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# Following the Rats: Becoming-Animal in Deleuze and Guattari

Leonard Lawlor

Undeniably, globalization defines the epoch in which we are living. As the word suggests, this means that the earth has been enclosed within a globe. And this means that all the ways out have been closed, so that one species—the human—is able to dominate all other species.<sup>1</sup> What justifies this—what gives us the right to dominate the animals? The answer is well known: humans believe they have the right to dominate the animals because humans believe that they possess a special kind of subjectivity. The concept of subjectivity that we think we possess has its conceptual origins in Descartes's "cogito," but the concept of the "I think" develops into the Kantian idea of autonomy. The Kantian idea of autonomy means, of course, that I am self-ruling; I give the moral law to myself, unlike the animals upon whom nature imposes its laws. But in order to give the law to myself, I must tell it to myself. Kantian autonomy therefore is based on auto-affection.<sup>2</sup> What makes me, as a human, autonomous is my supposed ability to hear myself speak at the very moment I speak. Because the voice seems to be purely immediate and mine, I hear myself speak in pure presence. This supposed pure self-presence gives humans a dignity that far surpasses that of animals. It justifies the human right to domination.

But, Derrida has shown in *Voice and Phenomenon*<sup>3</sup> that auto-affection is never pure self-presence (chapter 6). And Deleuze in *Difference and Repetition* has shown that when Kant introduces receptivity into the self, this puts a crack in the self (116-117/84).<sup>4</sup> These arguments show that human auto-affection is really and always hetero-affection; that within thought there is something that cannot be thought and yet demands to be thought. These arguments against the purity of auto-affection cannot be reversed or ignored. As we quickly see, they provide us with the means to criticize our current times (QPh 104/108), the times in which all living things are enclosed in a globe for human use, the times in which a kind of war is being waged against animal life. What must we do to stop (or at least

slow down) this war, what must we do to bring about some change in the collective human relation to animals? To put this as dramatically as possible, we must stop being human. But such a dramatic claim means that we must undermine human auto-affection; indeed, we must enlarge the concept of auto-affection.<sup>5</sup> In thought, in my interior monologue, when I hear myself speak, I also inseparably do *not* hear myself (Cinema 2 239/184). What do I hear if not my “self”? I hear the other voices of the animals. When I hear myself speak, I also inseparably hear the gnashing of the teeth of an animal in the agony of death. The voice of the animal is in me, and thereby I undergo the ways that animals change or *become*. We have gone from auto-affection to becoming, hence the title of this essay. We could even say that we have gone from Derrida’s thought to that of Deleuze and Guattari.

We shall return to Derrida’s thought at the end, and, as we shall see, the intersection of Derrida’s thought with that of Deleuze provides us with a double strategy in regard to the collective human relation to animals. But, primarily in what follows, we shall focus on the concept of becoming that Deleuze and Guattari develop in the Tenth Plateau of *A Thousand Plateaus*. Plateau Ten is the longest and most complicated chapter in the book—97 pages in the original French edition. In what follows I will lay out a kind of plan for *becomings* in general, identifying the agent, the condition, the positive definition of, and the motive for becoming (aging, desubjectification, minority, and affects). Like Levinas,<sup>6</sup> Deleuze and Guattari recognize the power that aging has to unmake the molar form of the subject, making the person susceptible to the affects of love and shame—affects that motivate the person to become minor. All becomings in Deleuze and Guattari are defined by becoming-minor.

Next we shall look at the negative definitions, prepositions, structure, and criterion for becoming: becoming is not imitation; the prepositions are *before*, *in*, and *for* (*devant*, *en*, *pour*); becoming consists in a zigzag structure, and the criterion is writing. In Deleuze and Guattari, becoming is never a process of imitating, yet the one who becomes finds himself before another who ends up being in oneself. With the other in me, however, I am not substituting myself for another; the structure of becoming is not reciprocal. It is a zigzag in which I become other so that the other may become something else, but this becoming something else is possible only if a work (*œuvre*) is produced.<sup>7</sup> It seems to me that no one has sufficiently recognized this fact: for Deleuze and Guattari, a becoming is successful only if writing results.<sup>8</sup> Without the tangible result of a creation, becoming fails and becomes a bare repetitious circle of the same

behavior, or worse, suicide. Next, after having laid out the general plan for becomings, we shall examine a particular kind of becoming: becoming rat. At the end, as the title suggests, we shall follow the rats.

Why rats? Early in the Tenth Plateau, Deleuze and Guattari distinguish three kinds of animals: individuated animals, the family pet, with its own little story; animals with attributes that are taken up into myths; and animals who travel in packs, inspiring tales (MP 294/240-241). Deleuze and Guattari valorize the animals who travel in packs, and this valorization of pack animals is why rats play such an important role in the Tenth Plateau.<sup>9</sup> The Tenth Plateau opens with the “tale” (*conte*) of the rat named Ben, the tale presented in the 1972 film *Willard* (MP 285/233). But rats appear four other times in Plateau Ten (MP 293/240, 315/258, 321/262, 337/275). If we want to understand becoming in Deleuze and Guattari, then we must understand becoming rat. As we shall see, when I become rat, the rat becomes a “feverish thought” in me, forcing me to think. And, in response to the gnashing rat thought, I do not start to look like a rat. No, instead, I start to write like a rat. To write like a rat is to write in the style of the rat’s agony, to fabricate a tale of rats—so that the work produced will call forth a new people. Writing like a rat, we might be able to call forth a people who themselves have the feverish thought of the rat in them, forcing them to think differently. Perhaps this thoughtful people would say, “This right that I seem to have is not justified.” Then perhaps we would see coming a people who would no longer enclose the world in a globe.

