

## Deleuze and Guattari: Feminine Simulacra, Semantic Machines

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### *To be or to become*

"In all sorts of complex ways - through the history of the feminist movement and the history of homosexuality, through relationships in general -, this new type of sensibility is also the revolution. If revolutionary glasses do not allow us to see that, then there is no more revolution, it is all finished": so, in 1979, Félix Guattari stated in an interview issued to a free broadcast station in Bologna, *Radio Alice*. In the writing *Toward a New Nomadism* (see bibliography below), for her part Rosi Braidotti argued: "The task of redefining female subjectivity requires as its preliminary method the working through the stock of culminated images, concepts, and representations of women and of female identity, such as they have been codified by the culture we are in". Though in an oblique way and in a Deleuzian paradoxical sense - history of thinking must not merely consider what thinkers said but also what they did not, that being implicit in their thoughts -, among other things the attempt here is to compare and to reconcile these two distinct yet complementary opinions.

As it can be intuited, in the works of Gilles Deleuze and Guattari - to a much greater extent in those of Deleuze, indeed - such feminine figures as Alice, the Sphinx, Ariadne and Mnemosyne/Psyche, are male projections and philosophic simulacra rather than feminist ones. They are not so far from Themis and Aphrodite in Parmenides, or Venus and Cybele in Lucretius (in *Dialogues* and elsewhere, Deleuze acknowledged his thinking precursors: Lucretius, Spinoza, Hume, Nietzsche, Bergson, Sartre...; there is a not negligible debt of the thinker to the Latin poet/philosopher, concerning the concept of *voluptas*, the function of simulacra and some atomistic/molecular image of the unconscious). And, of course, from Ariadne/Cosima/Lou Andreas-Salomé in Nietzsche. About this, nothing better than referring to *Amante marine. De Friedrich Nietzsche*, by Luce Irigaray. While Alice is an heroin crossing the whole *Logic of Sense*, Ariadne is the protagonist in a sort of far-sighted testament by Deleuze himself: *Ariadne's Mystery, according to Nietzsche*, included in *Critical and Clinical* at last. As to the Sphinx, more than the binomial *Anti-Oedipus*, Deleuzian *Difference and Repetition* looks under her enigmatic ascendant, long persisting in our arts and culture (Hegel, Nietzsche, Jung, Heidegger...). There, the hybrid monster was seen as a mythical mask of the questioning and problematic nature of the unconscious.

To better specify, it has nothing or little to do - if not a fine Jungian thread, at most - with such fascinating "Myths and Stories of the Wild Woman Archetype" as those in the celebrated *Women Who Run With the Wolves* by Clarissa P. Estés. And for the rest, examining from the viewpoint of common sense the recurring though varying sequence "becoming-woman, becoming-child, becoming-animal, becoming-plant, becoming-molecular, becoming-imperceptible" (otherwise and elsewhere, we cannot ignore "becoming-intense", "becoming-music", "becoming-god"), there cannot be found much feminism in it at first sight. On the contrary, some today's gentle "Maenads" would find easy grounds for driving their sharp shells into the flesh of unlucky Orpheus/Deleuze. Or else, they could balance by diplomacy,

splitting like Alice of Carroll/Deleuze onto a transparent/reflecting surface woven with signifying and signified phenomena. Just a bit like some Oriental Alice/Kundalini, it would also be nice arising from the profound self to enlighten our blinded minds. At any rate, Alice was the favourite simulacrum in Deleuzian imagery: since "everything of her is simulacrum"; she is a symbol of becoming, and becoming is the essence itself of our being.

In *Dialogues* with Claire Parnet, Deleuze himself advises that such expressions as "becoming-woman" have to be interpreted as "becoming-minoritary" (cf. *Philosophie et Minorité*; see bibliography below). And Guattari, in an interview conducted by Charles J. Stivale and entitled *Pragmatic/Machinic*, gives a popular explanation. More than with an equal one, an identification or approximation to a minority would be propaedeutic to a further civil development. Even more than a "molecular" or "rhizomic" revolutionary perspective - disintegrating old "territories" of the ego, of the family, of the profession, of the ethnic belonging etc. -, a relational and even domestic-centred reform in our Western societies: "There is no rigorous dialectics, there is no series of connections. [...] But simply, the departure from binary power relations, from phallic relations, is on the side of the *woman* alternative; the promotion of a new kind of gentleness, a new kind of domestic relationship; the departure from this, one might say, elementary dimension of power that the conjugal unit represents, it is on the side of woman and on the side of the child: such that, in some ways, the promotion of values, of a new semiotics of the body and sexuality, passes necessarily through the woman, through *becoming-woman*".

