

1 Through a net darkly

Spatial expression from glossematics to schizoanalysis

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We return to the swamp of spots.

(Guattari, 2015: 179)

Pressed for words, as is our fate, suffice to say four things by way of contextualisation, as we plunge into the swamp of signs. First, we will be forging a constellation of geo-graphical (earth-writing, earth-inscribing) terms that give spatial expression to what Félix Guattari and Gilles Deleuze famously called *schizo-analysis* and *geo-philosophy*. For we are “speaking always as geographers”, as they say (Deleuze and Guattari, 1983: 83). For our part, we are not so much interested in *the schizo* as a conceptual persona or a mental ecology/pathology (we lean towards anti-humanism, after all), but as a figure of splitting and splintering (from the Greek, *skhizein*, to split), which, incidentally, has a close affinity with the X or χ of deconstruction (the twofold asymmetrical process of reversal and re-inscription chimes with the twofold process of deterritorialisation and reterritorialisation). Second, and to drive home the point that we have just made about speaking always as geographers, this constellation of fissured and fractured terms takes flight from an impasse bequeathed to us by what has come to be known as *structuralism* and *poststructuralism*. After Ferdinand de Saussure, the signifying fraction of the sign (the ‘signifier’, as he famously dubbed it; the portion or splinter that ‘makes sense’, so to speak, by giving expression) was set afloat, and its tendency to drift (to disseminate) could only be temporarily arrested by Saussure through the forcible and arbitrary imposition of chains. Some of these chains sought to anchor the signifier onto something meaningful (the ‘signified’, as Saussure famously dubbed it; the portion or splinter that ‘made sense’, so to speak, by being expressed), which many have mistaken for solid ground. Most of these chains, however, were used to attach the signifier onto an illimitable network of other signifiers in a vain attempt to pin and peg down its identity through a summation of negative differences, explicated differences, and differentiations (Deleuze, 1994). Such enchainment could be called a ‘structure’. After Jacques Lacan and Jacques Derrida, however, the signified, having slipped beneath the signifier, more or less sank without trace, and the signifying chains that once held the signifier captive in its allotted place were loosened to such an extent that the

signifier was set adrift. And just as the play of foam amidst breaking waves may allude to the phantom presence of a sinking or sunken ship, so the play of the signifier on the surface of language may allude to the phantom presence of a sinking or sunken signified. There are those who claim to make out the flotsam and jetsam of meaning here and there amidst the torrent of breaking signs, but the wreckage of sense is barely discernible from the nonsense within which it floats. Hereinafter, there is nothing but broken signs stretching before us in all directions: “the universe is mute. Only men speak. Though there is nothing to say” (Coover, 1998: 83). Third, while empty signs may captivate and seduce us, as Jean Baudrillard (1990) aptly put it, the insatiable desire that this enchainment unleashes should not be mistaken for revolutionary desire. Doggedly pursuing the tantalising yet elusive “*objet-machine petit ‘a’*” (Guattari, 1984: 115) will never exhaust, let alone overturn, the labyrinthine ‘structure’ within which such a futile chase takes place (Deleuze, 2004; Derrida, 1981). Finally, for those of us, like Guattari and Deleuze, who yearn for a desiring revolution, it is sobering to be reminded that while Sigmund Freud pronounced that there are three impossible professions – *governing, educating, and healing* – Lacan added a fourth: *inciting desire* (Boni, 2014; Lacan, 2007; Zupančič, 2006). To put it bluntly, the militant injunction *Revolt!* is indistinguishable from the reactionary injunction *Enjoy!* Accordingly, Lacan scoffed at credulous responses to the solicitation of revolutionary desire in May ’68. “If the events of May demonstrated anything at all, they showed that it was precisely that structures had taken to the streets!” (Lacan, quoted in Dosse, 1997: 122). Here as elsewhere, once enthralled and enraptured by its alluring chains, there is no escaping the signifier. All of the exits are blocked. And yet, it was by taking into account a-signifying semiotics that Guattari discovered a way to circumvent this impasse. This seemingly oxymoronic notion occurred to Guattari during a forced reading of Louis Hjelmslev in contradistinction to Lacan, to which we now turn.

