

BATAILLE AFTER DELEUZE: TEMPORALITY AT THE MARGINS OF PHILOSOPHY¹

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Prologue - Convergences: Departures from the History of Philosophy

In *Qu'est-ce que la philosophie?* [*What is Philosophy?*] Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guatarri follow through with their deterritorializing ethos of *Capitalism and Schizophrenia* by explicating that philosophy ought not to be inscribed within history or historicity. The time of philosophy is that of Bergsonian *durée* [duration], wherein time is not constructed as a linear succession of separate moments, but as a continuous flow of temporality, where every past is contained within the present and thus every moment has its place. Deleuze uses the distinction of the “virtual” and the “actual” to designate the ways in which the past and the present co-exist, whereas the past is “virtually” present at any given moment, thus establishing an internal relationship between the past, the present and the future.²

This configuration of time as pure *durée* plays a primordial role in understanding Deleuze’s philosophy as that which renounces the historicity of philosophy inherited from the Hegelian and the Heideggerian tradition.³ For Deleuze, philosophy creates concepts and draws planes (of immanence), but philosophy as immanence needs to break off from history in order to create concepts; although these concepts may very well become part of history, history does

¹ I would like to thank James Tobias for his comments and suggestions regarding an earlier draft of this essay.

² For Deleuze’s analysis of Bergson’s concept of *durée*, see *Bergsonism*.

³ «Hegel et Heidegger restent historicistes, dans la mesure où ils posent l’histoire comme un forme d’intériorité dans laquelle le concept développe ou dévoile nécessairement son destin» (91).

not generate them (*Qu'est-ce que la Philosophie?* 92). Likening his definition of philosophy to *durée*, Deleuze explains that « *la philosophie est devenir, non pas histoire ; elle est coexistence des plans, non pas successions des systèmes* » (59).⁴ The concept of *durée* as differentiated yet coexisting moments of time informs Deleuze's critique of the neo-Platonist and Aristotelian concept of being as "distributive" and "hierarchical" (*Difference and Repetition* 35). Deleuze rejects the western metaphysics of being as a finite and stable entity (Descartes' God, Kant's transcendental I, Hegel's spirit) by positing that identity exists as "a principle *become*" that revolves around the concepts of difference and repetition. Drawing from the notion that in *durée* the past is always present and Nietzsche's concept of the eternal return, Deleuze is able to articulate an ontology of becoming in which previous identities are maintained while simultaneously being differentiated:

Eternal return cannot mean the return of the Identical because it presupposes a world (that of the will to power) in which all previous identities have been abolished and dissolved. Returning is being, but only the being of becoming. The eternal return does not bring back 'the same', but returning constitutes the only Same of that which becomes. Returning is the becoming-identical of becoming itself. Returning is thus the only identity, but identity as a secondary power; the identity of difference, the identical which belongs to the different, or turns around the different. Such an identity, produced by difference, is determined as 'repetition'. (41)

Rosi Braidotti notes that contrary to the humanist concept of stable identities, Deleuze's posthumanist concept of becoming rests on "a non-unitary, multi-layered, dynamic subject." "To speak of becoming as 'eternal returns'," she adds, "refers to the discontinuous regularity which marks the continuous present of energetic flows" (119). In correspondence with the revolutionary counter-ideology of *Anti-Oedipus*, Braidotti observes that Deleuze's objective is to free desire from an enslaving linguistic model of signification and liberate the body from "the despotic power of the Phallic signifier" (124). Hence, the body is configured as a "Body without Organs," "a body freed from the codes of phallogocentric functions of identity" (124). For Deleuze, the concept of being is inscribed within an oppressive ideology of linguistic and historical determination. This conceptualization of an identical and stable self that does not consider the way in which we experience time as *durée*, as the continuous experience of all previous moments contained within the present. In contrast, the concept

⁴ "Philosophy is becoming, not history; it is the **coexistence of planes**, not the succession of systems" (*Philosophy?* 59).

of becoming, as the ontology of the Body without Organs, emerges from the conceptual plane of immanence—which implies experimentation and excess (*philosophie?* 44). Inspired by Bergson's concept of *durée* and Nietzsche's *eternal return*, Deleuze diverges from the primacy of being that has characterized the history of Western philosophy by proposing the ontology of becoming: of being in the continuous sense.