Looking from a critical angle, that is a typical Guattarian reasoning. Between one term and another of a binomial there is not dialectic opposition, contradiction or antagonism. Therefore, there cannot be possible subversion or real transgression, but desirable "transition" or, better, "translation" of a sense: in an Italian interview conducted by Vittorio Marchetti, despite his aversion to traditional Psychoanalysis Guattari associated the term with the Freudian notion of *transfert*. In order that this becoming intense or becoming other is possible, through an empathic recognition until a mutual emancipation, some difference of potential has to be previous: just like a condition of "majority" in front of a status of "minority". It is a legitimate positivistic-trending view, though not seldom transposed from a medical scientific field to social relationship. Regarding it well, this lays itself open to some criticism like that already addressed by Herbert Marcuse in *Eros and civilization* to Erich Fromm's moderate optimism, within Frankfurt School thinking environment. Besides we should hope that, sometimes, a woman could be free to dream becoming a man or - more obviously - a child to wish becoming an adult, of course if they would find pleasure and convenience in such troubled metamorphoses. Anyway, the co-operation with the humanistic and rhetorical thought of Deleuze had to be a laborious process of reciprocal intellectual fascination and integration, "inhabiting the distance" of their cultural differences. The synthesis between Deleuzian philosophic simulacra and Guattarian semantic machines should have been a meaningful acme.

Especially the Nietzschean reception of the "difference" from Deleuze had to be different, though not at all incompatible with that one from Guattari. When the former wrote "becoming-woman", he was thinking of Flaubert's literary motto "Madame Bovary c'est moi", though not with the same exact meaning. Or maybe he thought of Michel Foucault, when this one had written on St. Antony the Hermit of Flaubert, who wished to be "animal, plant, cell" (in *Un fantastique de bibliothèque*; see bibliography below). On the other hand, we cannot disregard an influence of Guattari's professional practice, in the field of "schizo-analysis". In fact, it is well known the dissociation of personality in schizoid or schizophrenic clinical cases as well as a paranoid imaginary "machinic" persecution complex, frequently in today

feminine subjects (old studies of Victor Tausk and of Marguerite A. Sechehaye already confirmed it). That is a basically estranged feeling or, often, a rejection of modern hyper-productive, "logocentric" and "phallographic" society. But it could be also interpreted as a potential critical perception of reality, from sensitive "privileged" subjects. That was an opinion of Guattari, and of Deleuze. As to the former, we may add, his positions were coherent with a quite optimistic progressive formation. In the interview quoted here at the beginning, he also declared: "Political superstructures and systems of representation will collapse or crumble down in ridicule and inanity, but there are already an enormous number of things which function, and function remarkably well, whether at the level of science, aesthetics, or in the inventiveness of daily life. There is an extraordinary vitality in the machinic processes".

*How can it be decided?*

In a relatively recent scientific literature, it can be found not a psychotic but a neurotic pertinent example, presenting some psychosomatic pernicious symptoms: "Jeanne's Case" (in *Tempo e inconscio*, edited by Maria Giordano). During a therapeutic meeting, this patient from Southern Italy said: "It is not that reality objectively exists... it is not that... I... that other people are better than me... that is so, we are on two levels... I do not know... or I am, who... for there is a difference between two... between two situations... if there is a difference, it is clear too: the former will be upper, the latter will be lower... but that is relative, at last... the reality is that... just such... it is not that other people are... how can it be decided?". Actually, such a kind of lucid delirium sounds confirming some views of Guattari. But, we have to notice, the young woman was a University student. Her blinking language was a learned one, and we may have a methodic suspicion she could have read and be confusedly remembering some specialized texts. Anyhow, let us focus the close of the speech: "How can it be decided?". Not always, there is a clear-cut division between "normality" and not. Lucretius composed his philosophic poem *De rerum natura* "per intervalla insaniae". Nietzsche hyperbolically wrote: "Sometimes the madness itself is a mask, which hides a fatal and too certain knowledge" (in Deleuze's *Nietzsche*; cf. also the drama *Henry IV*, by Luigi Pirandello). Indeed, such a risk seems like a price to pay: "O Zarathustra, thou stone of wisdom! Thou threwest thyself high, but every thrown stone must fall! [...] Condemned of thyself, and to thine own stoning: O Zarathustra, far indeed threwest thou thy stone but upon thyself will it recoil!" (Nietzsche, in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*). Listening to Deleuze and Guattari, in a peculiar way philosophy itself can be a sort of visionary activity: all the more reason for a kind of thought, where connotation of the speech is as important as denotation, at least.

That here above is what Deleuze called in French "percée". Unfortunately, as we could see, this "breakthrough" does not exclude at all a later irreversible psychic "breakdown" of the acting subject. And, as to his relationship with the thought of Guattari, surely when the first one wrote "molecular", he was rather thinking of Lucretian atomistic view or even of Leibniz's monads. But, even through that, Guattari's contribution looks in a large part autonomous and profitable. When Pierre Lévy has composed his first important work *La Machine Univers*, reliably he is been thinking more of Guattari than of Deleuze, so that we can consider him a consequential heir of the former (even if we cannot forget, once again, the ancient poet of *De rerum natura*, canto V: "multosque per annos sustentata ruet moles et machina mundi"). Sometimes, the attitude of the latter toward his collaborating friend was symptomatic of an unintentional ambiguity. During the common interview by V. Marchetti,

twice he delegated some explanations to the "technical" competence of Guattari. Evidently, that was psychiatric knowledge and experience. It was a precious support for the Deleuzian theoretic construction or "deconstruction". Yet, we cannot skip it, they collaborated in a work about history of philosophy too: *What is Philosophy?* In a context but the present one, maybe more attention ought to be paid to such a generous attempt to overcome the "schizoid" gap persisting between cultural and scientific, or "technical", criticism.

