

Period Piece

Jennifer DeVere Brody, *Punctuation: Art, Politics, and Play*. Durham: Duke UP, 2008.

By Danny Kennedy

Despite Jennifer DeVere Brody's claim that punctuation as an area of interest to cultural studies has been relatively understudied, and the implication that it has certainly been poorly understood, the idea of punctuation remains a central theme in the popular culture wars of contemporary times.

Before a page has passed DeVere Brody offers us a bondage pun on the ubiquitous Lynne Truss. Truss' didactic screed on punctuation *Eat, Shoots & Leaves* (2003) implicitly links the work and responsibilities of punctuation to a sense of danger, impending disaster and violence. This undertone tempts with an excitement which is, in the context of her text, unfortunately misleading, with its showcase parable of a panda that acts after the title's violent manner due to a misapprehension based on a misplaced comma in its wildlife manual. In the context of Truss' text's purported edict of refinement and polished literacy, the occasional shades of seemingly violent aggravation can seem like an awkward or unnatural conjunction.

Nevertheless Truss' book remains one of the seminal mainstream accounts of 'correct' punctuation currently in circulation. According to the prescriptivist/descriptivist binary that DeVere Brody identifies as structuring much of the discourse surrounding punctuation, Truss' book applies an aggressive prescriptivist mandate, a language freighted with recommendation as warmongering, a determination signified in its talk of 'zero tolerance', 'shock and awe', and its dedication which invokes the Russian Revolution. Such incendiary rhetorical framing for a piece of otherwise self-consciously mannerly 'good-sense', as

well as attaching to Truss' book much of its apparent underdog attractiveness, displays DeVere Brody's contention that punctuation operates in a broadly excessive manner. Truss' message of a sober and benign vocation in assisting punctuation through its current travails, modulates between both a fey politeness as well as a faux-radical language of insurgency and retribution - all attributable to punctuation's variable styling.

By exploding beyond the utility of simple directional and imperative signs, punctuation further codifies the controversies of expression, politics, and sexuality. Consequently it produces an often dramatic conflagration at odds with the contrivances of decorum favoured by some of its more fundamentalist promulgators. Truss' paperback edition comes with a so-called 'punctuation repair kit' supposedly included so that invigorated readers, or 'sticklers' for good punctuation, can personally amend mistakes on public signage and the like. This form of 'underground' behaviour in service of a calcified ideal of perfect punctuation, results in a wry qualification where Truss 'legally' distances herself from these potentially vandal acts of re-punctuation about to be perpetrated by her readers; her shock troops. Basically, Truss' kit comprises a series of large stickers designed to look like punctuation marks. However once severed from her pages these over-sized periods, commas and semi-colons can subvert their intent in more ways than those that trouble Truss. Perhaps the reader will instead begin to cover their body in these black marks of material punctuation. Truss allows her kit an undecidable place in her ethics of punctuation by leaving their ultimate uses open to the reader. Its contents can lift outside of the context of her

panegyrics on right punctuation and *perform*. It is this performative aspect of punctuation which ceaselessly and suggestively disrupts the prescriptivist/descriptivist tension underwriting these crucial marks; one that DeVere Brody plays out across her ambling, conversational text.

Tellingly, and in sharp contrast to DeVere Brody, Truss imagines punctuation as imaginatively resembling the invisible servants found in fairy tale. Evoking the ephemeral, barely-there presence of punctuation in these self-absenting courtiers to the table of language, envisions a court where carefully monitored exchange and communication passes as revelry and intercourse. Distinct from DeVere Brody's characterisation of punctuation as precisely the (im)material register of its implementation's complex embodiment, Truss offers a blank and transparent language-golem. In contrast to the appeal to fairy-tale landscapes to supply imagery for punctuation's abstraction, DeVere Brody posits weirder, more cyclopean, reference points from the worlds of Op Art, design, dance and film. Apart from the mobility of her punctuation kit, Truss' vision of punctuation conveys an essential aversion to the transgeneric possibilities of punctuation for art, appearing as though transfixed to the page in terror, its characters afraid of the tumult and chaos of the language it shuttles. DeVere Brody's punctuation exists in order to intensely promote connection. It connects the page to sensibility at the temporal moment (point) of composition; it connects the visual inscription to the vocal repetition, and it connects individuals in a community of what the text constructs as a sort of 'dotological' affect, and even a kind of empathy.