In similar fashion, Bataille also creates a radical break with the history of Western Philosophy, and in particular with the Hegelianism taught by Alexandre Kojève: a dialectical model of philosophical inquiry that was to preside over French philosophy until the rise of structuralism in the 1960s. Like many of his contemporaries, Bataille regularly attended Kojève's courses on *The Phenomenology of Spirit* at the *École pratique des Hautes Etudes* from 1933 to 1939. While he recognized the validity of conceptualizing desire as a propelling force, he rejected the Hegelian system as it required subjugation to the teleology of the end of history. In "From Restricted to General Economy," Jacques Derrida explains in considerable detail Bataille's response to Hegelianism. Derrida reads Bataille's anti-/non-philosophical project as a response to western philosophical discourse, dubbing it a "general economy" as different from Hegel's conception of phenomenology as a "restricted economy" (271). The former evades circumscription in a system of meaning by the continuous and self-perpetuating movement of transgression, as it engages in free play with the dialectic, entering and validating it as much as it exits and sublimates it. Writing in a general economy transgresses the very *logos* of discourse and stretches beyond the horizon of thought. And so, Derrida perceives that the movement of transgression belonging to a general economy performs an *Aufhebung* of the Hegelian *Aufhebung* (275).

With regard to language, Derrida considers Bataille's advocacy for "silence" as a form of writing based on a "sliding," a sliding "toward other words, other objects, of course, which announce sovereignty" (262). This form of writing inscribes rupture in the text and proposes a concept of an absolute unknowledge, Bataille's "general economy," which comprehends Hegel's phenomenology of spirit as "absolute knowledge" (271). The former evades circumscription in a system of meaning by the continuous and self-perpetuating movement of transgression, as it engages in free play with the dialectic, entering and validating it as much as it exits and sublimates it. Writing in a general economy transgresses the very *logos* of discourse and stretches beyond the horizon of thought.

Bataille's project gears itself towards *non-savoir*, which is anti-

philosophical, and reverts to Nietzsche's will to power as a means to act upon the imposing overdetermination of Hegel's posthistory.⁵ In fact, Bataille is considered to be one of the very first thinkers to have reintroduced Nietzsche's philosophy into France⁶ and like Deleuze's, Bataille's departure from the history of philosophy is also inspired by Nietzsche. The movement of Nietzsche's eternal return can be mapped onto Bataille's concept of transgression as a continuous and self-perpetuating centrifugal movement of its encounter with the limit, and its subsequent subversion. The topography of transgression is the crossing of an accepted boundary, i.e. a geometrical "transgression of the limit," but not as a unique and isolated event within a two-dimensional Cartesian vectoriality of time and space. In this sense, it is the dynamic trajectory of transgression proper—its continuous de-territorialization and re-territorialization as a recurring event—that converges with the concept of becoming as eternal return.

The theoretical concepts brought forth by Bataille reach beyond the horizon of philosophy and come to realization in self-erasure in his fictional work. Considered "pornographic," Bataille's earlier texts are an incarnation of his thought, wherein by tapping into the intensities of excess, he emphasizes the physicality of a radical experience of being as ecstatic multiplicity.⁷ In *Story of the Eye*, the unsocketed eye invokes the sliced eye of Buñuel wherein the fragmented gaze undoes the Aristotlean primacy of seeing over imagining by undermining their distinction and subverts the fixity of identity and the nexus of representation by projecting them into the realm of the *Formless*. *Story of the Eye* is the story of the "I" that is an "Eye," an eye that is scarred and mutilated, the fragmented prism which retraces the *inner experience* and through which the subject loses itself through the *disorientation of all the senses*. As such, it retraces the journey of Rimbaud's *Le Bateau Ivre* as experienced by the *voyant*, the "I/eye" which is always other.

For Bataille, this radical experience is "being without delay" or "immediacy": *jouissance*. *Jouissance* celebrates the fusion of beings as continuity of Being and a continuous coming as the recurrence of desire. As an embodied, immanent experience *jouissance* is both the pinnacle and void of subjectivity as expressed metaphorically by *la*

⁵ See « Un disciple de Kojève très turbulent » in *Le Magazine Littéraire* 243 (June 1987).

⁶ See Bataille, *On Nietzsche* (New York: Paragon House, 1992).

