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Desire Was Everywhere

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Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari: Intersecting Lives by François Dosse, translated by Deborah Glassman

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The ‘philosophy of desire’ was born in 1969, Serge Gainsbourg’s *année érotique*, when the radical psychoanalyst Félix Guattari met the philosopher Gilles Deleuze. Today, it’s hard to imagine them not knowing each other, and easy to forget how unlikely their partnership was. François Dosse begins his biography of the two men with their first encounter, a year after the ‘events’ of 1968, which, more than anything, inspired their collaboration.

Guattari was not quite 40 when he drove to the Limousin to meet Deleuze for the first time. He had grown up in La Garenne-Colombes, outside Paris, where his father ran a chocolate factory. By the age of 15 he was going to Communist Party meetings and selling copies of *L’Humanité*. Within three years he’d joined the Trotskyist opposition. While studying for a degree in pharmacology, he made pilgrimages to Yugoslavia and China, organised protests against French colonialism in Vietnam and Algeria, and wrote articles for a dissident Communist paper under the pen name Claude Arrieux. Among Guattari’s enthusiasms, Freud ran a close second to Marx. He attended Lacan’s seminars at Sainte-Anne psychiatric hospital and went into analysis with him. In 1955 he began working at the La Borde clinic in the Loire Valley as a committed Lacanian.

At La Borde, however, as Dosse reveals, Guattari’s thinking evolved away from Freudian psychoanalysis, and, much though he tried to deny it, away from his *maître à penser*. The clinic itself had grown out of an experiment in group-centred institutional psychotherapy: patients and staff lived together, to promote a sense of community; decisions were made collectively; all employees had to perform a mix of manual and intellectual labour; responsibilities, tasks and salaries were distributed on an egalitarian basis. ‘Transversality’

was the term Guattari used to describe La Borde's programme for disrupting the 'binary structural oppositions' that governed life in a psychiatric clinic: between patients and analysts, between individual and group consciousness, between mental illness and normality. Transversality, he argued, would allow patients to 'take up speech' and achieve a sense of collective power: they would go from being 'subjugated groups' to 'subject groups'; the authority of the analyst would be thrown into question. After May 1968, when he'd ridden to the barricades on a motorcycle at four in the morning and then rushed back to La Borde to encourage the patients to join him, Guattari stepped up his efforts. He devoted himself to fomenting unrest, assigning staff members to tasks for which they weren't trained – 'Félix really liked to declassify people,' as one of them put it. Employees slept till noon, 'denouncing everyone who was already at work as alienated by capitalism'.

But the doctors didn't appreciate doing the dishes, and the maids weren't comfortable providing treatment. Staff members were put under further strain when Guattari organised 'erotic kamikazes' to break up couples who grew too close (monogamy was a 'capitalist' perversion). His own marriage to the mother of his three children had broken up, and now he was jeopardising his romance with Arlette Donati, a nurse at the clinic, with his compulsive womanising. He encouraged her to take a lover to counteract the 'oppressive conjugality' of their relationship, and when she did, he became even more depressed. He'd also suffered a professional crisis when Lacan passed him over as successor at the Freudian School in favour of his son-in-law, Jacques-Alain Miller, the ringleader of a Parisian cell of Maoist psychoanalysts.

Guattari had great plans to write, but he could never sit still, especially with all the distractions which life at La Borde presented. His *soixante-huitard* friends (La Borde's director, Jean Oury, called them 'the barbarians') staged regular invasions of the clinic. During the day, there were performances in the courtyard: a Japanese mime troupe, a Maoist magician, sometimes the patients themselves – on Bastille Day, they dressed up as sans-culottes. The 'Guattari gang' held seminars in the attic on Marx, Freud and the Revolution well into the night. Guattari was manic. 'He needed something like Ritalin,' his colleague Jean-Pierre Muyard recalled. 'We had to find a way to calm him down.' It was Muyard, who had studied philosophy with Deleuze at the University of Lyon, who arranged the first meeting between the two men. Guattari had drawn on Deleuze's critique of structuralism in a paper he'd delivered at the Freudian School, and Deleuze had expressed keen interest in Guattari's studies of group fantasy at La Borde. Muyard thought that they would have a lot to talk about. He also hoped Deleuze might get Guattari to focus on his work.

