Deleuze
and Anarchism

Edited by Chantelle Gray van Heerden and Aragorn Eloff

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Contents

Introduction

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In an interview with Antonio Negri, philosopher Gilles Deleuze memorably states that he and his co-author of many books, Félix Guattari, remained Marxists throughout because of the emphasis Marxism places on capitalist dynamics, an aspect they deem essential to any political philosophy. We see in their individual and collaborative work, then, continued analyses of capitalism, as well as an exploration of mechanisms that can be implemented to prevent the formation of what they term the 'State apparatus' – or hierarchical sociopolitical structures. However, Deleuze and Guattari's insistence on these aspects, as well as the decentralisation of power and the production of the new, have led many anarchists to recognise an anarchist, rather than Marxist, 'sensibility' in their work. There has also, since the publication of Todd May's *The Political Philosophy of Poststructuralist Anarchism* (1994), been observable scholarly interest in this intersection. However, the fact remains that Deleuze and Guattari never identified as anarchists, despite the fact that their oeuvre belies this position through its steady consideration of revolutionary subjectivity and active political experimentation. While this project does not attempt to post hoc label Deleuze and Guattari anarchists, it does look at core anarchist principles in their work, such as non-hierarchical organisation and communalism, and prefigurative politics, action and labour. Prefiguration, which is one aspect of anarchist politics, refers to the enactment and construction of a new political present in the here and now and, as an organisational practice, overlaps in many ways with Deleuze and Guattari's concept of the nomadic war machine. Importantly, a prefigurative politics does not have revolution as its object; instead, it relies on collective experimentation to produce modes of organisation and power relations that are envisioned for future societies by practising them in the present. In the same way, the nomadic war machine does not have war as its object,

but a creative line of flight or bifurcation from systems of oppression. This is not to say that either prefigurative politics or the nomadic war machine are not revolutionary but, rather, that there is an 'emphasis on experimentation in contact with the real' (Deleuze and Guattari 1987: 12). Having said this, it is important not to reduce anarchism to prefigurative politics as revolution played a far more significant role historically in the production of new subjectivities.

On that point, it was particularly during the time that Guattari worked at the experimental psychiatric clinic, La Borde, in France, that he began to reconsider the social subject which, according to him and Deleuze, is always produced, created and enacted in relation to individuals, groups, institutions and societies which, in turn, are in relation with other sociopolitical structures. In other words, the social subject is always imbricated in multiple assemblages. One of the important questions they try to answer in their work is how we practically produce different subjectivities within the workings of these complex arrangements. To put it differently, what forms of political organisation and praxes are needed to create new ways of seeing and being in the world? For Deleuze and Guattari it is always a question of desire, of micropolitics, of a revolutionary subjectivity. Anarchists have a long history of thinking about and enacting different ways of being and collectively producing alternatives to the flows and processes that inform subject formation and ensuing subjectivities. As a political philosophy, anarchism includes a critique of both the form and content of hierarchical organisation and the ways in which it creates arbitrary divisions between those with authority and those with less or no authority – the subjugated. Deleuze and Guattari did not identify as anarchists (although Guattari was occasionally, perhaps pejoratively, labelled an anarchist by his friends) and there is little value in attempting to claim them for some or other anarchist 'canon' or tradition. However, as their work has begun to be engaged with in earnest by a significant number of contemporary anarchists, it is perhaps worth considering why.

As a cursory response, we can observe that Deleuze and Guattari share several broad assumptions with anarchism in their work, as we have already hinted at: both traditions (analyses, critique and practices) are anti-State, anti-authoritarian, anti-capitalist and anti-essentialist. More importantly, both traditions imagine and work towards a reality outside of current political and economic configurations and beyond the dogmatic image of thought. Both anarchism, and Deleuze and Guattari, oppose hierarchical relations and simultaneously encourage affirmative praxes that extend to all spheres of life: the social, the economic, the

political, the educational, the existential and so on. Moving beyond salient overlaps, this book takes a Deleuzian approach and attempts to operate as a dark precursor that allows these disparate things – *A Thousand Plateaus*, *God and the State*, May '68, Spain '36, Simondon, Bakunin, a people to come, prefiguration, lines of flight, revolution – to resonate together. What does our Deleuze-Guattari-anarchism machine then look like? What are its singular points? Its relations and heterogeneities? The following chapters engage with the tensions and overlaps between anarchism and the philosophy of Deleuze and Guattari in a number of ways and have been divided into three sections.