⁷ In the preface to *Le Bleu du ciel*, Bataille writes: « *Un peu plus, un peu moins, tout homme est suspendu aux récits, aux romans, qui lui révèlent la vérité multiple de la vie. Seul ces récits, lus parfois dans les transes, le situent devant son destin* » (7).

petite mort—literally, “the little death”—that characterizes the orgasmic experience. The expression attempts to describe the state of oblivion, the loss of psychological cognizance, as well as the simultaneous state of catharsis and release, immanence and transcendence, which is triggered by sexual bliss as a moment situated beyond its horizon, thus recalibrating our experience in and out of language as an ontological experience. Our experience of the world is not exclusively mediated by our capacity to come to being through language, but also through the material engagement of our senses.

The trajectories of thought briefly outlined herein draw a zone of proximity between Bataille and Deleuze, wherein Deleuze’s philosophy of becoming converges with Bataille’s anti-philosophy of *Erotisme*. Their respective departure from the plateau of “western” philosophy, i.e. “The History of Philosophy,” can be traced to the point where they intersect with Bergson’s and Nietzsche’s conceptual planes and borrow the concepts of *durée*, the eternal return and the death of God to dismantle the concept of a fixed and unitary self with the dynamic notions of becoming and *jouissance*.

1. Deleuzean Multiplicity

As we have seen, for Deleuze, philosophy is a becoming; it rejects the concept of a centralized and stable identity and eludes a concept of being that is inscribed in linear time. But to create philosophy as a conceptual plane of immanence, i.e. a “transcendental empiricism,” Deleuze explains that becoming is:

... le rapport constitutif de la philosophie avec la non-philosophie. Le devenir est toujours double, et c’est ce double devenir qui constitue le peuple à venir et la nouvelle terre. Le philosophe doit devenir non-philosophe, pour que la non-philosophie devienne la terre et le peuple de la philosophie. (105)⁸

By relating philosophy to non-philosophy, one easily perceives how Deleuze’s project converges with Bataille’s. Bataille’s anti-philosophy is in fact that nonphilosophy that understands philosophy for it to be(come) philosophy. Even though he explains earlier that the plane of philosophy is pre-philosophical, it is only so when it is considered in itself, independently of the concepts that will occupy it, and that

⁸ “...the constitutive relationship of philosophy with non-philosophy. Becoming is always double, and it is this double becoming that constitutes a people to come and the new land. The philosopher must become nonphilosopher so that nonphilosophy becomes the earth and people of philosophy” (*What is Philosophy?* 109).

non-philosophy intervenes where the plane of philosophy meets with chaos.⁹

Deleuze's concept of becoming is intrinsically linked to his reading of Bergson and Nietzsche; the repetition of difference in itself, which produces multiplicity, is predicated on the notion that in Bergsonian *durée*, time is not constructed as a linear succession of separate moments, but as a dynamic whole that contains the past, present, and future. While the concept of becoming as multiplicity and as a leap and process makes its first elaborated appearance in *Nietzsche and Philosophy* and reappears again in *Difference and Repetition*, it concretizes itself in his work with Félix Guattari in *A Thousand Plateaus*. In the plateau entitled "1730: Becoming-Intense, Becoming-Animal, Becoming-Imperceptible..." Deleuze and Guattari elaborate on the concept of becoming as neither static nor mimetic (238). As the process of desire, becoming is described thus:

certainly not imitating or identifying with something; neither is it regressing nor progressing; neither is it corresponding, establishing corresponding relations; neither is it producing, producing a filiation or producing through filiation. Becoming is a verb with a consistency all its own; it does not reduce to, or lead back to, 'appearing', 'being', 'equalling' (239).

Becoming is not a state of being like being, it is a "verb," a process, a continuous action. In the wake of its movement, it creates connections with other beings and things, "alliances" or "symbioses" as Deleuze and Guattari call them (238), thus allowing these heterogeneous "multiplicities" to populate the plane of immanence. Insofar as "[b]ecoming and multiplicity are the same thing ... [it] *continuously transform[s] itself into a string of other multiplicities, according to its thresholds and doors*" (emphasis theirs, 249). In fact, these thresholds represent the multiple becomings of becoming: woman/animal/insect/imperceptible, the process through which one enters in symbiotic relationship with the universe, not as a Heideggerian "being-in-the-world" but as a "becoming-world" of some sorts: « On n'est pas dans le monde, on devient avec le monde, on devient en le contemplant. Tout est vision, devenir. On devient univers. Devenir animal, végétal, moléculaire, devenir zéro » (*Philosophie?* 160).¹⁰