Deleuze was 44 when they met. Born in 1925 and brought up in Paris, he hated his father, a right-wing, anti-semitic engineer. When the Nazis occupied France, Deleuze's older brother, Georges, joined the Resistance; he was captured by the Germans, deported, and murdered en route to Auschwitz. According to Deleuze's friend the novelist Michel Tournier, Deleuze's

parents ‘created a veritable cult around Georges’, for which Gilles never forgave them. A sickly, asthmatic boy, he grew his nails long because of a skin disease which left his fingertips painful to the touch, and he wore a scarf all summer. ‘It was like visiting Marcel Proust in his bedroom,’ a friend recalled.

Philosophy became his refuge, from the moment he read Sartre’s *Being and Nothingness*. But he soon abandoned Sartre – and indeed anything influenced by Hegel and dialectics – in favour of vitalist thinkers like Spinoza (the subject of his doctoral thesis) and Nietzsche: he was captivated by ‘their critique of negativity, their cultivation of joy, their hatred of interiority’. Inner life (*la vie intérieure*), he argued in one of his first published essays, was a bourgeois delusion: not for nothing did it sound like ‘domestic life’ (*la vie d’intérieur*). This put him at odds with the phenomenologists and Marxists who dominated postwar philosophy departments, and he taught in a lycée until 1957, when he was hired as an assistant professor of history by the Sorbonne. At Vincennes, where he moved in 1969, the Spinozist with the vampire nails and dandyish manner overcame his shyness. His lectures ranged across philosophy and flirting, Mozart and Edith Piaf, Proust and the *Série Noire*, and he was adored by his students, not so much a professor as a ‘spiritual guide’.

For someone who frowned on *la vie d’intérieur*, Deleuze led a life of unruffled domesticity, and rarely strayed far from the home he shared with his wife and two children. Poor health kept him there: he’d had a tubercular lung removed, and was having trouble breathing, a problem made worse by too much alcohol and too many cigarettes. He loathed socialising – ‘two was a crowd’ – and though he supported the May revolts, he did so from a distance. Yet the tranquil surface of his life concealed a subversive streak. In his writing, he had long been waging a playful but determined battle against the foundational concepts of Western philosophy: identity, metaphysical transcendence, the distinction between subject and object. He had enlisted Bergson as well as Spinoza and Nietzsche in this campaign, paying homage to them in adventurously interpretative monographs he called ‘portraits’ and later likened to ‘buggery’: ‘I saw myself as taking an author from behind and giving him a child that would be his own offspring, yet at the same time monstrous.’ When Guattari came to visit, he had just published his two most personal books, *The Logic of Sense* and *Difference and Repetition*, in which he declared war on Platonic philosophy. Yet these books only hinted at the radicalism of his intentions.

Deleuze and Guattari had an instant intellectual rapport. Both men were frustrated with the ‘Mummy-Daddy’ focus of psychoanalysis. By understanding desire in terms of the family romance, psychoanalysis had become (in Guattari’s words) a ‘capitalist drug’, individualising collective problems and neutralising the disruptive effects of desire. Freud’s big mistake, they agreed, was to see desire as something rooted in lack, as an attempt to fantasise a missing object (the mother’s breast, for example). As a result, Freud had imagined the unconscious as a theatre of representations, in which the same grimly repetitive Oedipal drama was

performed night after night. In Deleuze and Guattari's view, the unconscious was better understood in political terms as a productive and potentially transformative force – a force that could change the world. The unconscious, as they saw it, was a deliriously innovative 'factory', ceaselessly producing new and transgressive combinations of desires. In the book that eventually came out of this meeting, *Anti-Oedipus*, they would portray desire as a relentless and impersonal flow, an electric current moving through the social body and interrupted only by 'desiring machines' that sought to direct and channel it. A desiring machine could be anything from a breast ('a machine that produces milk') to a revolutionary political movement, and its aim was always the same: to connect with other machines (the infant's mouth, the masses), and produce a shift in reality. Desire had virtually no limits: like power in Foucault, it was everywhere, and it passed through everyone without belonging to anyone.

A second meeting was promptly arranged at Guattari's château in Dhuizon. As they discussed their project, friends and family dropped in, 'buzzing around the daily primal scene, in which Félix and Deleuze create intensely', one witness wrote. 'In a word, it's working.' Deleuze was beguiled by Guattari's energy: 'He always seems to be in motion, sparkling with light.' Yet he also recognised something about Guattari that few others did: 'When you examine Félix more closely, you realise how alone he really is. Between two activities, or in the midst of people, he can plunge into the deepest solitude.'