The first section brings together the series Deleuze *and* Guattari *and* Anarchism, and the introductory chapter by Aragorn Eloff serves to diagram, in broad and suggestive strokes, the Deleuze-Guattari-anarchism machine by following minor threads through the whole of their work, while limning occasionally surprising intersections and resonances with both historical and contemporary anarchist thought and praxis. This is followed by three chapters exploring similar themes, but with more focused approaches and more in-depth discussions. Thus, in Chapter 2, Thomas Nail clarifies what he sees as one of the most important misunderstandings of Deleuze and Guattari's political theory, namely the admixture of their ontological and political anarchisms. He argues that this conflation is unnecessary by demonstrating the difference and articulating their specific relation. He then draws on this to outline the strengths of a strictly political theory of anarchism resulting from Deleuze and Guattari's work, both in its applied and analytic senses. Following on Nail's thorough discussion of absolute and relative deterritorialisation, Andrew Stones, in Chapter 3, accounts for the ways in which these two forms of deterritorialisation are used strategically by indigenous activists and theorists. In particular, he thinks about the relations between struggles 'for' freedom – or *against* the structure of domination – and struggles 'of' freedom – or struggles that take place *within* the structure of domination. Turning to examples of both anarchist and indigenous struggles in India, Africa and Australia, he shows how Deleuze's concepts of 'relative' and 'absolute' deterritorialisation offer concrete strategic resources for resistance to settler colonialism. This is augmented by Paul Raekstad in the final chapter of this section when he looks at Deleuze and Guattari's concepts of the molar and molecular. He argues that while these differ in nature or scale, this does not necessarily mean they differ in size or extension. Based on this argument, Raekstad examines and pinpoints a problem with vanguardist approaches to revolution which, he shows, is

not a problem of organisation or unification as such, but of the kinds of organisation and unification that are required to go beyond capitalism and the State.

The second section focuses on theoretical perspectives. Nathan Jun's chapter opens this section by exploring the difference between 'anarchist' and 'anarchistic' thought. Drawing on Michael Freeden's theory of ideology, he thinks about the anarchist tradition in terms of a constellation of diffuse and evolving concepts, rather than a fixed set of principles. Thus, although Deleuze did not identify as an anarchist and was not associated in any meaningful sense with anarchist political movements, Jun argues that he nonetheless displays a strong, if oblique, affinity with anarchism that is particularly evident in his critique of representation. In Chapter 6, Elizabet Vasileva too thinks about representation – one of the many recurring themes in Deleuze's writings. In particular, Deleuze argues against the ontological primacy of identity on which representation is based and proposes instead an ontology of difference – a thread we find in all his work, starting with *Difference and Repetition*. His critique of representation also played a major role in his collaborations with Guattari, right up to their last project, *What Is Philosophy?* Taking 'difference' as the primary ontological category allows for a critique of transcendence, while simultaneously establishing the foundation of a philosophy/practice that does not rely on representation. Vasileva aims at extending and applying this critique of representation to ethics, specifically (post)anarchist ethics. Chapter 7 alloys representation with non-essentialism as Elmo Feiten draws out the overlaps and diversions between the work of Deleuze and Stirner. He shows that both of these theorists developed radical critiques of voluntary servitude and anti-essentialisms and argues, accordingly, that Deleuze's rejection of Stirner is based on a reductive reading of him. The final chapter in this section, by Natascia Tosel, considers Deleuze's critique of voluntary servitude in its fullest iteration by analysing the concept of 'anarchy' in relation to that of 'institution', both conceived of in a Deleuzian way of thinking. The starting point of her argument is the remark that Deleuze makes about Sade in *Coldness and Cruelty* (1967) when he talks about possible strategies to criticise the law. Among these strategies, Deleuze includes a Sadean one that uses irony and leads to a kind of anarchy. Thus, Sade looks for a way out of the law and finds it in perfect institutions, which implies as little intervention from the law as possible. This, Tosel argues, is productive for thinking about how to construct anarchist institutions that establish social relations completely different from those introduced by the law and contracts.