There is another kind of binary logos at work here attempting to settle the value of punctuation: the variety of combative approaches to engaging with the punctuation debate sometimes read as almost straining for the eschatological. DeVere Brody identifies herself as rudimentally conforming to a descriptivist inclination. But both sides of the argument can and do give an impression of the desire to 'immanentize the eschaton' in the manner of conspiracy-buffs, seeking to inaugurate an endpoint on a grammatical earth whereby people routinely behave in agreement with a preferred (and profound) stance on punctuation. Herein are found the shifting entreaties of a dotological/eschatological opposition.

Experiment: How would the Masonic eye of ancient architecture, that pivotal icon of conspiratorial surveillance balanced above its pyramid on the dollar bill, translate into the new coinage of emoticons (our nascent semiotic of smileys, a hybridised punctuation dominating our electronic communications)?

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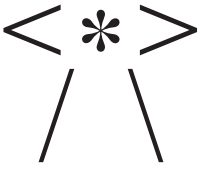
Tel. 807-766-7152 (Technoculture Lab); Fax: 807-346-7831

E-mail: genosko@lakeheadu.ca or genosko@tbaytel.net

Founding Editor: Paul Bouissac, Professor Emeritus, Victoria University, Victoria College 205, 73 Queen's Park Cr. E., Toronto, Ontario, Canada M5S 1K7

E-mail: bouissa@attglobal.net

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These scored fantasies and cognitive nonsenses might seem beside the point, and in DeVere Brody's punning (and cunning), associative text they are so, but with deliberation. Her book stacks up all the fantasies of the hulking body and the pungent sex, each beside each other, and then, formally, beside the point, the ellipsis, the hyphen, semi-colon, and so on. Along the way we get strangely poignant glimpses of the value of all this punctuation as it proceeds to reproduce its paradoxical semantics. A literal currency appears more than once; at one time in the mountains of useless, multiplying cash, everywhere during the German inflation between the wars, the notes defaced with the visual echo of pained exclamation marks. These items of punctuation are seen to be redolent of the concurrent birth/death pangs of Expressionism. Here there is a violent historical footnote, steeped in the horrible exultation of the exclamation mark, and cited between quotation marks from Adorno's *Notes to Literature*, in a mock playlet enacted through the colon's voicing of attributed speech in the text's dialogical and creative fifth chapter. Punctuation is consistently put to work throughout the text however much we are assured of its resolute playfulness.

The text sees punctuation as not simply a guide to good writing but as an "event" (3). Specifically it is an event subject to "ambiguous excessive tendencies" (4). Furthermore, these tendencies are characterised as attractive and pullulating forces - but in a very different way to the implied glamour of Truss' repressed sado-masochistic 'fairy' servants. DeVere Brody's work is genuinely politicised, and usefully humanistic. Allowing for punctuation's erotic swerves into expressive sexualities, at the same time she assesses fairly the possibilities and limitations proper to the digital and posthuman position for these marks we still ultimately make with our bodies.

Again and again the text emphasizes that punctuation reflects, but also ingeniously extends the body's intensities. This represents an ultimately human drama centred on punctuation and helps locate its constant revaluation. It also perhaps contributes to an explanation of the cultural insistence on anthropomorphising punctuation's markings. DeVere Brody is attentive to this further duality in any thinking of punctuation, respecting both the recurrent need to render punctuation the same, assimilating it entirely into the human, and vigilant to its more alien cursive qualities. In an arresting formulation she figures it as "extremities, as phantom limbs" (9). In this way the text begins to dislodge discussions of punctuation away from the monotony of linear assumption and teleological speculation - that is, away from the quest for its origin and advent, and the even duller obsession with its apocalyptic end-point (All puns intended, as DeVere Brody says). In a culture fraught with supposed pseudo-literacy, necessitating increasingly feverish yet accessible style bibles, perhaps what a neo-descriptivist outlook, in fact illuminates, is an encounter with a frighteningly audacious, and connective, hyper-literacy.