The tyranny of the signifier and the resistance of a semiotic war machine

What, in fact, does Lacan say? He says that the unconscious is structured like a language and that a signifier represents the subject for another signifier. . . . You accede to desire by the signifier and by castration, and the desire to which you accede is an impossible desire.

(Guattari, 1986: 18)

Guattari (1986: 18) added a crucial twist to Lacan’s algorithmic and paralytic analysis of the signifier. “I think that Lacan is completely right in terms of the unconscious of the capitalist social field”, he concurred, but not necessarily for other social fields. Indeed, Guattari “goes so far as to argue that the unconscious itself has become an institution: ‘one finds oneself rigged out with an unconscious the moment one dreams, délire, forgets, or makes a slip of the tongue’” (Goffey,

2016: 41, quoting Guattari, 1995: 10). Capitalism employs regimes of signs – ‘sign machines’ – that institute a ‘structuralized’ unconscious, but there is still *something more* than the tyranny of the *sliding signifier*, after Saussure, and the empire of the *algorithmic sign*, after Lacan (Nancy and Lacoue-Labarthe, 1992). And what’s more, this excess may take us beyond the horizon of capitalism, the horizon of the signifier, and perhaps even beyond the horizon of structuralism (Guattari, 2011). A forced reading of Hjelmslev was pivotal for enabling Guattari and Deleuze to break through the ‘white wall’ of the *sliding signifier* and the ‘black hole’ of *serial erasure* in order to fabricate a “semiotic [war] machine against structural semiology” (Dosse, 2011: 232). One of the crucial aspects of this *semiotic war machine* is that it avoids the detour through either the imaginary or the symbolic registers by remaining in constant touch with the real: “the real is not the impossible, as Lacan thinks, but the artificial” (Guattari, quoted in Goffey, 2016: 46). It is a resolutely materialist and immanent semiotic in which the real is machined or manufactured (*made to appear, forced to appear*). “Guattari reincorporates the real into semiotic theory by identifying a kind of a-semiotic encoding that, borrowing Hjelmslev’s terminology, bypasses ‘substance’ in order to couple ‘form’ directly with ‘matter’” (Watson, in Young et al., 2013: 158). Barbed wire, for example, sadistically instructs animals and humans by lacerating their flesh, rather than by forming semiotic substances that signify something.

Now, recall that Saussure inaugurated the rendering of linguistics as two ‘heterogeneous realms’ or ‘floating kingdoms’, one composed of an articulated mass of ‘signifiers’ (sound-images) and the other of an articulated mass of ‘signifieds’ (concepts). The problem for Saussure and his heirs was understanding how each of these two masses is internally articulated, and how they are articulated with one another; and the solution to this problem was shaped by the recognition that linguistic articulation is not only linear (enchained), but also arbitrary and incorporeal: *arbitrary*, since the slicing up and suturing of the otherwise ‘shapeless’ and ‘confused’ masses could always have been otherwise; and *incorporeal*, since language works on combinations and permutations that produce “*a form, not a substance*” (Saussure, 1974: 113). What crystallised out of linguistic articulation were points (e.g. anchoring points), lines (e.g. the bar along which the signifying chain slides), and surfaces (e.g. the array of differential traces); and the drift of post-Saussurean thinking towards ‘post-structuralist’ thinking was invariably towards a dis-articulation, dis-jointure, and cracking open of these points, lines, and surfaces. “Ex-centric, dis-integrated, dis-located, dis-juncted, deconstructed, dismantled, disassociated, discontinuous, deregulated . . . de-, dis-, ex-. These are the prefixes of today”, as Bernard Tschumi (1994: 225) put it. In other words, an “and . . . and . . . and . . .” (Deleuze and Guattari, 1983: 57). Stuttering . . . stammering . . . scission . . . (Deleuze, 1997). And yet, all of this mind-boggling discombobulation remains sandwiched between the two heterogeneous masses, despite them becoming increasingly maladjusted and malformed; both the one that drifts (thereby becoming inexpressive: a mass of signifiers that fail to recall any signifieds) and the one that sinks (thereby becoming unexpressed: a mass of signifieds that have seemingly vanished without trace). It is this waning bi-univocalisation