### I. Becoming via Aging, Desubjectification, Minority, and Affect

If we want to change our relationship to the world, to others, and to animals, we must understand how it is possible for us to change—how it is possible to enter into the experience of becoming. Deleuze and Guattari suggest that the cause or “agent” of becoming may be the experience that drugs produce in us (MP 347/283, see also QPh 156/165). While such a suggestion may seem infamous, one must recognize that hallucinogenic drugs change our perceptions (MP 304/278). Nevertheless, for Deleuze and Guattari, taking such drugs does not constitute a *successful* becoming. The failure is due to the fact that the drug user, and especially the addict, only enters into a cycle. He or she gets high, comes down, then wants to get high again, and so on. This cycle or circle is all that happens, which means in fact that nothing happens. For Deleuze and Guattari, becomings are never processes of beginning *again*; they are never processes that move only in a circle. We also see this cyclic behavior in

the alcoholic's idea of the last glass (MP 546/438), based on a subjective evaluation of how much the alcoholic is able to bear. Deleuze and Guattari say, "What can be tolerated is precisely the *limit* at which, as the alcoholic sees it, he or she will be able to *start over again* [*recommencer*] (after a rest, a pause...)" (MP 546/438). Thus with the alcoholic, nothing happens but the same thing over and over again; recommencement is not an event.

Although the concepts of limit and recommencement are very important for understanding *A Thousand Plateaus*—early in the book it's said that the body without organs is a limit and that one is always attaining it (MP 197/159)—Deleuze and Guattari oppose the concept of limit to that of threshold. The threshold lies beyond the limit, beyond the last glass; crossing the threshold, they say, makes the alcoholic change, to become suicidal or to stop drinking. For Deleuze and Guattari, either choice would break out of the circle. The two choices however are clearly not identical; it is the choice between choice and non-choice (C2 231/177). The choice to commit suicide by drinking oneself to death is to choose to have no more choices, while the choice to stop drinking allows one to choose again and differently. The choice of more choices—to get drunk by drinking water<sup>10</sup>—constitutes what Deleuze and Guattari call an event (or a line of flight).

But when the threshold has been crossed, we can ask "what happened?" The character of the alcoholic does not allude to Proust, but to F. Scott Fitzgerald (although Proust is mentioned in relation to the concept of threshold: the narrator crosses the threshold and chooses to stop having love affairs and to start writing). In Plateau Eight, Deleuze and Guattari tell us that "what happened?" (*qu'est-ce qui s'est passé?*) is the question that Fitzgerald keeps coming back to, at the end, after having said that "all life of course is a process of breaking down [*démolition*]" (MP 242/198, see also C2 70/50). With the idea of demolition or destruction or unmaking, we come to the true agent and condition of becoming, which is neither drugs nor alcohol. According to Deleuze and Guattari, in a life, there is a type of cracking that is micrological, like the small, almost imperceptible cracks in a dish (MP 243/198). These cracks in a life are the cracks of aging. Such cracks are not big molar blows like losing all your money in the stock market. The micrological cracks in a life refer us to this sort of experience: you wake up one morning and realize you have gray hair, and now it's over, you're old; or you wake up and realize you no longer love the person in bed with you. What has happened is nothing assignable or perceptible; these are molecular changes, "such that when something occurs, the self [*moi*] that awaited it is already dead, or the one that would await it has not yet arrived" (MP 243/198-199). The

micrological cracks of aging, these experiences in which one is finally aware that one has lost something of oneself, are the agent of becoming. But aging also indicates the necessary condition for becoming: the condition in which one's molar form is destroyed—the condition, in other words, of “desubjectification” (MP 198/159).

The condition of the molar form of the subject being destroyed has however a positive side, which we have already encountered—the choice of having more choices.<sup>11</sup> But Deleuze and Guattari also call the positive side of desubjectification “rupture,” this being their translation of Fitzgerald's “clean break” (MP 243/199). The clean break which aging causes—aging being the *agent* of becoming, while the destruction of the molar form is the *necessary condition*—does not mean that now one remains forever young. It means that, having shed the form of an adult, one is able to become something other than an adult man. One becomes a child, but becoming-child means that one frees the potentialities that the molar form of adult man was enclosing. Deleuze and Guattari say, with a rupture,

I am now no more than a line. I have become capable of loving, not with an abstract, universal love, but a love I shall choose, and that shall choose me, blindly, my double, who has no more self than me [*n'a pas plus de moi que moi*]. One has been saved by love and for love, by abandoning love and self [...] One has become like everyone, but in a way in which no one can become like everyone [*tout le monde*, also translated as “all the world”]. (MP 244/199-200).

By means of this quote (whose importance we should not underestimate), we see that becoming involves love; but love in Deleuze and Guattari is no longer a feeling between persons; it is no longer a personal feeling (MP 294/240, also MP 133-134/105-106). Love is now an affect.<sup>12</sup> As Deleuze and Guattari say, a feeling (*sentiment*) is the sense (*sens*) of a form and its development, the formation of a subject; it is introceptive. In contrast, an affect is informal, setting out ways (rather than the development of a form); an affect is a projectile (instead of a feeling that is introjected); a relation outward to the double (MP 497-498/399-400). But since the double is not an “I” or an ego, since it is not a molar unified self or subject, the double is really a multiplicity. Insofar as the love they are describing is not restricted to a feeling between persons, insofar as the love they are describing is a love of multiplicity, we see as well that becoming in Deleuze and Guattari is hyperbolic; it is the love of the whole world (*tout le monde*).<sup>13</sup> And as love of the whole world (a utopian love), this love frees the potentiality of everyone (*tout le monde*).