DeVere Brody's argument coheres around her notion of extension. The text does not advocate an anarchic break from convention in any dogmatic sense, but rather accentuates the measure of punctuation's coding. In her introduction she alerts us to the evasive substance of punctuation itself. What constitutes punctuation's event? Drawing on a variety of literary and academic instantiations the text presents a series of intellectual conundrums unique to the functional ambitions of punctuation. Punctuation is set up as a "supplement"; since it is "not a proper object: it is neither speech nor writing" (3). The text overtly resists any expectation to systematize or codify strictly its remarks on punctuation. Neither is it interested in a simplistic clarificatory historicisation; something like an actual periodisation. Instead the text repeatedly challenges the pedantic fixation on punctuation as merely an "assistant to authors and other supposed authorities" (4). It concentrates on delivering a series of ludic juxtaposed studies focussing on punctuation's supplemental status. The weird relationship between sign and body is made new in all aspects of DeVere Brody's text. This relationship is one that not only facilitates expression but is deeply connected to artistic production and welfare. DeVere Brody's arguments hinge on an astute conceptuality that never loses its sensitivity for and attentiveness to, a more hard-edged realism. In her readings of racial and political scenarios through the seemingly remote lens of artistic/punctuation practices, the text clearly balances its abstract concerns with a corresponding, and at times touching fidelity to lived experience.

If punctuation is not here an invisible, sexless, ethereal servant, nevertheless it does appear to haunt the body, as the embodied self ghosts in and out of materiality through its affective dissemination in art. But of what bodies is it the trace - what sex? What race? What nation? What orientation? The great originality of this text is in its playful, yet fierce, reconstitution of our complacent, even mundane understanding of punctuation through its careful appropriation of often marginal artistic figures remaking our moribund assumptions on the nature of punctuation through their events, happenings, screens, and exhibitions. A range of artistic practices are surveyed and extrapolated from, all of which are vaguely united through their often oblique usage of punctuation, but also their resolute kineticism. They reveal the perception of a static system of punctuation to be reactionary, complicit in a variety of troubling conservatism.

DeVere Brody's reliance on 'quoting' art to get her point across comes from her interest in the punctuation mark as visual object, a potent conflation of text and image, perpetually making and unmaking each term. The punctuation mark is to some extent a crushingly quotidian denotation. This text pushes for a revision of the stilted, even clichéd way we habitually consider punctuation. Its selection of artists and writers for discussion ably demonstrates how punctuation can do more than organise our writing. It can style our thought. And sometimes it can move us.

Punctuation alternates between liberating and subjugating employ. Ideologically the more obvious moves

the book makes are those that evince punctuation as a "tool of colonization and power" (63). Still this is certainly relevant work and the text interrogates these problems at length, particularly in discussions of Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man*, and a section extensively chronicling the trouble with hyphens in contributing to identity and citizenship. These portions of the text showcase the author's experience and insight as a scholar of African American Studies, in particular.

In Ellison she finds typographical contributions to a fascinating textual performance of blackness. In a subtle and nuanced reading, deviating from standard readings of Ellison's work overly enamoured with his jazzy prosody, the text detects his folding of the social invisibility of blackness into the defined absences of the ellipsis.

DeVere Brody's reading refocuses attention on what she calls the *mise-en-page*, rescuing Ellison's typographical innovations so that their crafted and achieved invisibility can in fact communicate. She convincingly attests to how writers can enfold layers of meaning, social, political and otherwise, within the secreted insertions of punctuation. The ellipsis, its dots denoting the unsaid, the redundant, and the unsayable, further inscribe the precarious position of Ellison's narrator. This chapter's hermeneutic strategy helps to restore elements of typography as an "important resource for reading" in general (64). Ellison is shown actively putting "these black marks into the service of black subjectivity" (65). In these pages the ellipsis becomes the mark of improvisation when foregrounded unusually in a literary text, "a present figure of absence [which] is paradoxically more meaning-ful, rather than meaning-less" (71).