that must be undone; the one-to-one coupling of the two masses, under the *direction* (i.e. domination, determination) of one of the masses. So, rather than a duality of signifier *and* signified, there is a bi-univocality of a signifier *for* a signified or *in lieu* of a signified. Bi-univocality, then, undergirds linearity, hierarchy, and transcendence: one term (the signifier) comes to dominate, eclipse, and foreclose the other term (the signified). Signifi-ance is what remains once signification is paralysed; once the signified is laid off. Such is the tyranny of the signifier. Hereinafter, signifiers are inclined to have intercourse amongst themselves, to purloin the phraseology that Karl Marx famously employed to characterise the fetishism of commodities, which exist for each other only as exchange-values, rather than as use-values. Indeed, it was Jean Baudrillard's (1981) genius to appreciate that commodities and signs have homologous forms: exchange-value is to use-value as signifier is to signified.

In his correspondence with Deleuze, Guattari (2006: 38) wrote: "I think it's with Hjelmslev . . . that we can find the key to 'clearing' out . . . structuralism". The key attraction of Hjelmslev for Guattari is Hjelmslev's desire to fashion "an immanent algebra of language" (Hjelmslev, 1961: 80), without recourse to a transcendental perspective (language as a means or vehicle for reference, representation, knowledge, communication or suchlike), which Hjelmslev dubbed 'glossematics'. And at the heart of this "arid algebra of language" (Genosko, 1998: 175) is the principle of *reversibility* rather than bi-univocality. "What Deleuze and Guattari borrowed above all from Hjelmslev", says François Dosse (2011: 232), "was the distinction between the absolutely reversible planes of expression and content. . . . The distinction had to do with strata, planes of consistency that destroyed Saussure's binarism. In fact, there was to be only a single plane of consistency unfolding in multiple strata". Brian Massumi (1992) offers the example of a carpenter engaged in woodwork to convey this reversibility. "Seen from the perspective of the dominating tool, the wood is content", he says. "But from the perspective of the forces that went into it, [the wood] is an expression, of the water, sunlight, and carbon dioxide it captured and contains" (Massumi, 1992: 12). In the hands of a carpenter, "each singularity can become a substance of expression: a knot may become the eye of a fish; a grain pattern, the waves of the sea; or something else entirely: the content-expression relation here is one of contingency, not necessity" (Holland, 2011: 17). Furthermore, the carpenter "with hand to tool is an agent of expression, but from another angle he is the content of an institution. . . . A content in one situation is an expression in another" (Massumi, 1992: 12). This is why we have stressed the word *force*: "Content and expression are reversible only in action. A power relation determines which is which" (Massumi, 1992: 12–13). Content and expression are both squeezed out – expressed.

In his *Prolegomena to a Theory of Language*, Hjelmslev (1961) contrasts the traditional (i.e. pre-Saussurean) and modern (i.e. post-Saussurean) conceptions of the sign. In the traditional/transcendental conception, "a sign is first and foremost a sign *for* something"; "the sign is an *expression* that points to a *content* outside the sign itself" (Hjelmslev, 1961: 47). In the modern/immanent conception inaugurated by Saussure, however, "the sign is an entity generated by a connexion

between an expression and a content” (Hjelmslev, 1961: 47). On Guattari’s (2006) reading, Hjelmslev breaks with bi-univocality (whether in the traditional form of ‘referral’ or the modern form of ‘connexion’) by introducing the notion of a ‘*sign function*’ posited between the plane of expression (Saussure’s plane of signifiers) and the plane of content (Saussure’s plane of signifieds). There is no ‘sign’ *as such*, only a *sign function*. From a functional perspective, content and expression are simply “functives that contract the function” (Hjelmslev, 1961: 48). They are solely formal and operational terms. “There will always be solidarity between a function and . . . its functives: a function is inconceivable without its terminals, and the terminals are only end points for the function and are thus inconceivable without it” (Hjelmslev, 1961: 48). For if a ‘sign’ were to lose one or both of its functives (i.e. its terminals of content and expression), or the function that contracts them as functives, then it would cease to be a sign.