So, while aging is the agent that puts in place the condition of the demolished molar form of the subject, the motive or motor of becoming



is the affect (as the motor of desubjectification, just as the function is the motor of deterritorialization). The imperceptible events of aging undo the molar form of oneself, which allows one to choose a clean break—to choose to become. And this choice of becoming is a choice to love the whole world; this is a love, as we just saw, that differs from the abstract universal love of persons. This love is no longer a feeling of one molar person or ego for another molar person or ego; it is no longer human love, no longer the love of man. Thus, as Deleuze and Guattari would say, it is a love of the minor. As is well known, all becomings in Deleuze and Guattari are becomings minor, but let us look at their exact definition in *A Thousand Plateaus*.<sup>14</sup> First, they tell us that there is “no becoming-man ... because man is majoritarian par excellence.”<sup>15</sup> Then they state the positive definition: “all becoming is a becoming-minoritarian” (MP 356/291). A minority, for Deleuze and Guattari is not defined by statistics; it is not “quantitative” (MP 133/105) or a “definable aggregate” (MP 357/291). Women are a minority for Deleuze and Guattari, not because there are fewer women than men in a given population, but because “the body is stolen first from the girl ... The girl’s becoming is stolen first.... The girl is the first *victim*” (MP 338-339/276, my emphasis). The positive definition of becoming therefore is not really a minor existence; it is that this minor existence is “oppressed” (MP 302/247), “wronged” (*indûment*) (MP 197/159, also C2 281/215); minor existence is one that is undergoing, as Deleuze and Guattari say in *What is Philosophy*, “abominable sufferings” (QPh 105/110). Abominable suffering is what defines a minority for Deleuze and Guattari. And the affect felt before this extreme suffering is “the shame of being a man” (QPh 102/107).<sup>16</sup> The affect of shame at being a man, at being human all too human, with our oppressions, our clichés, our opinions, and our desires, is really the *motive* for change.<sup>17</sup>

## II. Negative Definitions, Prepositions, Structure, and the Criterion for Becoming

We have just seen one negative definition of becoming; there is no becoming major, no becoming man. But there are several more negative definitions. As we can see with the micrological process of aging, for Deleuze and Guattari, a process of becoming does not terminate in a molar form; in micrological aging, a subject, does *not* grow up to be an adult, a girl does *not* grow up to be a woman. So, when speaking of becoming animal, they say, “Becoming can and should be qualified as becoming-animal even in the absence of an endpoint [*un terme*] that would be the animal which one has become” (MP 291/238). So, the experience of becoming is *not* an experience directed toward or oriented by a final

form. The lack of finalism is why Deleuze and Guattari separate becoming from history (MP 363/296). But they go further. If there is no final form into which one transforms oneself, then becoming is *not* based in imitation, resemblance, or analogy. The adverb “like” (*comme*) does not define becoming. In becoming animal, one does not end up looking *like* a horse or a dog or a rat. Indeed, Deleuze and Guattari reject both the faculty of imagination (which is able to provide analogies of proportion) and the faculty of the understanding (*l’entendement*, *Verstand*, *intellectus*) (which is able to provide analogies of proportionality) (MP 286-87/234). Since becoming is not a process of imitating, there is no eminent term by means of which one could measure or judge what is undergoing the becoming. That there is no eminent term or standard explains why Deleuze and Guattari separate becoming from memory, from what they call “gigantic memory”—memory as the faculty that always recalls one major idea such as man (MP 358-359/293). As we shall see, although becoming is not this kind of memory, it maintains a relation to a strange kind of memory. Nevertheless, just as the experience of becoming is *not* an experience of “gigantic memory,” it is *not* an experience of recognition. As Deleuze and Guattari say, “The animal, flower, or stone one becomes are ... *not* molar subjects, objects, or forms that one knows *from the outside of us* [*on connaît hors de nous*] and that one *recognizes* [*reconnaît*] from experience, through science, or by habit” (MP 337/275, my emphasis). Since the experience of becoming is not recognition, becoming is also *not* a relation of representation. In becoming I do not become the representative of what I am becoming; it is not a relation of one thing (me) *standing in for* another (the animal, for example). Finally, since the experience of becoming is not a representation, it is also *not* perception in the standard sense; it is *not* a relation in which the subject and the object remain outside of one another. Thus in Deleuze and Guattari, becoming is neither a circular process of recommencement nor a process that comes to an end. Moreover, it is not a process governed by an eminent form or endpoint; it is not a relation of recognition in which the subject and the object would be *outside of* one another, and it is not a representative relation of one thing standing *in for* another.

The negative definitions that we have just presented contain prepositions, in particular, “outside of” (*hors de*) and “for” (*pour*). There is in fact a logic of prepositions at work in Deleuze and Guattari’s experience of becoming, where pre-position must be taken in its literal sense, as prior to the positioning of a subject over and against an object. Deleuze and Guattari always use the preposition *devant* when they speak of becoming. Their use of *devant* refers neither to an experience of being over