Although indivisible from her politics, it is at such moments of dense reinvention that DeVere Brody's book sparks with liveliness, actually managing to extend our sense of punctuation, its adventures and itineraries. Through a combination of a discussion on musical notation, alongside a dream-like passage from Ellison, and a contextual knowledge of contemporary black culture, with the book's signature re-visioning of punctuation, DeVere Brody is able to extensively complicate our apprehension of the three dot ellipsis, found to "(t)here signify the tempo figured in and by 'the Blackness of Blackness'" (80). The ellipsis is appreciated as a key trope in Ellison's "figuration of invisibility" (81).

A somewhat less exacting, but still intriguing parsing of the hyphen's stake in the rhetoric of nationhood again critically augments the hyphen's performative capacities. In part due to the hyphen's protean delineation, whereby it must "occupy 'impossible' positions", the "intermediate" space of a perpetually suspended articulation of identity, the hyphen is a mark with tangible political weight and inference (85). To paraphrase DeVere Brody, it negotiates the space between two terms of vacillating connective difference. It is also the site of significant cultural furore, in the drive of nations toward the increasingly divisive myth of absolute unification, the dangerous fabulation of moral, racial, even linguistic uniformity; reshaping its agenda in an era of globalisation. The text gestures to the manner in which grammarians and prescriptivist stylists have repeatedly

predicted the inevitable disappearance of the hyphen, replaced by the solidity of the perfected compound word. De Vere Brody questions the political implications of accepting unthinkingly this supposed inevitability. This is enacted through an examination of the “numerous U.S. narratives [which] have continued to cast the hyphen as the tension between assimilation and difference” (89). These types of narrative span the decades from Theodore Roosevelt decrying the insistence of persons identifying themselves as American-Irish, American-German, and so on, at the expense of a distinctly unitary American nationhood, to the more recent, but almost identical consternation of historians such as Daniel J. Boorstin who condemn hyphenated Americans as un-American by (self) definition.

Uncovering the hyphen’s ambiguous place in these posturings and sentiments, the text moves to expand on how the hyphenated identity is problematic both for those to which it is anathema, inimical to their vision of the secure state and the strong nation, but also to those it categorises, charting them space to deviate from the limitations of citizenship, while concurrently impressing fresh anxieties.

A bridge between these debates and the book’s more playful performances is a chapter on the queering tendencies of quotation that looks at the dance performance and choreography of Bill T. Jones. Jones’ work, in dances like *Still/Here*, derived in part from workshops with other individuals with HIV, quotes sequences from these collaborations, re-ordering the spectator’s expectations and assumptions about dance. In this case a discussion of Jones’ performances add to the text’s figuring of quotation as a queering mark

and mechanism through its double link with both camp and the theatrical, as well as the “pedestrian behaviours” of the apparently normative. Quotation is another “paradoxical presence” (108), re-arranging the quotidian within excessive artistic spaces. Like all De Vere Brody’s ‘punctuation events’ it is close to the body.

So too are one of the book’s most triumphant subjects of analysis – the anarchic period, or dot. These dots are both more and less than that; they are the base material “smutty daubings” of the book’s first chapter. This chapter is framed with illustrations of bizarre magnifications of the humble dot, the first an example of the Englishman Robert Hooke’s 17th century microscopy, the latter a digital image of another example of the text’s dimensional typography, a dot that is the letter J seen from the top. These provocative and memorable images transform the closed singularity of print culture’s hitherto inviolate dot into an almost grotesque, dirty, rhizomatic smear. De Vere Brody makes much of this virulent dot’s affinity to the rampaging polka dot in the art of Yayoi Kusama throughout an entertaining and happily excessive chapter. Kusama, a Japanese artist, active in the 60s New York scene, annihilates the temperance and rationality of the placid dot converting it in a mania of plague-like polka dots enveloping everything, especially the naked body. In a series of multi-media pieces, including her notorious naked happenings where flesh and painted polka dots conspired to supplant the drudgery of war, governments and the grammar of conservation, Kusama endeavoured to enlist the dot in an effort at self-obliteration and de-personalisation. This chapter declares the extremity of the dot’s internal and external landscapes; its contagion as image and text.