The sign function is in itself a solidarity. Expression and content are solidary – they necessarily presuppose each other. An expression is expression only by virtue of being an expression of a content, and a content is content only by virtue of being a content of an expression.

(Hjelmslev, 1961: 48–49)

This insistence on solidarity acts as a kind of “prophylaxis against signifier fetishism”, says Gary Genosko (1998: 179); or rather, a prophylaxis against *signifier dissemination*, perhaps. “Therefore – except by an artificial isolation – there can be no content without an expression, or expressionless content; neither can there be an expression without a content, or content-less expression” (Hjelmslev, 1961: 49). In other words, what Guattari stumbles upon in Hjelmslev is the reassertion of ‘mutual presupposition’, but no longer in terms of a “double entity” (Saussure, 1974: 65) that is bound together through (arbitrary) association. For Saussure, it is always a matter of wholes and parts, which Lacan – amongst others – will delight in shattering (once bound, forever gagged, so to speak). For Hjelmslev, however, the sign is not a ‘double entity’, but a single function. Guattari’s intuition was that this functional approach was amenable to forging a semiotics of multiplicity and reversibility. Hjelmslev’s *sign function* will become, for Guattari, a full-blown *sign machine* (Guattari, 2006, 2011).

By applying a *functional* – rather than an associative, an algorithmic, or indeed an anagrammatic – logic to the sign, there are no longer *two* irreversible planes, realms, or kingdoms (i.e. the mass of more or less well formed signifiers and the mass of more or less well formed signifieds) that are more or less well articulated bi-univocally with one another, but rather there is a *single* functional (machinic) plane with *reversible* (foldable) functives. “The terms *expression plane* and *content plane* and, for that matter, *expression* and *content* are chosen in conformity with established notions and are quite arbitrary”, says Hjelmslev (1961: 60), rather disconcertingly. “Their functional definition provides no justification for calling one, and not the other, of these entities *expression*, or one, and not the other, *content*. . . . They are each defined only oppositively and relatively, as mutually

opposed functives of one and the same function". In other words, although the sign function operates between two planes, these planes are not given in advance, and in want of connexion, but are an effect of the functional operation itself. The sign function is *differential*. It differentiates (splits) into *distinct planes*. But such a distinction is reversible in the differential. What matters, then, is *difference*. Without this differential the sign function would collapse into redundancy and cease to operate. Consequently, for Hjelmslev, a *mono-planar* structure is symbolic rather than semiotic (e.g. in chess the entities are isomorphic with their interpretations). (For a subtle and profound analysis of the notions of 'sign' and 'symbol' in Freud, Saussure, Hjelmslev, and Lacan, see Arrivé, 1992). Moreover, since the sign function is differential rather than binary it can express any number of planes. Indeed, Hjelmslev (1970: 106) mentions in passing that "we must also reckon with the possibility that a language may turn out . . . to have three or more planes, but it would be absurd to suppose that such a structure is found in any everyday language and we can therefore ignore the possibility in our present discussion". With this act of compression, the multiplicity of sense was flattened out to just meaning and reference, and all the rest was squeezed out. One does not need to turn to 'affect', however, to discover that there is more to sense than meaning and reference. The depths of sense remain to be plumbed even within the twofold compression of everyday language (Deleuze, 1990).

By opening up the possibility of multiple planes that would be irreducible to a mono-plane, Hjelmslev thereby anticipated Deleuze and Guattari's (1988) 'rhizomes', 'assemblages', and 'multiplicities' (all with $n - 1$ dimensions, with the One 'subtracted' from the Multiple, so that immanence takes flight from transcendence). We are reminded of an ambivalent and enigmatic phrase that Jacques Derrida was fond of using, '*plus d'un*', which could be variously translated as 'more of one' or 'more than one', but also 'no more one' or 'no more of one'. All is fissured, cracked, and splintered. Each and every 'One' is shattered through and through. This vacillating, differentiating, and disseminating '*plus d'un*' that cannot be counted upon is the sense in which the operation of the sign function – the sign machine – produces "a single plane of consistency unfolding in multiple strata" (Dosse, 2011: 232).