and against, outside of one another, nor to the subject-object relation. Already in *Difference and Repetition*, Deleuze had explained what *devant* means: "Each time that we find ourselves before [*devant*] or in a limitation, before [*devant*] or in an opposition, we must ask what such a situation supposes. The situation of being before supposes a swarm of differences, a pluralism of free differences" (DR 71/55). Then in *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari say, "Perception will no longer be in the relation of a subject and of an object, but rather in [*dans*] the movement serving as the limit of that relation [...] Perception will confront its own limit; it will be among [*parmi*] things, in [*dans*] the set of its own proximity" (MP 345/282). In the experience of becoming, when one is fascinated by something before oneself, when one contemplates something before oneself, one is among it, within it, together in a zone of proximity. "Before," therefore, in fact, means "among" and "within."<sup>18</sup> But before what? In becoming animal (or child or woman or minor), I find myself fascinated before something I cannot recognize, before something that has lost its molar form, something singular. For Deleuze and Guattari, as is well known, singularities are always in a multiplicity, in a pack (MP 293/239). The pack always looks back (*regarder*) and emits sounds (MP 292-93/239). And it is this gaze from the singular animal and its cries that place the animal within me: one in the other. But the structure of "one in the other" does not mean, for Deleuze and Guattari, that becoming consists in a reciprocal relation. It is not the case that humans become animals and animals become human, as if the two would exchange places, one standing in for (*pour*) the other; it is not, as we said, a representational relation (QPh 105/109, CC 15/4). Deleuze and Guattari present the crucial preposition for becoming in *What is Philosophy*: "we become animal so that [*pour que*] the animals become something else" (QPh 105/109). The preposition *pour* becomes *pour que*. Or, the *pour* of representation becomes the *pour* of in their favor, for, not against.

Instead of a reciprocal or even chiasmic relation, Deleuze and Guattari describe becoming as a zigzag structure (MP 341/278). To understand this, we must focus on what they call "functions." In *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari distinguish functions from forms. Being molar, a form is composed of many functions. Functions themselves are informal; they have only little, micrological "details" (MP 357/292) or "traits" (MP 176/141). A face, for example, has a form, but it is composed of many traits or features, such as a mole or a tic. (MP 230/188). A poem, for example, has a form: its verses and the spatial arrangements of words and punctuation. But within the poem, there are functions of rhyme and alliteration. These poetic traits may be extracted and repeated in a different way than they were in the poem; repeated in a different milieu

or territory, repeated more rapidly or slowly, or used differently, producing different outcomes. Deleuze and Guattari, of course, call this extraction and emission of traits “deterritorialization” (MP 177/141). Because the traits are informal, each function is plural or even undecidable (QPh 25/20). For instance, the function of disguising oneself contains at least two possible uses: exhibition and concealment. **Animals disguise themselves at times in order to exhibit themselves to attract a mate; at other times, they disguise themselves for concealment and predation. Likewise, in Deleuze and Guattari’s example, a soldier dresses in camouflage (MP 340-341/277-278). Although s/he extracts the function of disguise from the animals, s/he does not become an animal.**

In *What is Philosophy*, the authors describe how **one becomes something else so that this something also becomes something else. Hence all becoming is double (QPh 105/109). Thus the soldier may become woman so that woman may become something else. What does the woman become? The woman does not become a man. Disguising herself, she becomes an animal who exhibits herself, not so that she may attract a mate, but so that she may be able to attack an enemy. In its undecidability, the animal function of disguise is at the center of becoming woman, but in this becoming, it is not the case that man becomes woman and woman becomes man. Man becomes woman and then woman becomes animal. But woman must become animal so that animal as well becomes something else. What does the animal become? There is no clear answer to this question, except to say that the function of disguising has other possible uses, other possible territories, than the ones outlined here. Perhaps, disguising is a function of marking, a function of tracing; disguising is perhaps a way of writing. Then we could say that the animal becomes a tale.**

**Writing brings us to the criterion for a successful becoming.** Repeatedly in *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari speak of the prudence required in becoming. Because the destruction of molar forms is required—recall that the agent of becoming is aging—it is always possible that one will not be able to go farther than destruction. It is always possible to become suicidal. We saw that the alcoholic can chose to drink himself to death or can stop drinking and thereby have more choices. **Deleuze and Guattari seem, however, to think that the choice of more choices is not enough; becoming has to go further. Let us backtrack into the experience of becoming. In order for the experience to happen, the condition of desubjectification must have been put in place by aging; then it is possible for me to experience a rupture and cross a threshold or a borderline, thereby entering into proximity with what I am becoming. Because of the borderlines—crossing the borderline from soldier to**

woman, crossing the borderline from woman to animal, and the borderline from animal to something else—it is possible, they say, “to conceive of the possibility of laying out [*étaler*] on a plane, the borderlines [*les bordures*] following one another by tracing [*en traçant*] a broken line” (MP 307/251). What is important in this quote is the verb “tracer,” which means an action of drawing or of writing. The action of drawing or writing traces out a map, which in *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari call “the plane of consistency” (MP 307/251). They say,

All the becomings are *written*, like sorcerers’ *drawings*, on this plane of consistency, which is the ultimate Door, through which they find their way out. This is the only *criterion* to prevent them from bogging down, or turning to nothingness. The only question is: does a becoming go this far? Can a multiplicity flatten in this way all its *conserved* dimensions, like a flower that would hold onto its whole life up as far as its being dried?” (MP 308/251, my emphasis).

For Deleuze and Guattari, the criterion for a successful becoming therefore is that something is written down, that by writing the becoming down one “conserves” the formulas that will allow others to become and to cross thresholds. In *What is Philosophy*, the plane of consistency is also called “the plane of immanence of concepts” (QPh 38/35, my emphasis). So, the criterion that a becoming is successful is that something like a concept is constructed, something like a work (*un œuvre*). We come to the model of becoming that Proust provided: “to write is to become” (MP 294/240, CC 9/1).

