

# Inside out

## Guattari's *Anti-Oedipus Papers*

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Félix Guattari met Gilles Deleuze in Paris shortly after the events of May 1968, through a mutual friend. Over the next twenty-five years, he would co-author five books with Deleuze, including, most famously, the two volumes of *Capitalism and Schizophrenia – Anti-Oedipus* (1972) and *A Thousand Plateaus* (1981). Their collaboration, a kind of French version of Marx and Engels, sparked enormous interest and curiosity: what had led them to undertake their joint labour? How exactly did they work and write together? In 1972, Guattari had not yet written a book of his own; his first book, *Psychoanalysis and Transversality*, would be published shortly after *Anti-Oedipus*, with an introductory essay by Deleuze. Deleuze, by contrast, was already a well-known figure in French philosophy and the author of ten influential works, including the landmark *Nietzsche and Philosophy* (1962) and his magnum opus *Difference and Repetition* (1968). The nature of Guattari's influence on Deleuze, in particular, is still the object of debate. Was Guattari a bad influence, transforming the good Deleuze-as-philosopher (the solo Deleuze – dry and even dull, but rigorous and scholarly) into the bad and crazy Deleuze-as-desiring machine (the Deleuze of the D&G writing machine – irreverent and flamboyant, but philosophically suspect)? Or was it Guattari who compelled an aloof or even 'elitist' Deleuze to go beyond his natural metaphysical tendencies and confront social and political issues directly? There remain, to this day, partisans on both sides of the issue.

The publication of Guattari's *Anti-Oedipus Papers*<sup>1</sup> has opened up a new window on the Deleuze–Guattari collaboration. Editor Stéphane Nadaud – who provides a helpful introductory essay – has here gathered together the Guattari manuscripts that are archived at the Institut Mémoires de l'Édition Contemporaine (IMEC) at the Abbaye d'Ardenne. The papers were

written between 1969 and 1972, addressed to Deleuze, and they constitute the basis for much of the material in *Anti-Oedipus* (a few of the papers were written after the publication of *Anti-Oedipus* in March of 1972, and anticipate *A Thousand Plateaus*). The manuscripts were never meant to be published in their own right, and no doubt some will question their significance, much as the value of Nietzsche's vast *Nachlass* has been disputed. Authors are indeed assessed by their fruits, not their roots. Yet there is new and informative material here, at least for readers with the patience to toil through Guattari's jottings. The papers, as one might expect, vary widely in style, content and tone, ranging from fairly developed theoretical proposals to scattered notes on diverse topics to early chapter outlines for *A Thousand Plateaus*. Several texts are little more than notes on books Guattari was reading, including Leroi-Gourhan's *Milieu et techniques*, Jean-Toussaint Desanti's *Les Idéalités mathématiques*, as well as Deleuze's own book on Spinoza, *Expressionism in Philosophy*, which Guattari had evidently not read prior to their collaboration. The final section of the book includes entries from a 1971–72 journal that Guattari was apparently encouraged to write at the suggestion of Deleuze and his wife Fanny. Not surprisingly, it includes the most personal and gossipy passages of the volume, recording the ups and downs of Guattari's relations with his girlfriends, patients and colleagues.

Kéline Gotman is to be commended for having produced a fluid and readable translation, making these texts easily accessible to English-speaking readers. The volume, however, is not without its editorial quirks. Strangely, Nadaud decided not to publish the papers in their chronological order (though some texts are dated by Guattari himself), but instead has organized the texts around six thematic sections of his own choosing.

\* Félix Guattari, *The Anti-Oedipus Papers*, ed. Stéphane Nadaud, trans. Kéline Gotman, Semiotext(e), New York, 2006. 384 pp., £11.95 pb., 1 584 35031 8.

Moreover, although Nadaud notes that almost all of Guattari's texts 'were annotated by Deleuze', the footnotes only cite slightly more than twenty such annotations, many of which say little more than 'underlined by Deleuze'. Obviously, Deleuze's annotations were more extensive than that: at one point, for example, Nadaud indicates that Guattari's text 'is followed by two pages written by Deleuze on the infinitive'. Yet none of these more substantial responses by Deleuze is included in the volume. Both decisions are regrettable – Nadaud says he wanted to publish the texts in their 'pure' form – since they make it difficult to follow the development of Guattari's own thinking or to get a sense of the creative give-and-take that took place between him and Deleuze. A well-constructed index would have made it easier for the reader to trace out various themes in these inevitably ad hoc texts. Nonetheless, we should be grateful to Nadaud for having undertaken the editorial work required to make these papers available in published form. Readers, depending on their interests, will find many paths to follow (and construct) through these texts; I will highlight a few of them.