Now, according to Hjelmslev, if one compares different languages so as to "extract, or subtract, the factor that is common to them and that remains common to all languages" (Hjelmslev, 1961: 50), then one will discover a 'common extract' that he calls *purport* (matter, sense). Purport is the unformed, amorphous mass that is nevertheless susceptible to semiotic formation, which thereby becomes what Hjelmslev calls *substance*. ("His *form* is our *code*. His *substance* is our *flow*", was how Guattari (2006: 202) originally pitched Hjelmslev's terminology to Deleuze.) But in keeping with his emphasis on the reversibility of the sign function, there is a purport of both content *and expression*, as well as a substance of both content *and expression*; just as there is a form of both expression *and content*. In short, both the plane of expression and the plane of content have their regions of formlessness (purport, matter), their array of forms (casts, nets, moulds), and their discrete formations (semiotic substances). Accordingly, the sign function articulates a sextuplet of content-form and expression-form, content-substance

and expression-substance, and content-purport and expression-purport (or even an octuplet, if one is inclined to include the a-signifying sub-atomic particles of content and expression that Hjelmslev calls *figuræ*, those elementary morsels below the threshold of sense that constitute the raw material out of which signs will come to be composed).

[T]he unformed purport extractable from all these linguistic chains is formed differently in each language. Each language lays down its own boundaries within the amorphous ‘thought-mass’. . . . It is like one and the same handful of sand that is formed in quite different patterns, or like the cloud in the heavens that changes shape in Hamlet’s view from minute to minute. Just as the same sand can be put into different molds, and the same cloud take on ever new shapes, so also the same purport is formed or structured differently in different languages. . . . Purport remains, each time, substance for a new form, and has no possible existence except through being substance for one form or another. We thus recognize in the linguistic *content*, in its process, a specific *form*, the *content-form*, which is independent of, and stands in arbitrary relation to, the *purport*, and forms it into a *content-substance*.

(Hjelmslev, 1961: 51–52)

Content, then, has its own form (*content-form*) as well as its own substance (*content-substance*). So too for expression (*expression-form* and *expression-substance*). Hence the parallelism of Hjelmslev’s terminology: *expression-purport* and *content-purport*; *expression-form* and *content-form*; and *expression-substance* and *content-substance*. In his book on Michel Foucault, Deleuze offers a wonderful example of this six-fold typology:

The content has both a form and a substance: for example, the form is prison and the substance is those who are locked up, the prisoners (who? why? how?). The expression also has a form and a substance: for example the form is penal law and the substance is ‘delinquency’ in so far as it is the object of statements. Just as penal law as a form of expression defines a field of sayability (the statements of delinquency), so prison as a form of content defines a place of visibility (‘panopticism,’ that is to say a place where at any moment one can see everything without being seen).

(Deleuze, 1988: 47)

Content-substance and expression-substance exist only by virtue of the content-form and the expression-form, “which appear by the form’s being projected on to the purport, just as an open net casts its shadow down on an undivided surface” (Hjelmslev, 1961: 57). “In this metaphor”, says Winfried Nöth (1990: 69), “the ‘undivided surface’ is the purport, the ‘open net’ is the form, and the ‘shadow’ is the substance”. This is why the sign function gives rise to *incorporeal* events.

The sign is . . . a sign for a content-substance and a sign for an expression-substance. It is in this sense that the sign can be said to be a sign for

something. [There is] no justification for calling the sign a sign merely for the content-substance, or (what nobody has thought of, to be sure) merely for the expression-substance. The sign is a two-sided entity, with a Janus-like perspective in two directions. . . : ‘outwards’ toward the expression-substance and ‘inwards’ toward the content-substance.

(Hjelmslev, 1961: 58)

Many following in the wake of Saussure and Lacan have mistaken the signifier for merely the expression-substance and expression-form, respectively, to the exclusion of the signified qua content-substance or content-form (i.e. the sign under erasure; the sign rendered inoperative; the sign malfunctioning). Guattari, for his part, used Hjelmslev’s functional sign to break out of the double bind of Saussure’s structural sign and Lacan’s algorithmic sign, and in so doing replenished the wealth of expression that had been crushed and squandered by signifier fetishism.