Anyhow, regarding the feeling of otherness, in *The Conditions of the Question: What Is Philosophy?* Deleuze had already upheld the need of "a vital relationship with that Other, which we believed could be excluded from pure thinking". And, in the interview *Signes et événements* (see bibliography below), he said: "I think I have created a concept of Other as something not subjective nor objective [...], but as expression of a potential world". Here we might also compare with Ralph W. Emerson's poetic intuition of a double consciousness, subjective and objective at once, in his *Lectures and Biographical Sketches*. Yet Deleuzian notion of alterity is an aprioristic form, as to the object as to the subject. Close to the unconscious seen as "speech of the Other" by Jacques Lacan, it was often implicating that one of alienism, even alienation, and never disjoined from a strictly philosophic background: "In classical philosophy the other of thought was the other of alterity. With Kant something absolutely new begins: the other within thought. It's an other of alienation. Of course Kant does not use this word, but the post-Kantians will produce a fundamental theory of alienation which will be revealed in its most perfect state in Hegel. The difference between the other of alterity, which is really an exterior other which creates an obstacle for thought, it is the other of alienation which is this interior limit" (Deleuze, in *4 Leçons sur Kant*). If we cannot really remove that obstacle, let us see here further how it may be reduced to a methodic means, not only on an abstract level.

Moreover, there is no doubt: besides Freudism, Deleuzian and Guattarian confluent thoughts were born with a purpose against Hegelism. Just for this, Hegel left some marks in Deleuze's "non-dialectic" basic concept of difference. It was not the only Romantic influence in his thinking. Mainly based on an intuition of Hölderlin reflecting about Sophocles' *Oedipus the King*, in a Deleuzian perspective our selves are perennially crossed by a mobile fracture (cf. *Difference and Repetition*). That is the "caesura" of time. Always we are surfing between a before and an after. Just to an imperceptible degree, we are always coming to be other than which we have been, in spite of our illusions of integral being. Already in the Homeric *Iliad*, books I and III, incapacity to link before with after was a proverbial allusion to insanity. And nowhere that anxiety was better caught than in the second *Olympian Ode* by Pindar, there already associated to Oedipus' character. It has to be added, at the same time we are crossed by a fracture caused by our reception of space: an inner space in front of an outer one, an unconscious dimension in front of a conscious one.

Feeling of intimate coherence depends upon those co-ordinates, resulting from some acrobatic equilibrium. More than definite coordinates, these are variable perceptions. The subject itself is an open cross-road, in an optimistic view. At the worst, it could also be a sort of running knot. In his ancestral expressive legend, Oedipus himself - hero of Being for the Death, so thrown into his unrepeatability, according to Heidegger in *Being and Time* - bitterly realized it. In the clay pediment of a late Etruscan temple near Talamone in Italy, he is depicted in a central position, as vainly trying to keep this world from being dragged into the hell by its own destructive instincts. Oedipian time was an Hamletic one, "off its hinges". And that had been a cryptic warning for him, inside the childish riddle of the Sphinx, suggested by Apollonian Muses. "Oedipus' complexes mostly depend upon the question of the Sphinx" (Deleuze, in *Difference and Repetition*). By believing he had defeated

the monster, the hero early introverted what was projected outside before. The abyss, into which she throw herself, still today is our self, partly at least. Let us remember what Carl G. Jung hyperbolically wrote in *Symbols of Transformation*: "Oedipus ignored that human intelligence could never stand on the same level of Sphinx's enigma". Actually, too late he became aware: "Dira ne sedes vacet, monstrum reponere maius. Hoc saxum insidens obscura nostrae verba fortunae loquar, quae nemo solvat" (Oedipus, in the *Phoenissae* by Seneca; cf. *The Phoenician Women* by Euripides, that is women of Cadmus' descent). Last paroxysmal utterance of Oedipus' complaint can be read in *Don Quixote* by Kathy Acker. So long he played the main part in the drama of subjectivity, of an identity clashing with domestic, social, political environments. And the female projection of the Sphinx was his *alter ego*, his Jungian "shadow", expression of an interior conflict more than a counter attraction.

In other words, our self-consciousness is an identitarian repetition, ever crossed by difference as well as every being is crossed by becoming. This defective though reminiscent self, always travelling through time and space, between consciousness and unconsciousness, becoming other than which he has been before, essentially is a "nomadic" one. On the other hand, "Ego is a habit" (almost a flux of molecular *ksana*, in a Buddhist view): Deleuze and Guattari, in *What is Philosophy?* Not as Oedipus the King, unaware and incestuous parricide, indeed. Rather, like *Oedipus at Colonus*, title of another tragedy by Sophocles (cf. Deleuze, in *Difference and Repetition*, in *Dialogues* and in *A Thousand Plateaus - Rhizome*). Actually, a wandering Oedipus. Nietzsche in *The Birth of Tragedy* supposed that the story of Oedipus, maybe also because he had descended from Phoenician Cadmus - Europa's brother -, had been an original Semitic myth instead of a Greek one. At this point, an association of ideas with the legend of the "Wandering Jew" is quite easy. That is what happened within a strange and well known neurotic case, analysed by Jung in his *Symbols of Transformation*. Precisely, I am referring to Miss Frank Miller's dreams and fantasies. Here, such figures as the Sphinx and the Wandering Jew appeared confused together. Through this oneiric contamination of Oedipus' myth with the legend of Wandering Jew, the dialectic development of personality by the unconscious - from differentiation to individuation - was explored by the renowned therapist and theorist. Yet, we may underline, in all those cases we have to do with a general and historical Western personality.