### III. Following the Rats

We have seen that aging is the agent of becoming insofar as it produces micrological cracks in the self. Aging sets up the necessary condition for becoming, which is the condition of having one’s molar form of the subject destroyed (desubjectification). Desubjectification then opens one up to be affected by the abominable sufferings of others, with the result that the affects of love and shame motivate one to become other than man. Such a becoming non-human, becoming-animal for example, is not defined by the imitation of the molar form of the animal. Instead of a resemblance relation, the relation that defines becoming is pre-positional. I find myself positioned before the animal, but being “before” in fact means I am in proximity with the animal. I am among the others and they are in me. But just as imitation does not define becoming, neither does representation define the preposition of one *for* another. Instead, becoming consists in a zigzag structure: we become animal so that animal becomes, not human, but something else. The zigzag is set in motion by emission and extraction of a function (deterritorialization). And finally,

beyond the destruction of the molar form, deterritorialization, in order to be successful, must use the animal function to produce something else. It must take the micrological function of the rat, for example, and write "like" a rat.

When Deleuze and Guattari speak of becoming-rat, they do not refer to Proust; they refer instead to Hugo von Hofmannsthal, to his "The Lord Chandos Letter."<sup>19</sup> Fictionally penned at the beginning of the seventeenth century (von Hoffmannsthal wrote it in fact in 1902), "The Letter" is supposed to have been occasioned by the receipt of a letter from Francis Bacon; Chandos then is writing back to Bacon. "The Letter" opens with Chandos saying, "I hardly know if I am still the person your precious letter is addressing. I am now twenty-six. Am I the same person...?" (*Chandos*, 117). He is not; Chandos says, "I have completely lost the ability to think or speak coherently about anything at all" (121). Then he describes his current existence, in which there are moments when mundane objects are filled "with a swelling tide of higher life." But he worries that Bacon will not understand, so he describes how he spread rat poison in the milk cellar of one of his dairy farms. That evening, he continues, he went out riding. Chandos writes:

Suddenly this cellar unrolled inside me, filled with the death throes of the pack of rats. It was all there. The cool and musty cellar air, full of sharp, sweetish smell of the poison, and the shrilling of the death cries echoing against the mildewed walls. Those convulsed clumps of powerlessness, those desperations colliding with one another in confusion. The frantic search for ways out. The cold glares of fury when two meet at a blocked crevice. ... I tell you, my friend, this was in me.... The soul of this beast I saw within me bared its teeth at its monstrous destiny. (123-24)

It is on this description of the rats dying that Deleuze and Guattari focus. They say,

Hofmannsthal, or rather Lord Chandos, falls into fascination before a "people of rats" who are in agony [*tombe en fascination devant un "peuple de rats" qui agonisent*], and it is in him, across him, in the interstices of his overthrown self [*en lui, à travers lui, dans les interstices de son moi bouleversé*] that "the soul of the animal bares its teeth at its monstrous destiny" [*l'âme de l'animal montre les dents au destin monstrueux*]; not pity [...] as he makes clear; still less an identification. It is a composition of speeds and affects involving entirely different individuals, a symbiosis; it makes the rat a thought in [*dans*] the man, a feverish thought [*une pensée fiévreuse*], at the same time as the man becomes rat, a rat who gnashes and is in agony [*rat qui grince et agonise*] [...] Then a strange imperative is born in him: either stop writing or write like a rat [*comme un rat*]. (MP 293-294/240, MP 315/275, also MP 337/275).

In this quote, we see the pre-positional logic that we had described earlier. Chandos falls into fascination “before,” [*devant*] the “people of rats,” but it is “in him,” [*en lui*] that “the soul of the animal bares its teeth at its monstrous destiny.” The rats have become in him a “feverish thought” of rats gnashing their teeth in agony. How has this feverish thought entered into Chandos? Deleuze and Guattari write:

If the writer is a sorcerer, this is because to write is to become, to write is traversed by strange becomings, which are not becomings-writer, but becomings-rat, becomings-insect, becomings-wolf, etc. [ ... ] Many suicides by writers are explained by these participations against nature, these nuptials against nature. The writer is a sorcerer because he lives [*vit*] the animal as the only population before which [*devant laquelle*] he is responsible in principle. The German pre-Romantic Karl Philipp Moritz feels responsible, not for [*des*] the calves that die, but before [*devant*] the calves that die and give him the incredible feeling of an unknown Nature [*l'incroyable sentiment d'une Nature inconnue*]-affect. For the affect is not a personal feeling, nor is it a characteristic; it is the actualization [*l'effectuation*] of a potency [*puissance*] of the pack that throws the self into upheaval and makes it reel [*qui soulève et fait vaciller le moi*]. Who has not known the violence of these animal sequences [*séquences*], which uproot one from humanity, if only for an instant, making one scrape at one's bread like a rodent or giving one the yellow eyes of a feline? Terrible involutions which call us towards unheard-of becomings. (MP 293-294/240)

In the case of Chandos, it is clear that aging has set up the necessary condition for becoming: desubjectification. The rupture with his past self opens him up for the affect, which Chandos tells us—and Deleuze and Guattari reiterate this—is not pity. On the one hand, the animals, through their death throes, are in the process of losing their molar form, but, on the other hand, Chandos too, due to aging, is in the process of losing his molar form. The double informality allows for the affect to pass from one to the other. Chandos says that the affect is “a vast empathy.” But we can see that the affect is something like the shame of having to poison animals. The result of the affect, however, is, as Deleuze and Guattari conclude in the quote above, that Chandos experiences a strange imperative: either stop writing or write like a rat. Although Deleuze and Guattari do not mention it, at the end of “The Letter” Chandos speaks of writing and thinking in a language that is not English or Latin or Spanish or Italian, a language “of which I know not one word,” Chandos says, “a language in which mute things speak to me” (127-28). The formula for this becoming therefore is: the rats become a thought in man, “a feverish thought,” while the man becomes a writer who writes like a rat.