The third and final section of this book establishes relays of a different kind. Thus, in Chapter 9, Jesse Cohn relates his extended encounter with Deleuze, explaining how he went from a fairly sharp mistrust of his philosophy to a place where he finds these problems productive, particularly in terms of thinking about representation, desire, collective forces and even identity politics. The 'drama' has roughly four acts: (1) his initiation into an anarchist thought, laden with humanist, naturalist and rationalist themes; (2) the period when he was taught to read anarchism into the text of deconstruction; (3) his rereading of Deleuze through the anarchist tradition which allowed him to reread anarchism's theoretical commitments through Deleuze; and (4) his current interest in the potentials for Deleuzian anarchist thought to take us past even more false alternatives, including those at the heart of the newer forms of ideology critique (for example, Žižek's), and to help compose new forms of affective intervention. This narrative passage leads to another as we explore, with Alejandro de la Torre Hernández and Gerónimo Barrera de la Torre, an outline of the geography of historical anarchism (from 1871 to 1918) according to three main ideas in which they bring together interdisciplinary contributions from anarchism, geography, history, and Deleuze and Guattari. The first examines the anarchist diaspora and the imaginaries or symbolic geographies that accompanied it through the 'rhizomatic'. This international network, without centre or periphery, and constituted by the flow and mobility of information, capital, people and cultural goods in terms of solidarity and identity, suggests a fluid and ever-changing configuration of nodes and circulation. In the second section, they focus on militant migration and the connections between groups around the world, as analysed through anarchist newspaper records, to highlight the contingency of these networks, but also moments of interruption and eruption. Finally, they draw on the concepts of 'deterritorialisation' and 'becoming' to address the ways in which anarchist thought and praxis were transformed and momentarily fixed through voluntary or compulsory journeys. They argue that anarchist networks can be better understood through a Deleuze–Guattarian framework that acknowledges the continual movement of its members and the contradictory and transformational moments that defined their own of understanding of anarchisms. Chapter 11 moves us into more contemporary anarchist praxis as Christoph Hubatschke thinks about the politics of the face. In the wake of the events of 1968, Guattari, impressed by this extraordinary revolutionary upheaval, wrote a short text entitled *Machine and Structure*. In this text, Guattari introduced the notion of the machine for the first time in order to describe a new form

of chaosmotic organising – a form of revolutionary politics without a party, without a specified programme and, most importantly, without representation. Hubatschke sketches a short anarchist theory of the machine and explores what Guattari called 'collectivities of utterance', movements that refuse representation and therefore break with the abstract machines of faciality. In so doing, he focuses on one specific strategy to dismantle the face: the use of masks in current social movements. Political resistance, he argues, must attack the logic of the face to dismantle it and fabulate its own faces. From the ski masks of the Zapatistas to the cartoonish grinning face of Guy Fawkes and the uncompromising 'faceless' black blocs, there are manifold strategies to dismantle the face – but, he asks, what does it mean to become visibly invisible? In Chapter 12, Gregory Kalyniuk addresses the relation of Deleuze's philosophy to anarchism by considering Pierre Clastres's ethnographic research on the stateless peoples of the Amazon basin. Central to Clastres's investigations is his analysis of political power in 'primitive' societies – particularly its regulation through collective levelling mechanisms, which avert social division by means of a systematic dispersal of power. Beginning in *Anti-Oedipus* with the notion of a primitive territorial machine that encodes flows of desire, Deleuze and Guattari propose that its resistance to a primordial Urstaat, or latent form of the State apparatus, would have marked the first stage in a universal history of contingency. With the passage from savage tribes to barbarian empires, however, this primitive mode of resistance would have ultimately come to nought, as the State would become manifest through processes of overcoding, deterritorialisation and stratification. For Clastres, the fundamental condition allowing primitive societies to avoid state capture is war: the threat of war from within, which is warded off by preventing the concentration of power in the chieftainship, and the threat of war from without, which unites the people against enemies and supports the formation of alliances with neighbours. While this may have significantly informed Deleuze and Guattari's concept of the war machine in *A Thousand Plateaus*, they are decidedly more critical in their reception of Clastres this time around and fault him for conceiving the emergence of the State in terms of a sudden and irreversible mutation. Against his apparent falling back into evolutionism, Deleuze and Guattari now present the reality of the war machine and the State apparatus in ahistoricist terms. With this in mind, Kalyniuk asks: What can contemporary anarchism take away from the insight that neither of these two types of social formation enjoys any historical priority over the other? In the final chapter, Chantelle Gray van Heerden argues that plantation logics create