The challenge was getting Guattari to endure the solitude of working at his desk: otherwise the book would never be written. That was Deleuze's first rule. His second rule was that the collaboration would be monogamous: no other parties could be involved, nor would he take part in any of Guattari's many other militant activities. *Anti-Oedipus* emerged from their correspondence over the next two years: 'long, disorderly letters' that Deleuze would fashion into Deleuzo-Guattarian prose. In recent years, Dosse notes, there has been a tendency to 'de-Guattarise' the collaboration and to canonise Deleuze at Guattari's expense, but Deleuze always insisted on the centrality of his friend's contribution. In his words, 'Félix was the diamond miner and I was the polisher.' As they worked on *Anti-Oedipus*, he recalled, 'we no longer knew who had written what ... We were more like two streams coming together to make a third.' The diamond miner took a less sentimental view of the collaboration. 'We're really not of the same dimension,' he complained in his diaries. 'I'm sort of an inveterate autodidact, a do-it-yourself guy, a sort of Jules Verne.' Guattari resented 'being strapped onto Gilles', and felt 'overcoded' by the 'perfection that he brought to the most unlikely book'. What he really wanted to do was 'say stupid shit. Barf out the fucking-around-o-maniacal schizo flow.'

Guattari needn't have worried. If Deleuze brought a certain formal polish to *Anti-Oedipus*, which was finally published in 1972, no one would have mistaken it for a work of academic philosophy or psychoanalytic theory. The massive volume drew on ethnology as much as

philosophy, literary as much as psychoanalytic theory, but it read more like a sprawling work of experimental fiction, a futurist epic. There are echoes of *Naked Lunch* in its opening sentence:

It is at work everywhere, functioning smoothly at times, at other times in fits and starts. It breathes, it heats, it eats. It shits and fucks. What a mistake to have ever said *the id*. Everywhere *it* is machines – real ones, not figurative ones: machines driving other machines, machines being driven by other machines, with all the necessary couplings and connections.

Deleuze and Guattari were hardly alone in thinking that the unconscious might have something to add to left-wing politics, and that it might even speed the revolution. Attempts to fuse Marx and Freud were very much in vogue. But *Anti-Oedipus* had little in common with Freudo-Marxism, with its lyrical dream of a revolution that would, in a single stroke, free individual desire from bourgeois repression and the proletariat from capitalism. The individual was of no interest to Deleuze and Guattari, and though they referred to the proletariat the mention seemed dutiful. Their goal wasn't to liberate human beings, but rather the current of desire that happened to flow through them.

Like Marx in *The Communist Manifesto*, Deleuze and Guattari portray capitalism as a turbulent system whose revolutionary effects threaten its own need to reproduce itself. On the one hand, it dissolves rigid structures of authority and hierarchy ('decoding', they called it), generates new and transgressive desires, and presides over radical forms of what they called 'deterritorialisation', which could mean everything from uprooting people from the land to overturning the systems of belief to which they have been anchored. At its most extreme, they suggest, capitalism encourages a kind of generalised schizophrenia, a shatteringly intense fracturing of subjectivity. On the other hand, to survive it has to contain these effects through oppressive fictions like the nuclear family and psychiatry, which attempt to 'reterritorialise' desire: to put it safely back inside the home and to keep it there. The project of 'schizo-analysis', therefore, would be to harness revolutionary desiring machines that liberate desire from the family and Freudian psychiatry.

Desire, they admit, is not always good: 'Hitler got the Fascists sexually aroused. Flags, nations, armies, banks get a lot of people aroused.' The appeal of reactionary politics lay in its ability to neutralise the 'deterritorialising' effects of capitalism with 'reterritorialising' narratives of God and country. All the more reason, then, for the 'revolutionary machine' to 'acquire at least as much force as these coercive machines have for producing breaks and mobilising flows'. But who would take part? The revolutionary machine in *Anti-Oedipus* is a band of outsiders, made up of avant-garde writers (Michaux, Artaud, the Beats), non-Western tribes, outlaws, gays, minorities, freaks and, not least, the mentally ill. The book was subtitled 'Capitalism and Schizophrenia', and it described the schizophrenic as capitalism's 'inherent

tendency brought to fulfilment, its surplus product, its proletariat, and its exterminating angel'. Were they really celebrating madness as a revolutionary force? Deleuze denied this, insisting not altogether plausibly that their message was 'don't become wrecks. We were terrified of producing hospital products.' The aim of 'schizo-analysis', he said, was to liberate the 'multiplicity' of the unconscious. ('We are all groupuscules,' he said.) But Guattari was much more ambivalent: he had treated schizophrenics, and had a soft spot for them.