The result of this becoming—writing—is not surprising, since we have seen that the criterion for a successful becoming is the production

of a diagram, a map, a score, a concept, or, most generally, a work. What is at stake in the imperative that Chandos undergoes is literature, to write literature like a rat.<sup>20</sup> But what is at stake in literature is the production of a people. In *What is Philosophy?* Deleuze and Guattari write:

We think and write for the animals themselves. We become animal so that the animal becomes something else. The agony of a rat or the slaughter of a calf remains present in thought not through pity but as the zone of exchange between the human and the animal in which something of the one passes into the other. This is 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. (105/109, my emphasis)

Likewise, the authors write in both *A Thousand Plateaus* and in *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*, “literature is the affair of the people” (MP 427/346; *Kafka* 32,150/18,84). The purpose of literature in the production of a people tells us what the “so that” of Chandos’s becoming rat is. Chandos becomes rat *so that*, writing like a rat will call forth a people. This *so that* does not mean that writing like a rat aims to produce “a people of rats” [*un peuple de rats*]; it does not aim to endow rats with human qualities or to endow humans with rat qualities; this attribution of characteristics is the work of myths. No, writing like a rat would fabulate a rat legend (C2 360/275), it would be a rat tale (*conte*). Like any tale, its question would be: what is going to happen? If it is a good tale, no one would be able to predict the ending. But undoubtedly it would be a tale of the rat’s struggle with death. Writing like a rat then would be to write in the style of agony, in the style of an “agon,” a contest, or struggle, against death: “agony against all the deaths” (QPh 151/160).<sup>21</sup> What would this style look like? The least we could say is that writing like a rat (like any animal-writing) would be a writing that struggles to escape from the dominant forms of expression. It would extract the function of teeth gnashing, the phonic traits of teeth gnashing, in order to reiterate them at a speed that is faster or perhaps slower than the gnashing of rat teeth in the agony of death; it would extract the vibrant traits of eyes in order to reiterate them at an intensity that is stronger or weaker than the color of the rat eyes in the agony of death. Writing like a rat would create a new syntax of gnashing, a new chromatics of color. Its aim would be to create a vision or an audition never before seen or heard.<sup>22</sup> It would create the outside of language, the outside in the sense of a new land. There would be a character, a persona, who exhibits a profound empathy with the whole world. This character would therefore present a new possibility of life. The character’s hyperbolic love would infect, like a rat, everyone (*tout le monde*) with the feverish thought of the rat’s agony. And it is this



infection that would produce a people contaminated with the feverish thought of the struggle against death. Writing like a rat—writing no doubt a folktale—would produce a people who thought feverishly.<sup>23</sup> Such a people would indeed be an immense change from our current times.

### Conclusion: Auto-affection and Becoming

We started with an obvious fact about our current times—“globalization”—which suggests that the earth has been enclosed within a globe. Perhaps one might say that by enclosing, globalization is a kind of peace. But this peace, which is the peace of pacification, is in fact war by other means. As we observed at the outset, the enclosure of globalization means that one species, the human, dominates all the other species. What justifies this domination is the belief that humans possess a kind of subjectivity that animals do not possess, a form of auto-affection that, as the belief goes, is truly “auto,” uncontaminated by any other: “I hear myself speak at the very moment I speak.”

I’d like to conclude by examining the experience of auto-affection. In other words, let us do a kind of phenomenology. When I engage in interior monologue—when I think—it seems as though I hear myself speak at the very moment I speak. My interior voice is not required to pass outside of myself; it is not required to traverse any space, not even the space of my body. So, my interior monologue seems immediate—immediately present, and not involving anyone else. Thus interior monologue seems to differ from the experience of speaking to another, and to differ from the experience of looking at myself in the mirror, where my vision has to pass through the portals of my eyes. But the problem with the belief that interior monologue (thought) is different from other experiences of auto-affection is twofold. On the one hand, the experience of auto-affection is temporal (like all experience). The temporalization of auto-affection means that the present moment involves a past moment, which has elapsed but has been retained. It is an irreducible or essential necessity that the present moment comes second. The problem with the belief that interior monologue happens immediately therefore is that the *hearing* of myself is never immediately present in the moment when I *speak*; there is a delay between the speaking and the hearing. This conclusion means that my interior monologue in fact resembles my experience of the mirror image, in which my vision must traverse a distance—an infinitesimal hiatus that differentiates me into seer and seen. But the conclusion that hearing myself is not immediately present also means that the experience of auto-affection resembles the experience of aging. There is a delay in

time that turns my speaking in the present moment into a response to the past. Because of the delay, there is a past that always precedes me, a past that has always started without me, from the very moment of my birth. No matter how young I am, I have always already aged. It is always later than I think, so that my hearing myself speak is like a rendezvous that I had forgotten but have just remembered.

The fact that auto-affection involves a strange sort of memory leads to the other problem with the belief that interior monologue is my own. Beside the irreducible agedness involved in the experience of auto-affection, there is the problem of the voice. In order to hear myself speak at this very moment, I must make use of the same phonemes as I use in communication (even if this monologue is not vocalized externally through my mouth). It is an irreducible or essential necessity that the silent words I form contain repeatable traits. This irreducible necessity means that when I speak to myself, I speak with the sounds of others. In other words, it means that I find in myself other voices, which come from the past. There is not a Platonic memory of one form; rather, there is a memory of multiplicity, of the many voices that are in me. Thus the problem with the belief that interior monologue is my own is that others' voices contaminate the hearing of myself speaking. Just as my present moment is always already old, my interior monologue is never my own.<sup>24</sup> Here, with these other voices in me, our phenomenology of inner experience intersects with Deleuze and Guattari's idea of becoming.