⁹ Deleuze explains that «Le plan de la philosophie est pré-philosophique tant que l'on considère en lui-même indépendamment des concepts qui viennent l'occuper, mais la non-philosophie se trouve là où le plan affronte le chaos. *La philosophie a besoin d'une non-philosophie qui la comprend, elle a besoin d'une compréhension non-philosophique, comme l'art a besoin de non-art, et la science de non science.*» (*Qu'est-ce que la Philosophie?* 205-6).

¹⁰ "We are not in the world, we become with the world; we become by contem-

Contrary to the Cartesian *Cogito*, Kant's transcendental I, or Hegel's "spirit," as a non-unitary, non-stable, undetermined identity, the differential self of becoming is "only a threshold, a door, a becoming between two multiplicities" (249). To this effect, Deleuze argues that Kant introduces a "crack" in the concept of the self in Descartes' cogito by introducing the Other. At the moment Kant questions theology, "the subject can henceforth represent its own spontaneity only as that of an Other ... A Cogito for a dissolved Self: the Self of "I think" includes in its essence a receptivity of intuition in relation to which I is already an other" (*Difference and Repetition* 58). The I of becoming enters in relationship with other becomings, and echoing Rimbaud's "*Je est un autre*", becoming is a multiplicity of successive becoming-others to the point of self-erasure: "to reduce oneself to an abstract line, a trait, in order to find one's zone of indiscernibility with other traits, and in this way enter the haecceity and impersonality of the creator" (280).

Braidotti's reading of Deleuze multiplies the sites of convergence between his thought and that of Bataille's by emphasizing becoming as the self encounter with the other, excess, the erotic nature of thought, the fusion of mind and body, and *jouissance*. She picks up on the notion that becoming involves entering into symbiotic relationships with the other and others, and by considering fluidity and affectivity, Braidotti argues that "[b]ecoming woman/animal/insect is an affect that flows, like writing, it is a composition, a location that needs to be constructed together with, that is to say in the encounter with, other" (119). She further notes that the various stages of becoming entail an erasure and a recomposition of the boundaries between self and others, to the point of self-erasure and that the "continuous present of energetic flows ... push the subject to his or her limit, in a constant encounter with external, different others. The nomadic subject as a non-unitary entity is simultaneously self-propelling and hereto-defined or outward-bound" (119). Below, I will explore the ways in which the notion of this limit-experience is analogous to Bataille's concept of *jouissance* as attained in *the inner experience* and how the "self-propelling" movement of the nomadic subject is similar to the self-perpetuating movement of transgression's sublation of the limit.

plating it. Everything is vision, becoming. We become universe. Becoming animal, vegetal, molecular, becoming zero" (*What is Philosophy?* 169).

2. Bataillean Erotisme

In *The Order of Things*, Foucault reveals the ways in which the construction of a scientific body of knowledge has defranchised the capacity for language to reproduce the immediacy of forms. And so, what Foucault perceives in Bataille—as well as in other writers such as Nietzsche, Sade, and Blanchot—is an encounter with the practical limit of language as a system of knowledge, whereas transgression undoes that limit. In that sense, it is important to distinguish between a normative definition of transgression as that which crosses or exceeds conceptual or physical boundaries with the more specific and dynamic notion proposed by Bataille. His interest lies in the ways in which it interacts with the limit(s) it supposedly transgresses on both a formal and conceptual level. Formally, the movement of transgression maps itself onto the Nietzschean trajectory of the eternal return as that which infinitely recurs with a difference. Conceptually, the limit that is transgressed is not only the breakdown of language in the sliding of words—in the metaphor of *la petite mort* for instance—it is also the breakdown of the finitude of being, of being as finitude. For Foucault reading Bataille, transgression is both “pure and complicated,” for not only is it detached from the properties of shock and scandal, it confirms its own existence outside of any conventional system of thought:

Transgression is neither violence in a divided world (in an ethical world) nor a victory over limits (in a dialectical or revolutionary world) ... Transgression contains nothing negative, but affirms limited being—affirms the limitlessness into which it leaps as it opens this zone to existence for the first time. (35)

The idea that transgression affirms being passage echoes the notion that “becoming is the affirmation of being” that Deleuze articulates in both *Nietzsche and Philosophy* (178) and *Difference and Repetition* (23), wherein he links becoming with difference and multiplicity.