Anti-Oedipus was an instant sensation in France. It sold out in a few days, got a two-page spread in *Le Monde*, and turned Deleuze and Guattari into the Rolling Stones of radical theory, giddy prophets of the philosophy of desire. Some weren't so thrilled. Lacan had long smelled heterodoxy and once the book appeared, banned all discussion of it at the Freudian School, while his allies launched a smear campaign against its authors. The left was nearly as hostile. Of all the *soixante-huitard* thinkers, Deleuze and Guattari were the most radical: *combattants* in struggles over the rights of prisoners and the mentally ill; passionate supporters of national liberation struggles in the Third World. Yet in *Anti-Oedipus* they appeared to be renouncing everything that had defined revolutionary left politics: the vanguard party, the working class, the critique of ideology, dialectical analysis, reason itself.

At the peak of his Maoist fervour, Alain Badiou, Deleuze's colleague at Vincennes, denounced the authors as 'hateful adversaries of all revolutionary politics', and dispatched his followers to break up Deleuze's lectures. (Deleuze serenely put his hat back on, and walked out.) For those who thought of revolutionary politics in terms of organising the party and building socialism, Deleuze and Guattari were dangerous ultra-leftists. Guattari, at La Borde, had tried to enable subjugated groups to become subject groups, and he and Deleuze had come to believe it was patronising, authoritarian, even fascist, to speak on anyone else's behalf, which is what intellectuals in France had always done. As Foucault noted in his introduction to the American edition of *Anti-Oedipus*, their true adversary was not so much capitalism as 'the fascism in us all, in our heads and in our everyday behaviour, the fascism that causes us to love power, to desire the very thing that dominates and exploits us'.

It was not in France but in Italy that *Anti-Oedipus* made its deepest impact. The *autunno caldo* of 1969 had developed, by the early 1970s, into a sweeping attack on all forms of authority: bosses and politicians, the Church, the education system, the family, the Communist Party, trade unions, psychiatric institutions. *Anti-Oedipus*, translated into Italian in 1975, resonated with many of Italy's young desiring machines, notably Franco Berardi ('Bifo'), a radio broadcaster in Bologna, who read the book in a prison cell – he'd been charged with placing a bomb in the headquarters of the Christian Democrats in Bologna. By spring 1977 Bifo was leading a movement that, in his own words, 'was more inspired by Dadaism and *Anti-Oedipus* than by political revolutionary manuals'. When Guattari came to Bologna that autumn to attend a far left conference, 'everyone rushed to greet him, touch him, kiss him,' shouting: 'Down with Oedipus, Long Live Deleuze and Guattari!' Bifo, by then, had fled to

Paris and moved into Guattari's flat – one of a number of exiled radicals who would take refuge there. Antonio Negri, who escaped to France in 1983 after being condemned for his alleged involvement in the Red Brigades, was another. For the next four years, he went by the name Antoine Guattari. 'Félix paid for everything,' Negri recalled of his time underground in Paris. 'He looked after me like a brother.'

Like many professional subversives, Deleuze and Guattari worked well in institutions. Vincennes was an ideal setting for Deleuze: an experimental university that had quickly acquired a reputation as the 'anti-Sorbonne', an enclave of radical professors and student revolutionaries. Recruited by Foucault, who was the head of the philosophy department, Deleuze taught there until his retirement in 1987, and rarely felt a need to travel: his followers came to him, and his lectures were so popular you had to arrive an hour early to get a place in the front ten rows. Guattari was more peripatetic: he was often on the road, strategising with fellow revolutionaries and 'schizo-analysts' in the Middle East, North America and Brazil. Yet he maintained his affiliation with La Borde, continued to treat patients, and ran a number of Paris-based institutes, notably the Centre for Institutional Study, Research and Training, which conducted research on social alienation and the psychological effects of urban growth, and at the height of its influence in the 1970s had a staff of 75 and a steady flow of government contracts.

