized bureaucratic machinery, defining itself instead as a microstructure. 'The GIP developed one of the only left-wing groups that worked without being centralized. … Foucault knew how not to behave like the boss'".

[26]In the vocabulary of Deleuze and Guattari, at least as far as *A Thousand Plateaus* is concerned, "mass" indicates a molecular element. However, the notion of "mass" adopted in *A Thousand Plateaus* does not coincide with that employed in *Crowds and Power*, where "mass" and "crowd" are synonymous. I think that this is proved by the following clarification that Deleuze and Guattari, significantly, feel compelled to offer: "understood in this way, the notion of mass has entirely different connotations than Canetti's 'crowd'" (Deleuze, Guattari 1987, 217/260).

[27] "The prudence with which we must manipulate that line [the segmentary line, that is the territorialising vector], the precautions we must take to soften it, to suspend it, to divert it, to undermine it, testify to a long labour which is not merely aimed against the State and the powers that be, but directly at ourselves" (Deleuze, Parnet, 1987, 132/166).

[28] See also Waldenfels 1994, 587-588: "No sign of rebellion, to which a petioner or a commander could hang on to, nothing else but a smooth wall of rejection […] The answer is given with one hand only in order to be taken back with another. The addressed refuses literally to listen to reason. The message comes back as a returned letter: the addressee is not willing to respond" (my translation) and Agamben 1999, 270: "Bartleby is a "law-copyist, a scribe in the evangelical sense of the term, and his renunciation of copying is also a reference to the Law, a liberation from the 'oldness of the letter' […] And Bartleby comes not to bring a new table of the Law but, as in the Cabalistic speculations on the messianic kingdom, to fulfil the Torah by destroying it from top to bottom".

[29] "If Bartleby had refused, he could still be seen as a rebel or insurrectionary, and as such would still have a social role. But the formula stymies all speech acts, and at the same time, it makes Bartleby a pure outsider [*exclu*] to whom no social position can be attributed" (Deleuze 1997, 73/95).

[30] However, as Nicholas Thoburn notes, "[t]he great resonance between Deleuze's and Foucault's work […] is such that it would be a stupid move indeed to pose this question in terms of a serious disjunction. It is much better to think of it as a productive differential in their relation, as the fact of Deleuze's not infrequent return to the subject conveys" (Thoburn, 2003, 41-42).

[31] Thoburn 2003, 42. See also Goodchild 1996, 134: "In Foucault's ontology, the only possible basis for relation is hostility and resistance".

[32] "Thus *Bartleby* is not the story of the quirks and misfortunes of a poor clerk. Nor is it a symbol for the human condition. It is a formula, a performance " (Rancière 2004, 146/179).

[33] See Thoburn 2003, 43: "[…] for Deleuze 'resistance' is a bad model of politics, and ultimately one that Foucault himself overcomes".

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