Guattari’s Hjelmslev

This linguistics of the signifier was to be replaced by a completely different linguistics of flux.

(Dosse, 2011: 231)

For Hjelmslev, then, the twofold distinction between the plane of expression and the plane of content is ‘overlain’ and ‘cut across’ by a triple distinction between purport, substance, and form. A sign is not the *double* articulation of signifier and signified, but a *six-fold* articulation of content, expression, form, substance, and purport. “This is a *crossroads machine*”, says Guattari (2006: 205). “It’s the conjunction of two deterritorialization processes, a disjunctive synthesis for an inscription machine. . . . But what’s annoying, as far as I’m concerned, is that there are planes and not *a* plane, a pure plane of consistency, of the filiation of deterritorialized machinic inscriptions”. Hjelmslev remains faithful to the ‘pseudo-dualism’ of content and expression, of signified and signifier, whilst nevertheless betraying this fidelity through reversion.

Why pseudo? Because . . . it’s implied that these terms are *absolutely reversible*. . . . Hjelmslev’s axiomatic machinism . . . spills out onto two planes: that of the signified – content – and that of the signifier – expression. Impossible once and for all to call it quits with Papa Saussure. Not to mention that form conserves a taste of eternity and substance a taste of transcendence, the signified keeps one foot in spirit and the signifier keeps one foot in matter. And yet, Hjelmslev, after the *Prolegomena*, did everything he could to mess this all up. It’s pure *strata*, he started to say. Substance and form are a pure relation of *manifestation*.

(Guattari, 2006: 204)

For Guattari, then, there are not just two planes of content and expression, but a single plane of consistency with innumerable strata and countless sign functions/sign machines. Each is *plus d'un*. Each is manifold. “One does indeed find folds everywhere”, quipped Deleuze (1995: 156). Guattari highlights three ‘regimes of signs’ or specific formalisations of expression. The first is what he calls ‘*non-semiotic encodings*’ or ‘*natural encodings*’, which function without the need for a semiotic substance; without the need for signs (e.g. the genetic code or photosynthesis). They encode directly, without recourse to an intermediary inscription or script. By way of illustration, Guattari and Deleuze return time and again to the ‘machinic’ encounter between a wasp and an orchid that deterritorialises each in relation to the other whilst reterritorialising them transversally as a conjoint becoming-other (a *becoming-wasp* of the orchid and a *becoming-orchid* of the wasp; a block of becoming that is *plus d'un*): “the production of a continuum of intensities in a nonparallel and asymmetrical evolution . . . a capturing, a possession, a plus-value, but never a reproduction or an imitation”; “the capture of a fragment of the code, and not the reproduction of an image” (Deleuze and Guattari, 1986: 13–14). Each becomes implicated in the explication of the other. Each is *plus d'un*.

With machines the question is one of connection or non-connection, without conditions, without any need to render an account to any third party. It is from that that the surplus-value of encoding originates. The situation is like that of the [wasp] which, by being there, became part of the genetic chain of the orchid. The specific event passes directly into the chain of encoding until another machinic event links up with a different temporalization, a different conjunction.

(Guattari, 1984: 125)

The second regime is what Guattari calls ‘*signifying semiologies*’, which are those sign systems that employ semiotically formed substances to make sense. This regime has two kinds of sign system. On the one hand, what he calls ‘*symbolic semiologies*’ or ‘*presignifying semiologies*’, which employ various semiotic substances, each with its own autonomous territory, such as a semiotics of gesture, of hysteria, or of clouds (e.g. Pearson, 1992; Hustvedt, 2011; Hamblyn, 2001, respectively). On the other hand, what he calls ‘*semiologies of signification*’, where all manner of “substances of expression (of sound, sight, touch, and so on) are centred upon a single signifying substance. This is the ‘dictatorship of the signifier’” (Guattari, 1984: 75). This is also the vortex of signifying slurry into which everything plunges: the vortex of nonsense around which the ‘mania for interpretation’ and the ‘delirium of capital’ revolve (Genosko, 2009, 2012). Semiologies of signification work by “crushing all that wealth of expression, all that opening-out to reality” (Guattari, 1984: 79). The gloopy mush that flows from this “machine of semiotic disempowerment” (Guattari, 2016: 122) bathes the world in an insipid blue-grey, which, as Jean-François Lyotard (1998) reminds us, is the

ghostly and ghastly colour of exchange-value, money, and capital. Hereinafter, all signs are signs of signs.