### *We are all aliens*

It is time for a closer watch on the rippling "surface" of Deleuzian simulacra. In *A Thousand Plateaus - On the Refrain*, our thinker said: "Always there is some sonority in Ariadne's thread. That is Orpheus' song". More than into a wood of Maenads, the Deleuzian "refrain" calls back in the twilight of Sibyl's cave, where an Heraclitean lunar Nature would play hide-and-seek with us. Notoriously, Apollonian Sibyls - as well as the Muses - were virgins, while Dionysiac Maenads were called "matres" by Virgil in the *Georgics*. "Mothers", and projected out of time and of space, were the Goddesses of the Heart in the *Faust* by Goethe, remembering Plutarch. Virgins were the Eumenides attending Oedipus' death in *Oedipus at Colonus*. Yet mother and lover at once is Mnemosyne, symbol of an improbable "virginal repetition" and loved by Eros, in Deleuze's *Difference and Repetition*. Truly, in the original Greek myth the goddess of remembrance was loved by Zeus and mother of the Muses. Thus, we have to suppose a Deleuzian contamination with the Apuleian *fabula philosophica* of Amor and Psyche. We may even argue, Ariadne's thread alias Orpheus' song is but a nostalgic Platonic reminiscence, making us looking for some foundation in the past and opening a window on the future. Already in the Jungian analysis we read of a psyche "in

transition": creating an image projected into the future, by remainders and tracks of the past. And Deleuze himself wrote: "The task of modern philosophy has been defined as overthrowing of Platonism. Yet such an overthrowing keeps not few Platonic traits. That is not only inevitable. It is desirable too". Codification and de-codification of symbols seem to be important, following an hermeneutic or a psychoanalytic approach. Often Deleuzian thought was balancing between such levels. On the other hand, not seldom the springing of a sense is committed to an enigmatic pressure or to a cast of the dice of paradox.

Let us listen to the refrain of the Sphinx, in its "original" reliable version: "Which is the animal who, with only one voice, walks in four limbs in the morning, with two at noon and with three in the afternoon?". Too often that "only one voice" has been disregarded. Perhaps, it is a crucial element and the sum of all: Ariadne's thread, Orpheus' song, Mnemosyne/Psyche's love. A few steps further, and the dancing enigma and paradox were going to usher us into a labyrinthine dialectic Logos (Plato, in *Eutidemos*; cf. Giorgio Colli, *La nascita della filosofia*, "The Birth of Philosophy": comparing some consonant ideas of Deleuze and of Colli, as two coauthors of the "Nietzschean Renaissance", maybe is a work to be better carried out in an academical field). That is too idyllic, considering that the birth of philosophy was following *The Birth of Tragedy* according to Nietzsche: let us emphasize, *Out of the Spirit of Music*. Rather, the Labyrinth seems like a mirroring interfaced emblem, between irrational and rational dimensions. "He who looks deep into himself as into an immense cosmic space, and carries Milky Ways within him, knows also that all Milky Ways are irregular: they lead us into the chaos and the labyrinth of existence" (Nietzsche, in *Gay science*). Really we need Ariadne's musical and reminiscent thread, for getting into and out from it. In his poem 64, Latin poet Catullus already intuited a convergence like that. Yet, is all here the inextricable ambiguity of the subconscious? Mainly a sort of foyer, or - better - of wings, in a Foucaultian "Theatrum philosophicum". Or, sometimes, is there something worse: just like introverted stories of sexual inhibition, violence and discrimination?

When I was a young student of Philosophy and Psychiatry, I spent one year in the Neuropsychiatric Clinic of University of Rome. With my seminar-group, we dealt with some schizophrenic and catatonic country-women coming from deep South of Italy. They were so closed in the armour of their family constrictive virginity, that could be objects of study rather than of effective therapy. The only voices of them we might "hear" returned from the anamnesis registered by doctors. Actually, these voices sounded so paradoxical and obscure symbolism-encumbered, that looked as coming out from Sibyl's cave. But we do not have to forget: those victims of a misrepetition - or of some realistic domestic rape - came from historical setting of Maenads, of Sibyls and the Sphinx, crashing into the modern age. It had been the same one, ancient "Magna Graecia", where an early Western feeling and self-consciousness had sprung. Anyway, the sense of impotence and the oppressive atmosphere were so hard, that I chose to retire to a humanistic-rhetorical field (you know: the Greek Sphinx and Sappho throwing themselves into the void, Roman Tarpeia pushed down from a rock... Was it the same old line? Listening to Sappho's complaint in *Dialogues with Leucò*, by Italian novelist Cesare Pavese, just it seems so).