Following the assertion he made in *The Order of Things*, where he defined transgression more broadly as a rupture with language, in “A Preface to Transgression” Foucault links transgression with the appearance of the language of sexuality in the Marquis de Sade and the Nietzschean imperative of the death of God:

From the moment that Sade delivered his first words and marked out, in a single discourse, the boundaries of what suddenly became its kingdom, the language of sexuality has lifted us into the night where God is absent, and where all of our actions are addressed to this absence in a profanation which at once identifies it, dissipates it, exhausts itself in it, and restores it to the empty purity of its transgression. (31)

In advocating the power of language, and more specifically, the appearance of sexuality in language, Foucault argues that the language of eroticism leads to a questioning of language as a system of meaning (50). Yet, Foucault is careful not to advance the argument that this language opens the door to understanding our being of becoming; rather, in confirming the death of God, the language of sexuality reveals the void left by the absence of a transcendental signifier which situates our being within a system of signification. As language arranges and delineates our sensible experience of the world under an organizing principle; it does so in a linear configuration of time, whereas, as Bataille puts it, “we can never hope to attain a global view in one single supreme instant; language chops it into its component parts and connects them into a coherent explanation” (274). In other words, time, as it is configured by language, is not that Bergsonian *durée* where the Cartesian distinctions between mind and body, exterior and interior, are broken down in order to promote the possibility of an integrative process of perception and consciousness experienced as *durée*.

The elevation into the “night” of which Foucault speaks is no other than the possibility of thought in the absence of a transcendental signifier, an epistemic-ontology brought about by transgression. In the absence of God, or, as Bataille would put it in “The Preface to Madame Edwarda” (*Erotism* 269), confronted with the void left by his nothingness, our experience of the world ceased to be mediated by a system of knowledge that seeks to overcome its object in the dialectical movement of transcendence. In considering the legacies of the Marquis de Sade and Nietzsche, and thus acknowledging the necessary death of God, the death of a transcendental signifier brought forth by the language of sexuality, Bataille values the immediacy of experience over the transcendence of dialectic language, as driven by excess and desire toward *jouissance*; an *inner experience* of symbiotic intersubjectivity where the distinction between the inside and the outside, self and other, subject and object, are broken down.

In exploring the complex, multilayered, and ambivalent intersections between the existential planes of death and sexuality, eroticism and the sacred, excess and transgression, Bataille’s anti-philosophy of eroticism does not aim so much as to create a dialectic, wherein the subject transcends its object, but rather deploys them as differentiated lines of flight that converge toward a point of fusion. *Jouissance* is the symbiotic experience which fuses both mind and body, where the epistemologies of eroticism and the sacred, the distinctions between sexual excitement and death collapse into an immanent experience of (be)coming.

3. The Multiple Becomings of *Jouissance Féminine*

Bataille is concerned with uncovering the ontological potentialities that lie at the subject's experience of the limit, not to reaffirm the fundamental character of the subject or subjectivity; but rather to "tear" (*déchirer*) the subject from itself. This is done in such a way that the subject is no longer the subject as such and so, Bataille's emphasis on excess is situated in the experience of life at the limit, whereas life is experienced at its very threshold, the same threshold that constitutes the various stages of becoming outlined by Deleuze. Bataille's ontology requires the individual to position him/herself in attempting to recreate the pre-linguistic experience of being that is situated at a point where the individual is capable of recovering its being outside of the self as subject, outside of a system of meaning where the subject has been traversed by a transcendental signifier which positions it as a subject. Bataille posits that eroticism is not possible without the violation of one's sense of self and it is in this violent impulse that the fusion of beings can take place: "[t]he whole business of eroticism is to destroy the self-contained character of the participators as they are in their normal lives" (17).

This notion echoes the stage of Deleuze's becoming, from becoming-other to becoming-imperceptible. To allow for the fusion of being to take place in the throes of passion, we need first to throw ourselves in anguish and distress, the Heideggerean "angst" of the unfamiliar, [*Unheimlichkeit*]; we thus arrive at a state that is completely "other" than itself, in the sense that when two entities give way to authentic continuous intersubjectivity, we arrive at the discontinued subject's own death or annihilation (19-20). This process of tearing or de-subjectifying is a "limit-experience" as it tears the subject from itself so that subject(ive) experience is not exclusively revealed by language, and where the truth of being is revealed precisely in becoming imperceptible.