There is a simple general formula for the signifying regime of the sign (the signifying sign): every sign refers to another sign, and only to another sign, ad infinitum. That is why, at the limit, one can forgo the notion of the sign, for what is retained is not principally the sign's relation to a state of things it designates, or to an entity it signifies, but only the formal relation of sign to sign insofar as it defines a so-called signifying chain. The limitlessness of signification replaces the sign. . . . It is this amorphous continuum that for the moment plays the role of the 'signified,' but it continually glides beneath the signifier, for which it serves only as a medium or wall: the specific forms of all contents dissolve in it.

(Deleuze and Guattari, 1988: 112)

Finally, the third regime of signs is what he calls '*a-signifying semiotics*' or '*post-signifying semiotics*', which use the signifying semiologies of the second regime of signs as "an instrument of semiotic de-territorialization, making it possible for the semiotic fluxes to form new connections with the most deterritorialized material fluxes. Such connections operate independently of whether or not they signify anything to somebody" (Guattari, 1984: 75). The avant-garde has taught us that the destiny of every sign is to be led astray and forced to work otherwise. "For nonsignifying language anything will do", declare Deleuze and Guattari (1984: 240); "no flow is privileged in this language, which remains indifferent to its substance or its support". "To put it another way: at this level, absolutely anything goes – any ideology, or even religion will do, (sic) even the most archaic: all that matters is that it be used as the raw material of existence" (Guattari, 1992: 20). Hereinafter, there are nothing but flows and interruptions, implications and explications, and experiments and becomings. And here we finally see the vital importance of Hjelmslev for Guattari and Deleuze:

a substance is said to be formed when a flow enters into a relationship with another flow, such that the first defines a content and the second, an expression. The deterritorialized flows of content and expression are in a state of conjunction or reciprocal precondition that constitutes figures as the ultimate units of contents and expressions. These figures do not derive from a signifier. . . ; they are nonsigns, or rather nonsignifying signs, points-signs having several dimensions, flows-breaks or schizzes that form images through their coming together in a whole, but that do not maintain any identity when they pass from one whole to another.

(Deleuze and Guattari, 1984: 240–241)

There are, then, always *several* regimes of signs in play (*plus d'un*), the multiplicity of which *resists* any power take-over that would collapse or reduce the severalty into a unity (Deleuze, 2008). By cross-cutting and traversing one another, by taking up, processing, and emitting each other's signs (e.g. 'voting with one's feet'), the regimes could be called an *assemblage*. Most geographers will be familiar with the notion of 'assemblage' (Anderson et al., 2012), which Guattari and Deleuze developed and refined in numerous books. The notion is loosely taken to mean an arrangement of disparate materials that performs some work. It is a structural and diagrammatic notion, but also a functional and machinic notion (Watson, 2009). An assemblage, then, is not simply a performative gathering of heterogeneous materials (*it operates, it performs, it produces, it transforms, etc.*), which has more or less severalty and more or less consistency (*plus d'un*), since *it* is also torn between the work of the *structure* and the work of the *machine* (Guattari, 1984; Lazzarato, 2014; Raunig, 2010). For Guattari, while structure is "the generality characterized by a position of exchange or substitution of particularities", the machine has the "function of detaching a signifier as a representative, as a 'differentiator', as a causal break, different in kind from the structurally established order of things" (Guattari, 1984: 111 and 114, respectively). To put it crudely, while *structures* shut down and close down, always resorting to more of the same (the same prefab possibilities, prefab statements, prefab interpretations, etc.), *machines* break down and fall apart, always leaving themselves open to tinkering and experimentation, and to a break through.