Meanwhile, Guattari and Deleuze were doing their experience of "open psychiatry" in the Chateau de La Borde near Paris. Then I read of them first, in the previously mentioned interview by V. Marchetti, entitled *Capitalismo e schizofrenia* (see bibliography below). That is really interesting, so as equipped with an impressive photographic report of that crucial experience, by Caroline Laure. Moreover, there we can clearly tell Deleuze from Guattari. The former replied to a question of the interviewer: "Logic is not a concept we care for. It is such a vague word! Everything and nothing is logic at once". Besides an expressive - both

Kierkegaardian and Deleuzian - "pathos of thinking", that seems simply meaning, behind great part of conscious concepts there is an active or even contrasting unknown background. On a cognitive plateau, we may also remark, there is no "adaequatio rei et intellectus" but interference of an emotional *transfert*. Many times, there are not reliable objects and a subject of knowledge, because this one is acting out of himself. Rather, an imaginative interzone, where archetypal simulacra were born and new ones are growing up.

Yet let us pay attention. In part, the provocative paradox is a Deleuzian mask, perhaps a reading-key particularly in *A Thousand Plateaus*. In fact, what was following up was an attempt to demonstrate that alienation is but a bitter sort of alienism: often irreducible, we have to admit. The consequent step is that alienism is a negation of identity of our subject, trying to open this one to a positive reception of alterity: within a wide range and in a soft way, something like Judith P. Butler's "subversion of identity" (a reversible identity could be a good result, in the meantime!). In a religious - why not? - perspective instead, it could even be a negation of hypocritical otherness alias selfishness, in order to return our egos to a superior and "unselfish" self: just like in the central message of original Christianity, the parable of the Good Samaritan. Elsewhere in the *Gospels*, Jesus dealt with a female Samaritan. And Samaritans were seen like aliens by several Jewish people at that time. Openly, the evangelical paradoxical meaning was that sometimes their alienism could be closer than alterity of not few compatriots and co-religionists. Incidentally, in a stained-glass window in the Cathedral at Rouen in France, it can be interesting to watch how even Oedipus' myth was sexually depurated and altered in a Christian medieval way, through a representation of wandering St. Julian's odd story (cf. Flaubert, *The Legend of St. Julian the Hospitaller*, in *Three Tales*).

In other occasions Deleuze's thought utilized such a logical method. Even more than Nietzschean "transmutation" or "transvaluation" and despite the opinions declared by the thinker himself (for instance, in *Nietzsche and Philosophy*), it seems like a reversion of Plotinus' dialectics (*Ennead II, Tractate IV*) or, better, Theodor W. Adorno's revision of negative dialectics: mainly eyeing the *Aesthetics* by the "repudiated" Hegel, where he dealt with Romantic arts: "A double negation is but an affirmation", etc. Yet, above all, that is a sort of Aristotelian catharsis, transposed from an aesthetic plateau onto an analogic one. Deleuze was the last Western classic thinker, dissimulating or making himself "imperceptible" in front of a misrepeating Modernity. Paradoxically, this is not the least reason of the stunning spreading of his thought all over the World, on the transparent/reflecting "surface" of Western civilization. Alienism or alterity - it is also up to us, at last - are living under our windows, crossing both the border-line of our common house and that one of our own self. Paraphrasing an Italian Jewish woman writer, Luce d'Eramo, in some measure we are all aliens. For the rest, echoing Philip K. Dick and Ridley Scott, we are more or less "repetition runners", prisoners of a reassuring but tedious identitarian routine.

Criticizing a Romantic-Decadent view, from Hölderlin to Nietzsche, more than once Deleuze wrote that the Territory had been German whereas the Heart had been Greek. According to his best expectations, we may wish that our own Territory can well be the "West", but the common house should be the Cosmos: or rather "Chaosmos", listening to Guattari? The aesthetic/logical method, of which here above, did not save Nietzsche from alienation; Deleuze, Primo Levi or Pavese, from suicide; Lucretius from alienation and suicide, believing St. Jerome at least (Deleuze, in *The Logic of Sense*). Unfortunately, that is quite true. In return, maybe it can also contribute in making us cautious of such half-machinic and monopolistic-trending monsters as the topical "Global Mind" of Kevin Kelly or even the "Collective Intelligence" of Pierre Lévy. "Timeo Danaos et dona ferentes" (Virgil, in *Aeneid*).

Rather, it would be nice to think even the World Wide Web as in part mirroring our Lacanian inter-subjective unconscious. Or, better too, as a virtual Venice throwing its thousand bridges toward West and East, North and South. Then, actually that could be an efficacious instrument for a new subjectivity open to "multiple identity". In *Tattoo Jew*, "Online Magazine for Jews with Attitude", Jill Bressler and Alan Kaufman once asked to the outsider novelist Kathy Acker about Internet, Virtual Reality and even Cyber-Sex: "Do you think this is some kind of manifestation of what the human spirit wanted - to shed all these encumbrances of identity, nationality, ethnicity, gender?". She wittily replied: "I think there is something. I think the society, with everything else it is done, has deprived the population of the uses of the imagination. And this is a playground for the imagination, for people to really do what they want".