Punctuation also includes some

interesting considerations of the effect of digitalisation on punctuation’s affect. De Vere Brody is always cautious in her adjudication on digital culture. While not exactly trumpeting its possibilities and transformations, neither is she begrudgingly cynical. Her curt acknowledgement and guardedness toward Motion Capture Technology is suggestive in its brief look at the repercussions of such technology for the field of dance. She finds in the spread of emoticons, not the much lamented collapse of punctuation standards but something approaching a latent lyricism of connectivity. At the core of her reading of punctuation as prosthesis is always an equally affecting sense of that sturdy vestigial humanity still not unplugged from our many media, tools and platforms.

Punctuation is an excellent self-described effort at reading punctuation ‘against the grain’. Her style is clean and bright. It is always readable while never less than searchingly scholarly. In its pages, mirroring the giant question marks and exclamations of Richard Artschwager which seem to punctuate the book’s own motifs, our shared punctuation looms like a terrible sentinel, or collapses into the crude visual onomatopoeic Blps of the artist, in some obscure way always watching our human slippages and frailties, like the smudged eye on a sweaty dollar bill.

Danny Kennedy is a research graduate in the Department of English, University College Cork, Ireland, and co-editor of *Dennis Cooper: Writing At The Edge* (2007).

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Insignification

Paul Hegarty, *Noise/Music: A History*. London: Continuum, 2007.

By Eugene Thacker

Paul Hegarty’s *Noise/Music* marks a significant contribution to the cultural studies discourse surrounding music and its many variegated forms. For cultural studies scholars – indeed, for music theoreticians as well – music has proved to be one of those stubbornly mute “things” which one can write about. While photography has the image, film the shot, and literature the word, the basic unit of music has remained elusive: is it the musical composition, its performance, the score, the melody, the note, or something like a primordial phoneme, a basic sound unit...a “soneme”? In addition, this is made all the more difficult since the history of modern music in the 20th century is ostensibly a continual redefinition of the basic unit of music, so much so that post-war avant-garde composers such as Ligeti, Penderecki, Takemitsu, and Xenakis began to describe their compositions in terms of either nature (e.g. Takemitsu’s references to gardens) or physics (e.g. Xenakis’ use of stochastic probability). Electroacoustic composers such as Parmegiani began to title their pieces *De Natura Sonorum* or *Sonare*, suggesting that late-20th century music was becoming at once simpler and more complex. Music

was becoming indistinguishable from mere sound, a tendency illustrated by Luc Ferrari’s recordings of found sounds, but presaged generations earlier by the Futurist composer Luigi Russolo, who called for entire industrial symphonies played by “noise machines” (*intonarumori*) that would celebrate the cacophony of early 20th century modern life.

Perhaps the paradigmatic examples of this twofold tendency – simple and complex, musical and non-musical – can be found in the work of John Cage (1912-1992). Cage’s much-referenced piece 4’33” – in which a pianist sits at the piano completely still for four minutes and thirty-three seconds – was not only a Duchampian gesture, but also an enframing of the boundary between music and “just sound”, sound and “just noise”. While 4’33” is not a silent piece, it is a piece about silence. On the surface, the piece questions what is or is not considered music, since Cage deliberately shows us a musical instrument – perhaps *the* musical instrument of the classical period – and then, in a gesture of subtraction, has the performer not play the instrument. However the performer is still performing the piece, since there is a score (or better, a script). This dialectic of

showing and withdrawing, of enunciation and silence, is perhaps indicative of all avant-garde music. Despite this, however, one never listens to the entire piece. This is not because it is unlistenable, but because the piece never delivers any reliable boundaries between music and sound. The absolutism of 4’33” is troubling – either everything is music or nothing is, either every sound signifies its musicality, or every sound is insignificant, a sound equal to any other, something like an “insignifying” sound.