a particular appreciative of the spatial coordinates of histories since the carceral, a kind of facialisation of power, is always reliant on binarisation and biunivocalisation. In order, therefore, to bring about any real change in the world, anarchism has to shed this weight, becoming-imperceptible being a necessary step towards the deterritorialisation of stratified micro-powers, the dogmatic image of thought, the sedentary arrangements of enunciation and subjectivisation. The problem, she argues, lies at the surface, when surface equals ground as a condition, because one is then trapped within the circular logic of conditioned/condition. No other condition is possible while the surface grounds itself on the finite synthetic unity of transcendental apperception because this unity is tied to the four aspects that subordinate difference to diversity. This, she contends, leaves us neatly inside the plantation. Deleuze, in *The Logic of Sense*, invites us to reconsider the surface and the ground and this, Gray van Heerden argues, can help us think about how to disrupt the spatial coordinates of the plantation and the racial violence it portends. However, another aspect needs consideration, namely the kinds of subjectivities plantations produce. For her, the problematic lies in the tension between that which is and can be stratified – and therefore regulated – and that which presumably cannot. The intensification of algorithmic regulation and recognition under disciplinary control societies, she argues, means that moving bodies have increasingly come under political governance, which at once owns and disowns them as the figure of the migrant, the moving target par excellence of our time. Migrant frames, as memory devices, signal a problematic related to the temporal dimensions that memory inhabits and catalyses. What Deleuze finds problematic with this is that such a view subordinates time to memory, which remains locked within the extrinsic conditionings of identity and representation. In order to respond meaningfully to the logics of the plantation and the moving target, she contends that anarchism has to desire a politics of time rather than one of memory because, by forgetting, we return to the groundless ground of the surface, leaving behind the conditions that memory ties us to.

In summary, what we explore in this book is a different understanding of what constitutes political thought and action. Deleuze and Guattari, like anarchists, see prefigurative action as a central component of this other politics. In their philosophy, it is presented as a becoming-minoritarian; that is, 'a political affair and necessitates a labour of power (*puissance*), an active micropolitics' (Deleuze and Guattari 1987: 292). Deleuze, and anarchists too, see Nietzschean affirmation and active nihilism as a kind of prefiguration; that is, as opposed to ressentiment.

On practising such a micropolitics or prefigurative labour, Guattari writes the following:

> If there is a micropolitics to be practiced, it consists in ensuring that these molecular levels do not always succumb to systems that coopt them, systems of neutralisation, or processes of implosion or self-destruction. It consists in apprehending how other assemblages of the production of life, the production of art, or the production of whatever you want might find their full expansion, so that the problematics of power find a response. This certainly involves modes of response of a new kind. (Guattari and Rolnik 2007: 339)

All of us, to some extent, live in contradiction with our politics and collude with the State, with capitalism and with other forms of hierarchy and domination. But this does not mean that we have to accept these conditions wholesale. Instead, we can resist the call of nationalists, statists, patriarchs, fascists and capitalists, refusing to belong to the facile, territorialised, homogeneous community of people they invoke, in favour of a people-to-come.

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