### **Amis, pas copains**

'It is easier to follow the thread of a good author', wrote Leibniz in the preface to his great book on Locke, the *New Essays*, 'than to do everything by one's own efforts.' Such might have been Deleuze's motto as well. He famously found it difficult to write 'in his own name', and his usual modus operandi was to enter into a 'becoming' with the authors on whom he was writing (Spinoza, Leibniz, Kant, Nietzsche, Bergson), creating a kind of zone of indetermination between himself and them. His collaboration with Guattari seems to have functioned in exactly the same manner, albeit, of course, with a living author. 'At the beginning of our relation, it was Félix who sought me out', Deleuze recalled in a 1991 interview. 'I didn't know him.... My encounter with Félix took place around questions concerning psychoanalysis and the unconscious. Félix brought me a kind of new field, he made me discover a new domain, even if I had spoken of psychoanalysis beforehand.' 'It was me who sought him out', confirmed Guattari, 'but in a second period, it was he who suggested we work together.... I had been very impressed by the reading of *Difference and Repetition* and *Logic of Sense*.... He was struck by my marked dissidence in relation to Lacanianism, which was already dominant, and by my way of approaching political and social problems' (Robert Maggiori, 'Secret de fabrication: Deleuze–Guattari,

Nous Deux', *Libération*, 12 September 1991). Deleuze would later confirm that he 'made a sort of move into politics around May '68, as I came into contact with specific problems, through Guattari, though Foucault, through Elie Sambar' (Deleuze, *Negotiations* [1995], p. 170. Elie Sambar was the editor of the *Revue des études palestiniennes*). Prior to his meeting Deleuze, Guattari's work had been dispersed primarily in four different areas: his involvement in leftist activism, his co-directorship of the La Borde Clinic (with Jean Oury), his attendance at Jacques Lacan's seminars, and his psychotherapeutic work with schizophrenics. For his part, he later explained, 'I felt a need, not to integrate, but to make some connections between these four ways I was living, I had some reference points ... but I didn't have the logic I needed to make the connections' (*Negotiations*, p. 15).

Deleuze and Guattari spoke freely about the working method that they worked out between themselves, or what they called their 'writing machine'. Initially they wrote letters, then had face-to-face meetings, and finally sent manuscripts back and forth, with constant corrections and revisions. Their collaboration was a working relationship, not a social one: they were friends (*amis*), but not buddies (*copains*), and continued to refer to each other with the formal *vous* rather than the familiar *tu*. One of the revelations of *The Anti-Oedipus Papers* is the important role that Deleuze's wife Fanny played in the writing process, serving as both a go-between and an amanuensis, typing up Guattari's notes and funnelling the manuscripts between the two authors. Guattari speaks often of his affection for her – 'I'm supported by someone who types, corrects, reads' – but also of 'her demanding nature'. Despite the definition of philosophy given in *What is Philosophy?*, Guattari did not always seem to conceive of his work as the production of concepts. 'His ideas are like drawings, or even diagrams' rather than concepts, Deleuze noted elsewhere. 'From my perspective, Félix had these brainstorm, and I was like a lightning rod. Whatever I grounded would leap up again, changed, and then Félix would start again' (Deleuze, *Two Regimes of Madness: Texts and Interviews 1975–1995* [2006], p. 238). Brainstorms harnessed by a lightning rod: such seemed to be the nature of the collaboration, with Deleuze functioning as a conceptual apparatus of capture in relation to Guattari's diagrammatic war-machine. In the end, it was Deleuze who 'finalized' the text of *Anti-Oedipus*, although they both conceived of the ultimate result of their work as a truly 'collective assemblage of enunciation'.