What Cage’s 4’33” does for the theme of music and space, Cage’s organ piece *Organ2/ASLSP* (1987) does for the theme of music and time. The “ASLSP” in the title is an abbreviation of “As Slow As Possible”, the time signature of the piece. At the St. Burchardi Church in the German town of Halberstadt, *Organ2/ASLSP* is currently being performed. The performance began on September 5, 2001, and it will end in the year 2640, taking over 600 years to play. As of this writing, the last chord change took place on May 5, 2006, and the next one will take place on July 5, 2008, to be held as a concert with tickets pre-sold on the Web – an exciting event, to be sure. *Organ2/ASLSP* is not quite

the opposite of 4'33", but what both have in common is that their structure mitigates against any possibility of listening to the entirety of the piece. With 4'33" impossibility is due to the fact that each performance and context, and hence each experience, is different (e.g. different chance sounds occurring in the given environment).



An excerpt from Cage's *Organ2/ASLSP* (1987), as performed at the St. Burchardi Church, showing the year of each chord change.

With *Organ2/ASLSP* the impossibility of listening is that it exists on a time scale that is radically non-human, many times longer than the average human life span (if ever there was a Bergsonian, durational piece of music, this would be it). Both pieces evoke the sublime, not by their sheer power or magnitude, but by a mode of negation – 4'33" negates the possibility of "musical" sound (represented by the object of the piano), while *Organ2/ASLSP* negates the possibility of any traditional musical time signature (resulting in the unlistenable composition).

I mention both of these pieces by Cage because they raise an issue that is central to Hegarty's book – the relation between noise, production, and negation. Avant-garde practices are often bifurcated between the destructive and productive poles – an avant-garde practice either destroys the prior traditions (Dada, punk) or, following upon this destruction, it creates new practices, new forms, new systems (serialism, minimalism). The insight of *Noise/Music* is that, in the case of avant-garde music at least, these two gestures of destruction and production cannot be separated from each other. The question Hegarty raises – but, evocatively, does not answer – is to what degree this contradiction of negation-as-production can continue without imploding in on itself. This is a question of musical form, to be sure, but it is, as Hegarty notes, also a question of political economy.

Noise/Music is a unique combination of approaches from cultural studies, continental philosophy, and modern theories of experimental and avant-garde music. Readers familiar with theoretically-oriented studies, such as Jacques Attali's *Bruits* (*Noises*), as well as with studies focusing on particular music genres and practices (e.g. Douglas Kahn's *Noise Water Meat: A History of Sound in the Arts*), will find much in common with Hegarty's book. In fact, the uniqueness of *Noise/Music* is its ability to combine these two types of writing on music – the more theoretically-oriented, cultural studies approach, and the more art historical approach. *Noise/Music* accomplishes both of these tasks. It proceeds in a roughly chronological manner to outline a genealogy of movements, composers/groups, and pieces that push the boundary of music and non-music, signal and noise, meaning and meaninglessness. In this sense *Noise/Music* shows awareness of previous genealogies of avant-garde music such as those by R. Murray Schafer or Michael Nyman. But

Noise/Music also conceptualizes each of these moments, showing how the theories of Adorno, McLuhan, Baudrillard, Deleuze, Foucault, and especially Bataille, all bear upon the tension between music and noise. In this sense *Noise/Music* displays some affinities with the work of Attali and with the later Barthes.

Central to Hegarty's argument is this: *that noise is a negation that is not itself negative*. As Hegarty notes, "noise is a negativity (it can never be positively, definitively and timelessly located), a resistance, but also defined by what society resists. It works as a deconstruction, so, in practice, this means that identifying the noise in a piece of music is only the initial step; the next is to see the noise as the relation between that first, explicit noise and that which is not noise" (ix). The very concept of noise is, for Hegarty, caught within a modern dichotomy between outside and inside, aberration and norm, static and signal, resistance and recuperation, and it is for this reason that the work of Georges Bataille occupies such a central place in Hegarty's study. Bataille's meditations on political economy – a "general economy" based not on scarcity but on excess and expenditure – provide an overall framework for looking at how this dichotomy of noise and music has played out in the 20th century and beyond, a period in which what counts as music becomes increasingly more extreme, and yet a period in which absolutely every musical extremism can become part of the music industry.