Following the example set by Nietzsche in *Beyond Good and Evil*, Bataille asks, "What is truth, if we think that which exceeds the possibility of thought?" (268), and he demonstrates how such possibilities are to be found in excess and transgression, in seeing the unfathomable, expressing the inexpressible, experiencing the impossible: the experience of *jouissance*. Bataillean *jouissance* can be traced through the ways in which excess and transgression perform simultaneous and perpetual multilayered sublimations in a topography of desire that exceeds the various levels of hermeneutic, symbolic, semiotic, and historical codification. In this sense, it is not the male experience of *jouissance phallique* which is subjugated to the phallic logic of the complex of castration. Rather, it is the ontological

multiplicity of a notion of *jouissance féminine* as articulated by the likes of Luce Irigaray, Hélène Cixous and Julia Kristeva, which challenges and expands on the theories developed by Jacques Lacan.¹¹ By pointing to the plurality by and through which women experience their sexuality, it subverts “the Phallic signifier” as Braidotti calls it, by freeing desire from the patriarchal system of order and signification. It is a process of desubjectivation that Deleuze has dubbed “Becoming-Woman.” As such, it destabilizes the very experience of *being* inscribed by a transcendental signified; it disrupts the notion of a fixated and identical self in the intensities and throes of eroticism, where each ecstatic moment perpetuates its displacement in the multiplicity of becoming.

Deleuze’s reading of Nietzsche’s eternal return in *Difference and Repetition* suggests that the will to power is an extreme intensity that propels one to the limits of existence, and that the overman represents that form of “noble energy” which is capable of transformation and subverts the hierarchies by installing a sort of “crowned anarchy” (41). Braidotti reminds us of Nietzsche’s observation that “most humans live in fear of a longing for that intensity which is alternatively labeled ‘passion’ and ‘ecstasy’ or ‘trauma’ and ‘anguish’; fear and desire for being transported beyond one’s self towards an outside, an outsider, an other whom one hopes will be kind and nurturing” (141), and consequently she argues that “[t]he process of becoming is collectively driven, that is to say relational and external; it is also framed by affectivity or desire, and is thus eccentric to rational control” (143). Moreover, Braidotti reads the Deleuzian rendition of Nietzschean anarchy as a sensuous “pan-erotic approach to the body” suggesting that thinking for Deleuze is in fact “enfleshed, erotic, and pleasure-driven” (124), an observation that situates the thought of Deleuze in close proximity with that of Bataille. In fact, she rather faithfully echoes Bataille’s concept of eroticism as a symbiosis of mind and body in the following observation regarding Deleuzian affectivity:

¹¹ In *Dictionnaire Le Robert*, Charles Baladier explains that Lacan first introduces the concept of *jouissance* in his elaboration of the difference between the sexes, distinguishing between *jouissance phallique* and *jouissance féminine*. He presupposes that desire in human beings is first most experienced in his/her relation to words and that as such, there is no “sexual relationship.” This implies that the subject, in the sexual act, does not encounter the object of desire that the other seems to present to him, nor is one capable of finding the plenitude that one expects from such an experience. In yearning for that impossible, the *jouissance absolue* which is associated with the symbolic father who possesses all the women of the horde, male subjects are constantly threatened by castration and hence are only capable of experiencing *jouissance phallique*, which remains inscribed in “lack” and not in the plenitude that the sexual act is supposed to bestow.

Philosophical nomadology shifts the balance of power away from the mind and on to the body. Even more significantly, it favours the unity of mind and body, not their binary opposition. The emphasis on affectivity here marks a pre-discursive moment in which one thinks without thinking about it, a phase in which thinking is just like breathing. (125).

More interestingly, with regard to the convergence between the concepts of becoming and *jouissance* she notes that “the ultimate frame or horizon for the processes of becoming is cosmic, the infinity of the ‘becoming-imperceptible.’ This used to be rendered in the old language of holism, fusion, with the universe, or a sort of oceanic feeling that Freud associated with female *jouissance*” (147).