### *Looking into the wide*

Now, we may observe in a fair perspective Deleuzian feminine simulacra. Although in a different ratio - obviously, there is more alienism in the Sphinx; a little more of alterity in Alice; more irremediably sad identity in Ariadne -, they are as much "desiring-machines" as "misrepeating-machines". Their main function should be cathartic, so as it happened in the ancient Greek tragedy *Oedipus the King* by Sophocles: the model of catharsis, according to Aristotle in his *Poetics*. In early Psychoanalysis, catharsis was a means of recognition of our individual and collective unconscious. Yet some good alienism may be useful for throwing bridges out of it, and watching us reflected in the wide World around. Let us compare with Fillide/Venice in the *Invisible Cities* by Italo Calvino: every town is, just a little, Venice, in Marco Polo's surreal travelling memories. A truer and more comprehensive Venice than no real one, like Deleuze inspired by Proust wrote in *Difference and Repetition*: any reminiscence, either of a woman or of a town, is erotic at last. Mnemosyne and Eros are ancient fellow-gods, in some Platonic way. It could be also an effectual incentive, for a proper interpretation and application of Deleuzian "nomadism of thinking", or - why not? - of Giorgio Colli's "wandering reason".

But, on top of it all, perhaps it should be better that such simulacra/machines will stop working, retiring to their Lucretian-Epicurean *intermundia*. "Just as the Dancer at the end of her performance leaves the scene, so Nature ceases every activity, since she has revealed herself to the Spectator" (Ishvarakrishna, in *Samkhya-Strophes*). Then, the subject himself - in Sanskrit, *purusha* - realizes: "Spectacle and Spectator are but one thing" (Patanjali, in *Yoga-Sutra*). In the Samkhya-Yoga school imagery, the Dancer is an epithet of the goddess Kundalini. In a well known poem of the modern Irish poet William Butler Yeats, *The Double Vision of Michael Robartes* (cf. also *Michael Robartes and the Dancer*), we can find the Sphinx, the Buddha and the Dancer, joined together in one allegoric phantasmagoria. Yet, if the Sphinx wanted to recover Oedipus' ego by pathos and catharsis into a blinded self, into a cyclic time or familistic order, Kundalini's aim is to deliver our selves from a blinding *samsara* by *rasa* and *dhvani*: so, as in a Tantric aesthetic theory. At the same time, she is cosmic energy and an hypostasis of the extreme variety of shapes of the Whole (yes, the model of the concept of *Maya* in Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*). At least, an illusionist *karman* looks less heavy than Oedipus' atavic and Freudian fault-complex...

In a conjectural way, in ancient Greek Europa meant "Looking into wide spaces". According to the transmission of this myth, once a taurine Zeus in love, king of gods, ravished a beautiful Phoenician princess taking her to Crete (cf. the poem *Europa* by the Sicilian-

Hellenistic poet Moschus, with special reference to Europa's prophetic dream, where she is contested by two female allegories representing old Asia and a mysterious unnamed continent: that is overcoming Europe). Vainly her brother Cadmus, Oedipus' ancestor, was searching for her elsewhere. In the Mediterranean isle, she had to be nostalgic of her far family and Eastern land. For some poetic reasons - Greek settlers of "Magna Graecia" were considered Western as to their mother-country -, her gentle name became synonym of Occident and remained as that one of our residential or original continent. In the long run the difference, which those settlers already a bit philosophers were inhabiting (cf. Deleuze and Guattari, *What is Philosophy?*), became our far-descending repetition.

"Inhabiting the distance" from Sicily to California or Tasmania, inside our deep self we persist in a confused and contradictory nostalgia of Orient. With some problems, we might even try to transform the legacy of Labyrinth, or Baudelaire's "forest of symbols", into a self-centred Mandala (Deleuze and Guattari, *ibidem*). But it looks like a mystic matter. Western self could well be "ecstatic". Yet, we have to admit, no more in that way. For example, it would be difficult to take seriously the following statement of the sensitive writer Patricia K. Cadigan to the "cyberfeminist and queer" Italian magazine *Fikafutura* (see bibliography below): "Maybe the *karman* will balance everything, at last. I have seen it happening so many times! I am realistic and obstinate, firmly believing in the *karman*". Evidently, Irish-American "Pat" wanted to express some literary remembrance of Catholic inscrutable Divine Justice, rather than a literal reception of Indian *karman*. More interesting, what she said about identity through Internet: "Internet idea is not driving back people into hidy-holes, from where they began to succeed in coming out. To hide our own gender, race, culture and the like, it should not be necessary". Such an advice could be taken as a proper caution, concerning the danger foreseen by Jean Baudrillard in the telematic global communication: that the unwary cybnaut may become a sort of terminal of himself, instead of proceeding on the difficult way to an extroverted subjectivity.