Noise/Music is structured about a series of short studies that densely weave examples of music groups/performers/composers with reflections on the ideas of music vs. non-music, noise vs. silence, and the act of listening vs. the act of hearing. In each chapter, Hegarty focuses his attention on particular movements or tendencies in the history of avant-garde music, often spending time doing "close readings" of particular pieces. While *Noise/Music* does not require a knowledge of music theory, Hegarty does pay attention to the materiality of music, noting, for instance, how the changes in the use of instrumentation, technology, or source material impact the boundary between music and noise, meaning and meaninglessness.

The first two chapters (titled simply "First" and "Technologies") lay out the basic conceptual vocabulary for the rest of the book. The first chapter broadly deals with the historical contingency of the concept of "noise", pointing both to musicological and anthropological studies (e.g. Attali). The stress here is on the "judgment of noise", a Kantian articulation of a listening subject within a social and political context. This also means, for Hegarty, that any study of the concept of noise and its relation to music must also be, in some way, an account of the avant-garde in modernity. This brings Hegarty, in the second chapter, to meditate on the concept of "amplification" in music – not simply volume or loudness, but amplification in its engineering sense, as a kind of medium that proliferates and generates differences, as well as the recuperation of those differences. Hence Hegarty's book is also a significant contribution to the problematics of the avant-garde, and should be read alongside studies such as Paul Mann's *Theory-Death of the Avant-Garde*.

The bulk of *Noise/Music* consists

of chapters that take up specific examples of the noise vs. music dichotomy. Chapter three ("Free") deals with Adorno's notorious critique of jazz and the later development of free jazz, focusing on Derek Bailey's work and the experiments of group improvisations. The following chapter ("Electric") treats the impact of amplification in both rock and the avant-garde, contrasting the "anti-hippie" proto-punk groups (MC5, Stooges) and their emphasis on repetition and aggression, to the parallel development of krautrock (Faust, Can, Kraftwerk) and their emphasis on repetition and machinic affectlessness. This change in the form of rock music towards a more stripped-down, repetitive "now time" is linked (via Deleuze) to another formal change, which is that of progressive rock and the "studio album" (chapter five, "Progress"). Chapter six ("Inept") shows how punk espouses an ethos of noise in terms of its negation of the complexity of prog rock (amateurism vs. virtuosity, spontaneity vs. composition, noise vs. tonality, expression vs. reflection). Aside from the Sex Pistols, Hegarty also considers no wave, west coast punk, and links all of these to the experiments in *musique brut* of Dubuffet, and the "indeterminacy" of Cage.

In all these cases, Hegarty shows how noise is not simply excluded from the musical form, but that it is situated within it in different ways: repetition vs. development in the popular song structure; noise as a part within a grander whole. Noise is present within the music, but it is never noise in itself. Chapters 7-10 constitute the core of *Noise/Music*'s argument. Here Hegarty asks whether the developments of industrial music in the UK and Germany, and what has come to be called "noise music" in Japan, can be considered as instances in which noise is presented as noise in itself, without recourse to a transcendent, top-down framework, be it in terms of the pop song structure, jazz-based improvisation, or the classical composition. Chapters 7 ("Industry") and 8 ("Power") focus on key works in industrial music (taking a cue from Simon Ford's *Wreckers of Civilization*, and the RE/Search anthology *Industrial Culture*). Hegarty places industrial groups such as Throbbing Gristle, SPK, and Esplendor Geometrico in the context of post-industrial, post-Fordist economies, while at the same time drawing connections between industrial music in the 1970s and 1980s, and Italian Futurism. As such, industrial music is, at least in its early incarnation, an explicitly political gesture, acting against both the homogenization of music into muzak, as well as against the commodification of rebellion represented by punk. Early industrial music immerses itself in the taboo – eroticism, death, sadomasochism, murder, genocide – as Hegarty notes, precisely the terrain identified by Bataille as the site of transgression, and later, by Baudrillard, as the form of "symbolic exchange".