For Bataille, the Death of God, or of any synthetic system that promotes transcendence over immanence, is made possible by the recursive experience of the transgression of limits in the ecstasy of excess. Mapped topographically onto the notion of eternal recurrence, this perpetual movement of displacement enables death *to come* into life in the infinity of possibilities as made possible by *jouissance*, the experience of the impossible. In other words, transfigured as “*la petite mort*,” the impossible possibility becomes an infinite recursive possibility. In *L'Histoire de l'œil*, death is transfigured as the becoming of *jouissance féminine*: the church scene wherein the eye of the sacrificed priest (i.e. God, the transcendental signified, being, “spirit”) becomes woman in the body of the “other” as an experience of the other evokes the *disorientation of all the senses* proper to Barthes’ notion of the *writerly* as an aesthetic experience.¹² In this passage the impossible possibility of being (death) is realized as the infinity of possibilities of becoming-other. In Derridean terms, *Jouissance* carries in itself the fundamental *trace of différance*. Seen from the perspective of Deleuze’s philosophy, Bataille’s notions of transgression and excess create a plane of immanence from which the experience of *jouissance féminine* emerges as a concept that connotes multiplicity and heterogeneity. In this sense, *jouissance* destabilizes the very experience of being as inscribed by a transcendental signifier; it disrupts the notion of an identical self by the intensities and throes of eroticism, where each ecstatic moment perpetuates the displacement of the self in multiple becomings.

Epilogue - Divergences? The Symbolic, Performativity, and Theoretical Praxis: a Question of Terminology?

This brief and preliminary comparison between Bataille and Deleuze is certainly useful, but in order to take the analysis further, we

¹² See *The Pleasure of the Text*. (Trans. Richard Miller. London: Cape, 1976): 14.

should also consider divergence: in other words, the difference between becoming woman and *jouissance feminine*. This is especially pertinent if we consider that when Deleuze and Guattari were at work on *A Thousand Plateaus*, they struggled to articulate a terminology for those kinds of sign systems which produce effects directly rather than symbolically (and hence, neither requiring nor producing subjectivity); Guattari suggested 'semiotic interactions' but Deleuze seems to have suggested 'diagrammatic interactions' instead; apparently Deleuze felt that 'semiotic interactions' was 'too *Tel Quel*.'

Although Braidotti seems to draw a clear parallel between *jouissance* and becoming, why did Deleuze feel the need to reject this terminology? Perhaps he felt that the work of the *Tel Quel* Group was too engrossed in textual practices and too removed from a materialism that he favored in his work with Guattari. This leads us, of course, to our original question: In which ways do *Becoming* and *Jouissance* diverge? We could address this by considering on the one hand the perspective that there seems to be some distinction between Deleuze's "affiliation" with philosophical praxis and Bataille's rejection of it (i.e. his "anti-philosophy") and on the other, the ways in which they each approach the problematics of language and stylistics.

Concerning the latter point, there appears to be a clear distinction if we were to believe that the former's use of language gestures towards the symbolic, while the latter towards affect and sensation. But at the same time, Deleuze's emphasis on the operative function of philosophy recalls the performative characteristic of the symbolic,¹³ and in addition, it would be improper to circumscribe Bataille's thought exclusively in terms of the symbolic his fictional praxis aims specifically at producing the sensations of 'limit-experience' in the act of reading/writing (i.e. "le moment de rage" that inspired Barthes' concept of *jouissance*), which he later conceptualized in his theoretical writings. In other words, the theory is performed textually in a language that is performative and which tends towards dispersion/dissemination and resists determination. There is also a way in which Bataille stumbles over a line which Deleuze crossed really only in terms of a stylistics (especially with Guattari), thus differentiating philosophy and art, which brings us back to the first point.

'Anti-philosophy' is perhaps what allows Bataille to aim a critical and philosophical art at a history of philosophy understood as

¹³ For a discussion of symbolic systems and performativity, see Marcel Hénaff's "Lévi-Strauss and the question of symbolism" in *The Cambridge Companion to Lévi-Strauss*.

canonical. But it seems that perhaps for Deleuze, particularly after Nietzsche (and Bataille), such an anti-philosophy would already be part of philosophical praxes if not theories. And at the same time, if we consider Deleuze's philosophy (like Derrida's) to be performative, Deleuze's status as a philosopher of the creative and Bataille's notion of anti-philosophy would also necessitate further investigation.

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