What *The Anti-Oedipus Papers* confirm is the degree to which their ‘writing machine’ functioned, as they themselves liked to say, only on the condition of constantly breaking down. ‘Félix sees writing as a schizoid-flow drawing in all sort of things’ (*Negotiations*, p. 6), Deleuze said, and these texts now allow us to see Guattari’s schizoid writing-flow in its raw state, as it were, in comparison to which the text of *Anti-Oedipus* seems to be a paragon of organization and systematicity. For his part, Guattari frequently bemoans the fact that his writing is a ‘mess’: ‘I want to make an outline this time, but I can tell that it’s going to be a mess again!’ ‘Everything I do is a mess.’ ‘Same mess all over again. I’m so jealous of your ability to organize and classify things.’ Yet, in one of the more revealing passages of the volume, Guattari reacts against this predilection on Deleuze’s part to organize and classify, to conceptualize: ‘He works a lot.... He always has the *œuvre* in mind. And for him this is all just notes, raw material that disappears into the final assemblage. That’s how I feel a bit overcoded by *Anti-Oedipus*.’ Indeed, it would seem that for Guattari – and for many of his fans in the blogosphere – what counted the most was the mess itself, the schizo-flow:

Writing to Gilles is good when it enters into the finality of the common project. But for me, what matters, really, is not that. *The energy source is in the mess*. The ideas come after.... What I feel like is just fucking around.... Barf out the fucking-around-o-maniacal schizo flow. (emphasis added)

Nowhere do the divergent styles of these two unlikely co-authors appear more clearly: for Deleuze, the importance of the work lay in the ideas, the concepts; whereas ‘the continuous–discontinuous text flow that guarantees my continuance’, Guattari complains, ‘obviously he doesn’t see it like that. Or he does, but he’s not interested’. After *Anti-Oedipus* is published, Guattari makes a note to himself on how to keep the writing machine going:

I don’t really recognize myself in A.O. I need to stop running behind the image of Gilles and the polishedness, the perfection that he brought to the most unlikely book.... Digest A.O. Liberate myself from it. It’s the necessary precondition for writing the rest.

Indeed, throughout the papers, Guattari expresses his ambivalence and even insecurity about the entire collaboration. On the one hand, the work helped him disengage himself ‘from twenty years of Lacano-Labordian comfort.... At La Borde, I have status, I have my role to play.’ On the other hand, he regrets

being thrust into a new and unwelcome public role, and the breaks his writing may introduce into his life. ‘Both books are finished’, he writes in November 1971.

Which fascinates and irritates me. I will have to account for them. I will have to say things, answer questions. Things will be thought about them, and positions taken. What a pain! There will be consequences. I feel like scrunching myself up into a little ball, becoming tiny, putting an end to this whole politics of presence and prestige. Stay in a corner with little things that don’t interest anyone. To such an extent that I almost blame Gilles for having dragged me into this mess.... Now everything is inscribed: something irreversible with Lacan, and maybe with Oury and even La Borde.

Yet what *The Anti-Oedipus Papers* also makes clear is how productive these tensions became at the conceptual level. Although Deleuze declared that ‘neither of us assigns a paternity to concepts’, both he and Guattari frequently talked about the complex genesis of their concepts. ‘I myself have a strong memory of the introduction of this or that notion’, Deleuze said, ‘For example, the “ritournello” ... was due initially to Guattari. I introduced the “body without organs,” taking it from Artaud’ (*Nous Deux*, p. 17). It would not be difficult to continue the list: desiring machines, schizoanalysis, deterritorialization, black holes, faciality initially came from Guattari; the notion of the syntheses of the unconscious, as well as the analyses of capitalism and nomadism, were initially due to Deleuze. But the manner in which these concepts were finally articulated seems to have been equally ‘messy’. Sometimes a division of labour seem to have been maintained. Deleuze, for example, seems to have been responsible for their revisionary concept of capitalism: ‘I have the feeling of always wandering around, kind of alone, irresponsibly’, Guattari writes to him early on, ‘while you’re sweating over capitalism. How could I possibly help you?’ (137).

At other times, the introduction of one concept would generate another: ‘Deterritorialization, a barbarous formula that I had articulated’, Guattari recalled, ‘was then articulated by Gilles in connection with the concept of the Earth [*Terre*], which was not, at the start, in my sights’ (*Nous Deux*, p. 17). In another passage, Guattari proposes an intriguing transformation of one of Deleuze’s basic concepts, but which seems not to have been pursued: ‘Maybe we shouldn’t make multiplicity [*multiplicité*] a substantive but a verb: multiplicitate [*multipliciter*].’ Revealingly, Guattari indicates that, in September 1972, a mere six months after the publication of *Anti-Oedipus*, Deleuze