As Dosse shows, Deleuze and Guattari used their influence and institutional resources to assist insurgent groups. Guattari made the offices of CERFI available for some of the earliest clandestine meetings between Israeli anti-Zionists and PLO officials in the mid-1970s, and Deleuze helped a young Palestinian intellectual, Elias Sanbar, set up the *Revue d'études paléstiennes*. The pair were generous, but they weren't always circumspect. Their relationship with the armed left in Italy and Germany troubled some of their friends, particularly when another of Guattari's organisations mobilised on behalf of Klaus Croissant, the lawyer for the Red Army Faction, who in 1977 was threatened with extradition to Germany. Croissant was not just the Red Army's lawyer: he was a co-conspirator. (Foucault joined the protests against Croissant's deportation, but he refused to sign the petition because he considered it far too sympathetic to the RAF.) In Dosse's view, Guattari refused to condemn the Red Brigades and the RAF so that he could maintain the trust of radicals attracted to violence, and dissuade them.

The warmest welcome Deleuze and Guattari received outside Italy's Red Belt was in underground America. In 1975, Guattari's friend Sylvère Lotringer, a professor at Columbia, organised a conference on 'schizoculture' in their honour and put them up at the Chelsea Hotel. They were beginning work on *A Thousand Plateaus*, the sequel to *Anti-Oedipus*, an alluring, enigmatic essay on the 'rhizome', a non-hierarchical, hyper-connective open system in a state of constant flux and transformation, without origin or destination; they contrasted it with the root-obsessed 'arborescent' or tree model. ('We're tired of trees,' they wrote. 'They've

made us suffer too much.’) Radical New York – Black Panthers and gay activists, Marxist professors and anti-psychiatrists – turned out en masse for the symposium; John Cage and William Burroughs came along; and Foucault flew in from Paris. It quickly became a circus.

Deleuze and Guattari had long envied American writers like Henry Miller and Allen Ginsberg, with their ‘gift for intensities, flows, machine-books, tool-books, schizo-books’: now it seemed as if the desiring revolution’s future was in America. ‘Everything important that has happened or is happening takes the route of the American rhizome: the beatniks, the underground, bands and gangs,’ they announced in *A Thousand Plateaus*, which appeared in 1980. An even stranger (and longer) work than *Anti-Oedipus*, *A Thousand Plateaus* was a chaotic bricolage of anthropology, fractal geometry, music theory, psychoanalysis, literature, art history, physics and military history. It emerged, they said, from ‘hallucinatory experiences’ and read as if it had been written under the influence. They had signed their names, they said, ‘only out of habit’: ‘Since each of us was several, there was already quite a crowd.’ Their celebration of ‘multiplicity’ generated a barrage of new concepts: rhizomes, war machines, striated and smooth space, nomadology, planes of immanence, faciality. Yet the book was recognisably a continuation of *Anti-Oedipus*, a hymn to the micro-political weapons of the weak, the ‘lines of flight’ and ‘nomadic’ resistance practised by subjugated groups in their struggles with state power. Once again they criticised psychoanalysis for reducing desire to the ‘family tree’ (the arborescent model), praising the rhizome’s ‘liberation of sexuality not only from reproduction but also from genitivity’. Passages of fearsome theoretical density were punctuated with trippy slogans: ‘Make rhizomes, not roots, never plant! Don’t sow, grow offshoots! Don’t be one or multiple, be multiplicities!’

These were untimely suggestions in France in 1980. This was the moment of the New Philosophers – led by André Glucksmann and Bernard-Henri Lévy – and the French were too busy discovering the Gulag to consider the rhizome’s revolutionary potential. In 1972 Deleuze and Guattari were rebels: now they were embarrassing reminders of 1960s burn-out. Lévy accused them of producing ‘a defence of what is rotten in the manure of decadence’. Deleuze, usually publicity shy, said in an interview with *Le Monde* that the New Philosophers were notable mainly for having ‘introduced France to literary or philosophical marketing’, but he couldn’t conceal the fact that, politically, the philosophers of desire were now on the defensive. What Guattari called ‘the winter years’ had begun. Deleuze reacted by turning to questions of aesthetics. He published two strikingly original books on the experience of time in cinema, much indebted to the work of Bergson, and began to write, with his usual mix of panache and opacity, about music and painting. He was a careful, humble listener, Dosse says, and picked up a number of his ideas on the arts from friends like Pierre Boulez and the painter Gérard Fromanger. From Fromanger, for example, he learned that the blank canvas is not white, but rather ‘black with everything every painter has painted before me’ – an idea he would explore in his book on Francis Bacon, *The Logic of Sensation*.