We have in fact been pursuing a double strategy. On the one hand, we have been trying to undermine the claim that humans are superior to animals by criticizing, by means of the delay in temporalization and the traits in language, the belief that human auto-affection is pure "auto." On the other hand, we have been trying to become animal, to put the animals in us so that we humans change our relation to animals. Both strategies, as we have just seen, intersect; we could even say that the two strategies are the intersection of Derrida's thought with that of Deleuze and Guattari. Based on the two strategies, we can now say, as Derrida would, "*l'animal que donc je suis*," "the animal that therefore I am." The animal that I am, that I have in my *cogito*, is like a specter who haunts me. The haunting I undergo is relentless. The thinking is so feverish that I feel myself being late. Is this lateness the feeling of bad conscience (as in Derrida), or the feeling of shame (as in Deleuze and Guattari)? It does not matter. All that matters is that, since I am late for my rendezvous, I am in a hurry to catch up, hurrying along and following, "*l'animal que donc je suis*," "the animal that therefore I follow." But following the animals

never means imitating them. Following the animals means writing like the animals. As we have suggested, this kind of writing—to write like a rat—would challenge and question common sense. It would question what we call the truth. Therefore, it would be a writing that fictionalizes, that fabulates, that writes tales (QPh 158/168).<sup>25</sup> Only through tales—again, they would be a kind of folktale—are we able to call forth a collectivity. Is this collectivity a people (as in Deleuze) or a democracy (as in Derrida)? Again, it does not matter. All that matters is that, since the collectivity would be called forth by rat-writing, the collectivity would have a different relation to the animals than we do. Perhaps this collectivity to come would be themselves a people who thought feverishly. Haunted by the specter of the agony of animals that they find within themselves, perhaps they would say “This land that I seem to possess is not my own.” They would say, “Let’s open all the doors and destroy the walls.” Perhaps they would be a people who loved the world so much that they would want to let everyone, without exception, enter in, and to let everyone, without exception, exit out. Perhaps, we could call this people to come “the friends of passage.”

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## Notes

1. In other texts, I have associated globalization with the problem of the worst, a problem based on Derrida’s idea of auto-immunity. See Leonard Lawlor, *This is not Sufficient* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007).
2. Heidegger has shown in *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics* that what is at work in the Kantian subject is auto-affection. See Martin Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, tr. Richard Taft (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990), pp. 129–133 (section 34).
3. Starting with my *Derrida and Husserl* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002), I have insisted on using the correct English translation for the title of Derrida’s *La voix et le phénomène*, instead of the published title of *Speech and Phenomena*. I am in the process of preparing a new translation of this text for Northwestern University Press, with a publication date in 2010.
4. In citing the works of Deleuze and Guattari, I will give first the French, then the English pagination. The following abbreviations will be used : C2: *Cinéma 2, L’image-temps/ Cinema 2: The Time-Image*; CC: *Critique et Clinique/ Essays: Critical and Clinical*; MP: *Mille Plateaux/A Thousand Plateaus*; QPh: *Qu’est-ce que la philosophie?/What is Philosophy?*.
5. The concept of auto-affection has its roots in Plato’s dialogue called the *Theaetetus*, when Plato defines thinking as the soul’s monologue with itself. In this strange dialogue however, Plato also considers conceiving memory as an aviary. Do these birds in my head sing?