was already hard at work on the ‘Nomadology’ chapter of *A Thousand Plateaus* (‘Gilles is working like a madman on his nomads’), almost as if Deleuze had realized, even before finishing *Anti-Oedipus*, that its tripartite typology of social formations (primitives, states, capitalism) was inadequate, and would have to be complemented with a fourth type – the nomadic war-machine. In the *Papers*, Guattari was himself developing an interesting notion of what he calls ‘audio-visual’ societies, which, for some reason, did not make it into the final draft of the book. Years later, in 1984, Deleuze revealed that ‘we never did understand the “body without organs” in the same way’ (*Two Regimes*, p. 239), which is faint consolation, perhaps, to contemporary readers trying to comprehend the concept on their own. But this was precisely the ‘concept of the concept’ that Deleuze and Guattari wound up formulating in *What in Philosophy?*, and that no doubt was itself the result of their collaborative efforts: ‘It’s not a question of grouping things under a single concept, but of relating each concept to the variables that determine its mutations’ (*Negotiations*, p. 31).

### Dinner with Lacan

In the end, however, perhaps the most important contribution of Guattari’s *Anti-Oedipus* papers will be the insights they provide into Deleuze and Guattari’s complex relation to Jacques Lacan. *Anti-Oedipus* is sometimes characterized as an anti-Lacanian book, but it is clear from Guattari’s notes that this is not the case. ‘At first there was no hostility toward Lacanism’, Guattari writes: ‘It was the logic of our development that led us to emphasize the dangers of an a-historical interpretation of the signifier.’ On this score, Guattari is indeed critical of Lacan’s conception of the symbolic, which relies on what Guattari considers to be a ‘really bad linguistics (Saussuro-Jakobsonian)’: ‘Lacan was wrong to identify displacement and condensation with Jakobson’s metaphor and metonymy on the level of primary processes.’ Even Foucault’s concept of discourse comes in for a similar criticism from Guattari: ‘I’m trying to read *The Archaeology of Knowledge* by Foucault; but it’s so hard for me to get through this kind of thing. It seems to me that your friend is getting lost in linguistics and other structures.’ In a prescient text entitled ‘Hjelmslev and Immanence’, we can see Guattari rethinking the signifier/signified distinction in terms of Hjelmslev’s notion of language as a system of continuous flows of *content* and *expression* – a shift that would come even further to the fore in *A Thousand Plateaus*. But in the end, this negative critique is

merely a propaedeutic to their positive appropriation of Lacan’s work. ‘I don’t personally think the linguistics is fundamental’, Deleuze later noted;

There’s no question that we’re all the more indebted to Lacan, once we’ve dropped notions like structure, the symbolic, or the signifier, which are thoroughly misguided [*mauvaises*], and which Lacan himself has always managed to turn on their head in order to show their inverse side. (*Negotiations*, pp. 28, 13–14)

This ‘inverse side’ of the symbolic is what Lacan called the Real, and *Anti-Oedipus* presented itself, from start to finish, as a theory of the Real. Yet an orthodoxy had grown up around Lacan that understood the Real (via the *objet petit a*) simply as an internal *gap* or *impasse* within the symbolic. ‘How many interpretations of Lacanianism’, Deleuze and Guattari asked, ‘overtly or secretly pious, have in this manner invoked ... a gap in the Symbolic?... Despite some fine books by certain disciples of Lacan, we wonder if Lacan’s thought really goes in this direction’ (*Anti-Oedipus*, pp. 82–3, 53). In *Anti-Oedipus*, Deleuze and Guattari attempted to follow a different path, but one they insisted had been marked out by Lacan himself. For Lacan, it was *psychosis* (and not *neurosis* or *perversion*) that was closest to the Real, since psychotics were ‘foreclosed’ from the symbolic – so Deleuze and Guattari followed Lacan’s lead and took psychosis (schizophrenia) as their model for the unconscious. ‘Lacan himself says, “I’m not getting much help”’, Deleuze later commented, so ‘we thought we’d give him some schizophrenic help’ (*Negotiations*, pp. 13–14). Moreover, they showed that there is an intimate link between psychosis and the social field. Far from being preoccupied with personal or familial concerns, psychotic deliriums are marked by an extraordinary political, geographic, and even world-historical content, which had often been ignored or explained away by psychoanalysts and psychiatrists. It’s the Russians that worry the psychotic, or the Aryans and Jews, or Joan of Arc and the Great Mongol, the circulation of money and the conspiracies of power – an entire unconscious investment of the social field. This is what allowed Deleuze and Guattari to establish a precise relation, indicated in their subtitle, between capitalism and schizophrenia, since capitalism itself, while perfectly rational in its axioms, is itself fully delirious in its functioning.