The winter years were much harder for Guattari, who’d never shared Deleuze’s ability to find

solace at his desk. When Mitterrand came to power in 1981, he served briefly as an informal adviser to Jack Lang, the minister of culture, but he was soon disappointed by the Socialist government, particularly its failure to fight on behalf of French North Africans and other racial minorities. Though he continued to write on ecology, the struggles of various minority groups (Uighurs, Basques, Kurds, Palestinians), and what he called 'the molecular revolution' (a scattered, micropolitical series of transformations that he contrasted with an older, state-centred model of 'molar revolution'), he was slipping into a gloom from which he would never emerge. His collaboration with Deleuze was on hold, and now Deleuze seemed to be getting all the credit for their work together. His personal life, too, was falling apart. He lost his house near La Borde and was evicted from his Paris flat. His second wife, Joséphine, whom he married in 1986, spent his money on drugs and slept with other men. She also set strict rules of admission to their new flat in Paris. The 'Guattarian network', the large, informal group of nomadic intellectuals, artists and revolutionaries who were used to stopping by at a moment's notice, particularly if they were on the run from the law, discovered they were no longer welcome. Neither were Guattari's children, who were forced to see him at La Borde. 'I am not saying that Joséphine destroyed him,' his friend Jean-Jacques Lebel said. 'I'm saying that he used Joséphine to destroy himself.' When he wasn't staring at the television, he scribbled away at a Joycean novel about an Oedipal triangle, *33.33.33*, an allusion to the date of his birth, 30 March 1930. The book was published after Guattari's death by Agnès B (who had run a sewing group at CERFI).

Partly because of Guattari's depression, the last book bearing both their names, *What Is Philosophy?* (1991), was written by Deleuze. But Guattari's signature was there for a reason: as a friend said, 'Guattari is in it throughout, in the way that aspirin in water is everywhere.' It was an uncharacteristically sombre and subdued book: more lamentation than revolutionary call to arms, written, as they conceded, at a time when 'we lack resistance to the present,' when 'creation' has given way to journalistic 'communication'. Philosophy, like art and science, they argued, is an act of invention, not of contemplation. And what philosophy – and philosophy alone – creates are concepts. These 'centres of vibration' are 'signed', the creations of 'a specifically philosophical taste that proceeds with violence or by insinuation and constitutes a philosophical language within language – not just a vocabulary but a syntax that attains the sublime or a great beauty'. And who would create these sublime concepts for 'a new earth and people that do not yet exist'? Not 'populist writers' like the New Philosophers, mired in the 'clichés of opinion' and in vapid 'communication', but rather 'the most aristocratic', those blessed with superior taste. This claim was hard to square with their insistence that thinking (or 'geophilosophy', as they called it) is a subjectless process that 'takes place in the relationship of territory and earth' – but it had a certain romance. So did their vision of philosophy as one of the three 'rafts' – together with art and science – from which the brain dives into and confronts chaos, not in an attempt to eliminate or control it, but to allow one to be transformed in the encounter.

What Is Philosophy? was, in essence, a lyrical description of the adventure they had taken together, and now it was almost over. A year after it was published, Guattari died of a heart attack. (Joséphine Guattari died of an overdose a year later.) More than a thousand friends turned out at Père Lachaise. Deleuze, connected to an oxygen tank, suffering awful coughing fits, was too ill to attend. Three years later, when he could no longer speak or write, he caught a train from the Limousin to his flat in Paris, and jumped to his death from the window.

Their names are invoked more often today than they were when they were alive. D&G have a rhizomatic afterlife online, cited in articles on art and film, anthropology, avant-garde jazz, colonialism, disability and military strategy; WikiLeaks has been described as an exemplary ‘rhizomatic, deterritorialised, itinerant war machine’. Politically, their ‘tool kit’, as they liked to call their work, has proved useful to everyone from Hardt and Negri, the authors of the alternative globalisation manifesto *Empire*, to the counterinsurgency theorist Shimon Naveh, a retired general who teaches at an Israeli military academy and speaks in fluent Deleuzo-Guattarese, describing his effort to ‘smooth out’ spaces that are ‘striated’ in Palestinian towns.

What would Deleuze and Guattari have made of this domestication – this perversion – of their arguments? It seems that the further their ideas have travelled from their roots on the far left, the more they have been incorporated by the system they opposed. Indeed, the language of desire, multiplicity and all the rest is no longer the language of revolution. It is the language of cyberspace, and of neoliberal capitalism. Deleuze and Guattari’s desiring machines, constantly seeking out new sensations, look a lot like today’s permanently distracted consumers and webservers. François Dosse is keen to portray his subjects as visionaries, but they anticipated a future neither of them would have wanted to live in.

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