Many times, several concepts look different in a different cultural context. If we wish to compare West and East through female figures, we have to point out of exiguous documented Deleuzian imagery. Let us look at Penelope in the *Odyssey*, and at Sheherazade in *A Thousand and One Night*. Both of them are feminine repetition-simulacra. The former was repeating her weaving during the day, and taking down the web in the night, to preserve a cyclic time and familistic order. Ulysses' ship and Penelope's loom were their technical instruments. Their risk was impiety and its punitive consequences: to come out blinded like Oedipus, chained like Prometheus or turned into a spider like Arachne. For her part, Sheherazade had to tell a new story every night. She could not stop doing it, otherwise she had to die. Many other unknown women did have to die, indeed. Her instruments were imagination, and some female cunning or charm. Her *techne* was narration. Her ship and texture was an unflinching narrative text, filling every empty space and prevailing over a deadly *horror vacui* at last.

Truly, Sheherazade/Kundalini was not a rebel Antigone. Nor she was a suicidal Phaedra, contested between loyalty to a stale patriarchal order and a free pseudo-incestuous desire. She did not die for a cause but survived and generated, struggling against an absolute arbitrary power. Caught in the trap of his redundant selfishness, the despot himself could not kill their coming children. We can hazard to say, she was Penelope and Homer in the same time. Or Ulysses as a story-teller at the court of Alcinous, king of Phaeacians. Foucault examined such vague correspondences, in some essays of literary criticism as *Qu'est-ce qu'un auteur?* and *Le langage à l'infini* (see bibliography below). He observed: "The story-telling of Sheherazade [...] is an every night repeated effort to keep the death out of the circle of

existence". It may be also added that an analogous narrative device can be found in *Decameron* by Giovanni Boccaccio. Yet generally the reception of repetition - of course, in such cases it happens *sub specie* of variations on a theme - looks quite different in an Eastern view: because it is different the reception of the ego and of the self, perhaps as the reading of the subconscious. In some ways, we might even insinuate that such is also the difference between the binomial *A Thousand Plateaus* and the anonymous *A Thousand and One Night*. Just one night, or plateau, more. Obviously, it would be only a malicious play on words. However, Sheherazade is the symbol of a self becoming larger than our ego - a "selfless" one; cf. *anatman*, in Sanskrit -, just as she overcame the tyrannical king.

### *Inhabiting the difference*

Has all this something to do with a "Postmodern self", attempting to "inhabit the distance" of the difference? Rather than an ontological one - Plotinian, Heideggerian or Derridian -, I mean sexual, social, cultural, ethnic, religious, linguistic, even pathologic difference: anything, what is escaping from a Pirandellian identitarian repetition. It would be a patient work of translating alienism and identity into mutual alterity, trusting that truly irreducible alienation is but death and annihilation (in a late Latin, *Nihil Ens* or *Ni-ens* was the negative of *Ens*, at last). Probably, that one above is a mere Eastern digression. Yet, in some measure, the ancient Indian "wisdom" influenced Friedrich von Schlegel and Schopenhauer. Schopenhauer influenced Nietzsche, even if this one refused such an influence later. Nietzsche influenced Heidegger and Deleuze. More than a profitable "concatenation", not seldom it looks a misrepeating - or misunderstanding, in a different context - Western thinking syndrome. Between a "German Territory" and a "Greek Heart" there was like a subtle Oriental interzone, often concealed in the strict perspective of an Eurocentric mainstream. According to Deleuze reflecting once on Foucault, the self is not merely a knowledge nor a power, but also producing new subjectivity or virtual multiplicity. In *Signes et événements*, he said too: "I conceive philosophy as a logic of multiplicity". Maybe, this "becoming-multiple" is a proper passage for the Western mankind or womankind: in an old obscure but impressive philosophic jargon, their way from a wavering cosmic *quidditas* to a real human *haecceitas* (more than the medieval John Duns Scotus, let us remember *Ecce homo* by Nietzsche).

Yet what today has changed are the scene, and the actors, of the play. Instead of a sibylline Sphinx, an adolescent Alice or a seduced and deserted Ariadne, here are some impersonal, equivocal or parodistic simulacra: "Global Mind", "Beehive Mind", "Collective Intelligence"... We might also fear that these desiring-machines are going to be converted into misrepeating-machines, just as degraded Platonic idols or - even better - Voodoo "avatars" down in the Cyberspace of William Gibson, since they have definitively converted half-maiden Mythos and residual Eros into pseudo-virginal and catatonic Logos. If there is a lack of female difference in the first case, of feminine it remains but a vague grammar gender in the second one. As to the "Philosopher of Twentieth Century", we may firstly conclude, his deconstruction - on a rhetorical plateau, on a psychologic plateau, on a logical one... - aimed at a recomposition of consciousness and at a reformation of Western *episteme* at present. In such a sense, truly his thought is even more systematic - and flexible, at once - than what it liked to seem. But let us openly confirm: inhabiting the difference is the only way, habit and risk, we can suffer to share. Naturally, it does not imply a minimizing homogenization at all.