Guattari summarizes his and Deleuze’s relation to Lacan in a revealing text: ‘It was at the *end* of his analysis of the representation of desire that Lacan found the *objet a*, the residual object. We started

from the other end, production and desiring machines, and found all our figures of representation on the way' (349). Many of Guattari's papers, as indicated by their titles, are attempts to rethink the status of Lacan's concept of the *objet petit a*: 'In Lacan, the *a* Plays the Part of the Body without Organs', 'Of a Machinic Interpretation of Lacan's "*a*". Throughout, Guattari exhibits an inevitable ambivalence towards Lacan. At times, he praises Lacan's efforts at 'deterritorialization' ('What's interesting about Lacan is that he is crazier than most people, and that, in spite of his efforts to "normalize" everything, he manages to slip, and slip back into deterritorializing the sign'), while at other times he expresses his frustration that Lacan does not go far enough: 'I think he has only gone halfway on the path to deterritorialization'; 'he



interrupts his deterritorialization process to the letter (no doubt a defence against his own schizophrenia. It would be useful to reread his analyses of Schreber, and find where he gets stuck)'. Indeed, Deleuze and Guattari undertook extensive rereadings of the classic Freudian cases of Schreber, Little Hans and the Wolf Man in order to defend their position. And despite the disclaimer in *Anti-Oedipus* ('No, we have never seen a schizophrenic', p. 380), the *Papers* reveal that Guattari's reflections on psychoses were based on his experience with schizophrenic patients, which was rather considerable.

It seems to that it is *much easier to help a schizophrenic patient than a neurotic one*. Easy, on the condition that you work at it full time.... The case of R.A., my first schizo, took up at least four to five hours a day. It took over everything. Including my friends and even my girlfriends.

Revealingly, recent 'Neo-Lacanian' interpreters of Deleuze, like Alain Badiou and Slavoj Žižek, have deliberately ignored *Anti-Oedipus* – a rather obvious avoidance of Deleuze and Guattari's critiques of Lacan. Instead, they have tended to focus on earlier psychoanalytic texts of Deleuze such as *Masochism* and *Logic of Sense*, even though Deleuze himself insisted that '*Anti-Oedipus* marks a break' with these earlier works, which were still too timid (*Negotiations*,

p. 144). (Among interpreters, only Eugene Holland, in his *Deleuze and Guattari's Anti-Oedipus: Introduction to Schizoanalysis* [1999], has dealt with Deleuze and Guattari's relation to Lacan systematically and sympathetically.) The publication of the *Anti-Oedipus Papers* will perhaps help focus these debates concerning the Lacanian heritage on what seems to be their true *differend* – namely, the status of the Real. Put crudely, in the 'orthodox' view, the Real marks the points of 'impasse' or 'rupture' in the representative or discursive structure (the *objet petit a* as the 'impossible Real'). By contrast, Deleuze and Guattari's heterodox approach starts with the Real, and diagnoses the manner in which an immanent unconscious (the Real) comes to be represented, mediated and symbolized (transcendence), and yet is not an immediate or raw experience beneath its representations, but rather must itself be constructed and produced – the unconscious as a factory and not a theatre, or, desire as the production of the Real. In this sense, *Anti-Oedipus* could be said to have brought about an identification of the Real with the Idea (the syntheses of the unconscious).

A final surprise: Guattari's papers reveal that Lacan himself seems to have made efforts to monitor both the progress and the content of *Anti-Oedipus*. On 1 October 1971, Guattari received an 'urgent convocation to Lacan's office':

'What have you been doing over the past two years? We've lost contact.' ... He wanted to see the manuscript. I retreated behind Gilles who only wants to show him something completely finished. I told him that I still consider myself to be a front-line Lacanian, but I've chosen to scout out areas that have not been explored much, instead of trailing in the wake.

Lacan nonetheless insists on another meeting, where Guattari attempts to lay out verbally the entire argument of the book:

Dinner invitation, next week, to lay the cards on the table ... Impossible to back out.... 'So what is schizoanalysis?' [Lacan asks].... I laid it all out. The '*a*' is a desiring machine; deterritorialization, history.... He was pleased with our meeting. Reassured. Or so he said! Stopped, evidently exhausted, limping imperceptibly, his silhouette disappeared into the night.

Several months after the publication of *Anti-Oedipus*, Lacan would similarly summon Deleuze to his office, telling him, 'I could use someone like you'. We have no record, to my knowledge, of what Lacan actually thought about *Anti-Oedipus*, but Guattari's papers seem to indicate that he was anything but antagonistic towards them.