6. Earlier than Deleuze and Guattari, Levinas had insisted on aging ("senescence" or "vieillesse") as the primary way of understanding time. See *Autrement qu'être ou au-delà de l'essence* (Paris: Livre de poche essais, 1974), pp. 30, 66; *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (The Hague: Marinus Nijhoff, 1981), pp. 14, 38.
7. Perhaps Proust is the model for all becomings in Deleuze and Guattari; in *A Thousand Plateaus*, they say that "another outcome [issue] [other than annihilation] was possible, or was made possible by Proust," and that other outcome was the work (*l'œuvre*) (MP 333/272, also 547/439).
8. In the preface to his translation of Deleuze's *Critique et Clinique* (*Essays: Critical and Clinic*, xli), Daniel W. Smith seems to recognize that the production of a work is the criterion for a successful becoming. Ronald Bogue also comes close to recognizing this in the final chapter of his excellent *Deleuze on Literature* (London: Routledge, 2003). In *Gilles Deleuze* (London, Routledge, 2002), Claire Colebrook writes, "We can think of art and philosophy as becoming-molecular or becoming imperceptible. We do not actually want to be a molecule or animal, for this would mean not writing at all [...] Freedom requires moving beyond the human to affirm life. Literature, for Deleuze, is essential here" (128).
9. Donna Haraway criticizes Deleuze and Guattari for the valorization of animals that travel in packs as opposed to house pets such as dogs. But she fails to see that Deleuze and Guattari also say that "it is also possible for any animal to be treated in the mode of the pack or swarm... even the cat, even the dog" (MP 294/241). See Haraway, 29.
10. This phrase refers to Henry Miller; see MP 350/286. But we must stress here the role asceticism plays in becoming; see MP 302/247. A crucial example of becoming can be found in Foucault's third volume of *The History of Sexuality*: "One familiarizes oneself with the minimum. This is what Seneca wishes to do according to a letter written a time before the Saturnalia of the year 62. Rome is 'in a sweat' and 'licentiousness is officially sanctioned.' Seneca asks himself if one ought to take part in the festivities or not; what puts one's restraint [*retenue*] to the proof is to abstain from the festivities and to break with the general attitude. But not to isolate oneself is to act with a still greater moral force; the best is 'without mixing with the crowd, to do the same things, but in a different way [*mais d'une autre manière*].' And this 'different way' is that to which one forms oneself ahead of time by means of voluntary exercises, periods of abstinence, and poverty cures" (83-84/60).
11. One should note that aging plays a crucial role at the end of Part I of *What is Philosophy* (QPh 106-107/110-111). Here too aging (or history) opens up the possibility of becoming.
12. For more on love in Deleuze and Guattari, see John Protevi, "Love," in Paul Patton and John Protevi, editors, *Between Deleuze and Derrida* (New York: Continuum, 2003): 183-194, especially, pp. 188-189.
13. See Tamsin Lorraine, *Irigaray and Deleuze: Experiments in Visceral Philosophy* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999), pp. 183-84.
14. See Philippe Mengue, *Deleuze et la question de la démocratie* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2003), p. 178. Here Mengue recognizes the importance of the intolerable in Deleuze's final texts. See also Ronald Bogue, *Deleuze on Music, Painting, and the Arts* (London: Routledge, 2003), p. 35. Here Bogue recognizes that all becomings are minor, but does not see the essential requirement of suffering. See also Paul Patton, *Deleuze and the Political* (London: Routledge, 2000), p. 78-83. Patton's discussion of becoming remains one of the best available. See also: Claire Colebrook, *Gilles Deleuze*, p. 143; Elizabeth Grosz, "A Thousand Tiny Sexes: Feminism and Rhizomatics," in *Gilles Deleuze and the Theater of Philosophy*, eds., Constantin V. Boundas and Dorothea

- Olkowski (London: Routledge, 1994): 187-211. In a short discussion of becoming-animal, Christian Kerslake starts with a mention of the film "Willard," and the role of rats in becoming. See Kerslake, *Deleuze and the Unconscious* (London: Continuum, 2007), p. 170ff.
15. See Véronique Bergen, *L'ontologie de Deleuze* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2001), p.79.
  16. See also Gilles Deleuze, *Critique et Clinique* (Paris: Minuit, 1993), p. 11; English translation by Daniel W. Smith and Michael A. Greco as *Essays: Critical and Clinical* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), p. 1: "writing is a question of becoming." Hereafter cited with the abbreviation CC, with reference first to the French, then to the English translation.
  17. See François Zourabichvili, "Deleuze et le possible" in *Gilles Deleuze, une vie philosophique*, sous la direction de Eric Alliez (Le Plessis-Robinson: Institut Synthélabo, 1998): 335-357, especially, p. 351.
  18. Jacques Derrida too has stressed this preposition. See Jacques Derrida, *L'autre cap* (Paris: Minuit, 1991), p. 69; English translation by Pacalle-Anne Brault and Michael B. Naas as *The Other Heading* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992), p. 70.
  19. In *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari refer to "The Lord Chandos Letter" three times, using the French edition of Von Hoffmannsthal's work: *Lettres du voyageur à son retour*, traduit de l'allemand par Jean-Claude Schneider (Paris: Mercure de France et Gallimard, 1969). I am using *The Lord Chandos Letter and Other Writings*, translated from the German by Joel Rotenberg (New York: New York Review Books, 2005).
  20. J.M. Coetzee through his character Elizabeth Costello writes a variant of the Lord Chandos Letter, "Letter of Elizabeth, Lady Chandos." Elizabeth Costello's letter stresses the role of language in this experience. See J.M. Coetzee, *Elizabeth Costello* (New York: Penguin Books, 2003), pp. 227-230.
  21. On style see MP 123/97. See also Gilles Deleuze, *Pourparlers*, 1972-1990 (Paris: Minuit, 1990/2003), p. 192; English translation by Martin Joughin as *Negotiations: 1972-1990* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), pp. 140-141.
  22. I am following the three aspects of the minorization of major language that Deleuze presents in "Literature and Life," in *Essays: Critical and Clinical*; see CC 15-16/5.
  23. See MP 439/355, where Deleuze and Guattari speak of "a Stateless woman-people."
  24. Fred Evans has developed an important conception of the voice in *The Multi-Voiced Body* (Columbia UP, 2008).
  25. In many places, Deleuze appropriate Bergson's idea of a *fabulation function* (see C2 353/269-270). See also Deleuze, *Pourparlers*, p. 235; *Negotiations*, p. 174. For the Bergson reference, see Henri Bergson, *Les deux sources de la morale et de la religion*, in *Œuvres, Édition du Centenaire* (Paris: PUF, 1959), pp. 1066-1067; English translation by R. Ashley Audra and Cloudsley Brereton with the assistance of W. Horsfall Carter as *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1977), pp. 108-109. The English translation of *The Two Sources* renders "la fonction fabulatrice" as "the myth-making function"; this translation does not harmonize well with Deleuze's use of this Bergsonian idea, since Deleuze stresses that *fabulation* is used against the dominant myths of a society. In *Cinema 2* he writes, "It is thus necessary to go beyond all the pieces of spoken information; to extract from them a pure speech-act, creative story-telling [*fabulation créatrice*] which is as it were the obverse side of the dominant myths, of current words and their supporters; an act capable of creating the myth instead of drawing profit from or business from it" (353/269-270).

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