Considering Deleuze's simulacra, then we cannot stand on a single plateau or leave their "therapeutic" aim out. Above all, this one is not simply psychotherapeutic, as well as that

imaginary machinery is not merely rhetorical. Often it is a dynamic structure, affecting the reality: "Let us stop dealing with the subconscious like some stage, where an Oedipian drama looks privileged. Rather, we imagine it like a workshop" (Deleuze, in the interview *Capitalism and Schizophrenia*). That is the celebrated production of sense, even if such an author as Jean Baudrillard has objected that Deleuze and Guattari fell into the snare of a modern hyper-productivistic myth. Anyway, what was carried out were the ultimate consequences of a dialectic intuition - the Century has been just a little Gramscian too, at last -: the effects caused by a cultural superstructure are retroactive, into its determining socio-economic structure. Not seldom and even against our will, some misrepeating-machines could change into dangerous raving-machines or "war-machines". Just so it happened in the conclusive "delirious" pages of an epochal psychoanalytic novel by Italo Svevo/Ettore Schmitz, *Confessions of Zeno*, not casually dated at the outbreak of the First World War. More than that one of Guattari, Deleuzian perception of the "automatism of repetition" looks mainly negative and even terrific, almost like the dull riddle of the sing-songing Sphinx.

It may also remind us of Søren A. Kierkegaard alias Johannes Climacus, in his quite pessimistic work on *Repetition: A Venture in Experimenting Psychology*. Of course, in reality positive examples of repetition - in such cases, better to say, variation: as for Venice famous bridges - fortunately are not lacking. Yet probably we ought to look more outwards, attempting a critical comparison with a different context, not so obsessed by elusive goals of a sweeping History. Last but not least, "semiotic machines" is a generic definition we can find in *A Thousand Plateau - On the Refrain*: since such kind of abstract - and, in a large part, subconscious - machines seem originally charged to produce existential sense. Not necessarily, they are going to produce new subjectivity. Indeed, real new subjects could rise only from their breaking-points (cf. Guattari, *Machine et structure*, in *Psychanalyse et transversalité*). In *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, for her part Judith P. Butler has punctually written about a "semiotic war", currently fought within a mediatic and cultural landscape. Let us hope to have to do only with "semiotic war-machines": in the sense that they are spreading transgressing and subversive too, but pacific and pacifistic, behaviour-patterns in our mentalities. And that their main battle-field, their theater or workshop, could be our far-proceeding "symbolic order". Never out of some deal of our own "self-control", indeed.

Actually, nothing has to be worse than a crazy drift of simulacra/machines in a sea other than that one, where they were born and had grown up. "The world of depth is still rumbling under the surface. It threatens to make that one bursting. Even displayed and unfolded, monsters are harassing us" (Deleuze, in *Lewis Carroll*, in collected essays *Critical and Clinical*). On the other hand, in such an undifferentiated ocean the half-maiden Sphinx, the becoming-woman Alice, the resurrecting-goddess Ariadne, were going to precipitate into the white bulk of a Melvillian/Deleuzian Moby-Dick. Then, this one was going to drag its Captain Ahab into a consubstantial abyss ("The symbol is a *maelström*": in *Nietzsche and St. Paul, Lawrence and John of Pathmos*; cf. *Literature and life*, in *Critical and Clinical*). The involuntary prophecy of Foucault, "Ariane s'est pendue", was going to be fulfilled once again. An old Labyrinth took prisoner Daedalus, the architect himself who had built it - he was guilty of having counselled Ariadne -, and his improvident son Icarus. Desiring pulsions of the subject were going to be revealed as perverse seductions of the objects, just like in Baudrillard's way of thinking. The feeling of otherness fatally arose as the paranoid "possibility of a terrifying world" (Deleuze and Guattari, in *What is Philosophy?*). Thus, identity and difference, are they but meanders of a no-way-out repetition? Today more than ever is ineluctable what Karl Marx stated in the *Grundrisse*: that production does not produce

only an object for the subject, but is going to produce a subject for the object too?

Or else, guided by his daughter/sister Antigone, at last a self-blinded Oedipus/Deleuze could rest in Colonus, "following his flight-line, become imperceptible, identified with the great living secret" (Deleuze, in *Dialogues*). That day five years ago near Paris, in a hall of Saint-Denis University, there were about three hundred people hearing Deleuze's lecture. In a low voice, he started by saying: "Last lectures, you know, have already been given so long before...". Later, maybe it could be better understood. Never he would be going to misrepeat himself or the thinking heritage from the past. Reversing a celebrated paradox of Heidegger in *On the Way to Language*, "Language is the house of Being", at no other event it might be more properly said: the silence was the final abode of the becoming. Nevertheless, such a silence is full of Jungian vacant symbols or Foucaultian blank cases, waiting for being filled with a new sense by our "pathos of thinking". Still today, not few signs are warning, we are living in a "schizoid" civilization and society. It cannot be excluded at all, somewhere inside his Theban citadel an up-to-date tyrant is sickening for a true delirious insanity, so as it happened of Creon in Sophocles' *Antigone*. At the best, we may choose to agree with a witticism of Donna J. Haraway in *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women*: though persisting in taking part in the Dionysiac perennial dance of the shapes, it would be better to be a posthuman cyborg than some superhuman goddess. Or than a cartoonish demigod!

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