Content and expression are machinic fabrications rather than structural components, and since each has its own forms and substances, there is no need for one of them to *stand in for* the other; rather, they *interweave* with one another, and *intervene* in one another, according to the machinations of the various regimes of signs, abstract diagrams, and assemblages that mobilise them. Paradoxically, content and expression ordinarily stand apart from one another, without any natural affinity or essential symmetry. They must be *forced* together, so that expression *acts on* content, and content *acts on* expression. For "signs are at work in things themselves just as things extend into or are deployed through signs" (Deleuze and Guattari, 1988: 87). In other words, the conjunction of content *and* expression entails dis/connection, dis/assembly, de/construction, pro/duction, trans/duction, and trans/formation. Deleuze and Guattari famously called this work 'desiring-production' – "To desire consists of this: to make cuts, to let certain contrary flows run, to take samplings of the flows, to cut the chains that are wedded to the flows" (Deleuze, in Guattari, 2009: 53). And all of this "means nothing. There is no meaning, no interpretation to be given, no significance" (Deleuze, in Guattari, 2009: 54). In other words, there are just "sign machines" that function, malfunction, and function otherwise (Guattari, 2016: 118). And what they produce is the real – the real as process, as fabrication, as artifice.

Conclusion

INTERVENTION: Lacan, is psychoanalysis revolutionary?

Now, there's a good question!

(Lacan, 2007: 200)

By forging a trajectory from Louis Hjelmslev to Félix Guattari, we have wrought a constellation of geo-graphical (earth-writing) terms that give spatial expression to what Guattari and Deleuze call *schizoanalysis*. This constellation includes: points, lines, surfaces, planes, series, segments, strata, joints, folds, flotsam and jetsam, slips and slides, assemblages, arrangements, articulations, multiplicities, structures, rhizomes, diagrams, machines, and transversals. One could just as easily call it *geo-philosophy* (Bonta and Protevi, 2004; Deleuze and Guattari, 1994; Gasché, 2014; Woodard, 2013). After Guattari and Deleuze, geography should give a Spinozist expression to *schizoanalytic cartographies*. The 'schizo' is not, then, a *figure of madness* or of *reason unhinged* (isn't it always?), but a *creative energy*: splitting, differentiating, deviating, mutating, evolving, explicating, implicating, etc. The 'schizo' is the gust of fresh air that gets everything moving, the molecular twists and turns that are eternally tearing open and pulling apart the very fabric of space and time: *schizomosis* and *chaosmosis* (Guattari, 1995, 2013).

Schizzes have to do with heterogeneous chains, and as their basic unit use detachable segments or mobile stocks resembling building blocks or flying bricks. We must conceive of each brick as having been launched from a distance and as being composed of heterogeneous elements: containing within it not only an inscription with signs from different alphabets, but also various figures, plus one or several straws, and perhaps a corpse. Cutting into the flows (*le prélèvement du flux*) involves detachment of something from a chain.
(Deleuze and Guattari, 1984: 39–40)

Accordingly, “the revolutionary period . . . is when the machine represents social subjectivity for the structure – as opposed to the phase of oppression and stagnation, when the superstructures are imposed as impossible representations of machine effects” (Guattari, 1984: 117). The militant task of schizoanalysis, then, is not to incite desire – *Revolt! Enjoy!* – but to repeat differently – *Deterritorialize! Refabricate!* For “the unconscious doesn't mean anything: because machines don't mean anything. They merely work, produce and break down, because all we're looking for is how something functions in the real” (Deleuze, in Guattari, 2009: 76). When all is said and done, then, we need machines, rather than structures, to take to the streets, and we need the empty squares of human habitation – from the smallest cubbyhole to the largest cosmopolis – to buzz with “schizzes, points-signs, or flows-breaks that collapse the wall of the signifier, pass through, and continue on beyond” (Deleuze and Guattari, 1984: 242). Or again: “the schizzes-flows” are “forces that escape coding, scramble the codes, and flee in all directions”

(Seem, in Deleuze and Guattari, 1984: xxi). Finally, it is invariably assumed that a revolution requires a great many and a huge number, if only to lend weight to the enormous effort that it takes to overturn a ‘whole’ world – and the inordinate effort that it takes to keep it upturned thereafter. But this is not so. Revolutions hinge on the *plus d’un*. An *and* or a *but* may suffice. This is always how a world shatters: from the hairline cracks that run through the middle of things.

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