"For the first time, volume drives the sound (rock volume and feedback volume convey the music). Noise that is actually 'just' noise is introduced, with SPK's 'Emanation Machine R. Gie 1916'... being an important example" (114). But such groups, in all their "hatred of capitalism", cannot escape an awareness of their participation in a music industry (records, concerts, reviews, etc.). Thus, an interesting thing happens with later industrial music (Skinny Puppy, Ministry, Laibach) – the noise-as-noise become

rhythm, thereby obtaining a newfound bodily affectivity, an “electronic body music”. This development – what Hegarty describes in Foucauldian “disciplinary” terms – is at once the appropriation of the top-down structures of pop and dance music, but also their reduction to an absolute minimum; it is at once “catharsis and complicity”, ultra-liberal and arch-conservative (hence the opposing ideological standpoints of Skinny Puppy and Front 242).

A different problematic arises in the case of Japanese noise music (chapters 9, “Japan,” and 10, “Merzbow”). Here we see a number of commonalities with industrial music – e.g. themes of sadomasochism, death, occultism – but also a number of striking differences. As Hegarty notes, what counts as noise music in Japan is incredibly heterogeneous, from improv-based performers (Keiji Haino), to avant-rock (Boredoms), to “tablecore” (Merzbow), to sampling and turntablism (Otomo Yoshihide). “With the vast growth of Japanese noise, finally, noise becomes a genre – a genre that is not one ... it is not a genre, but it is also a genre that is multiple, and characterized by this very multiplicity. This means that as a genre, it is neither arbitrary or quasi-colonialist ... but crucially, [it] asks the *question* of genre – what does it mean to be categorized, categorizable, definable? This is what ties it together as a genre” (133).

As Hegarty notes, Japanese noise has to be seen in the context of the 1990s and the globalization of music – from the emergence of a “world music” industry to the universalization of the Western music industry model. Japanese noise is unique, for Hegarty, precisely because it acts “against specificity” (134) – against the homogenization of all music into the pop music format, but also against the nationalism of music (world music, ethnomusicology). In fact, Japanese noise pushes this gesture of negativity to such a point that it can only work against *form* itself: “Noise moves Japanese music beyond a hybridity of discrete forms becoming new discrete forms to an absence of form, or more accurately, what Bataille termed *formless/informe*, where the absence of form plays across form” (138). Hegarty considers a range of examples to illustrate this, from actual noise bands (Fushitsusha, Zeni Geva, Ruins), to noise performers (Masonna, Hijokaidan), to noise electronics (K2, MSBR), to the recent, and fascinating development of “silent noise” – the minimal computer glitches of “onkyo” music (e.g. Ryoji Ikeda, Sachiko M).

It is in these sorts of experimentation that Hegarty locates the major difference between industrial music and Japanese noise – while industrial “noise” still signifies (it acts against, states its position, identifies a target), Japanese “noise” acts against signification altogether ... perhaps we can extend Hegarty’s analyses and say that it “insignifies”. The explicitly political questions raised by industrial music (capitalism, genocide, normativity) become sublimated into a question of *form* in Japanese noise. And nowhere is this more apparent than in the massive output of Merzbow, the project headed by Masami Akita. Hegarty spends time looking at how the question of form is manifested in the work of Merzbow, which stretches over nearly thirty years (in the ‘70s and ‘80s Akita collaborated with early

German industrial groups such as P16.D4 and S.B.O.T.H.I.). Hegarty first looks at the early, “analog” Merzbow works and their use of the specificity of analog technologies (mixers, pedals, contact mics, feedback loops), before contrasting them with the later “digital” or laptop Merzbow works, and then considering the “ecological” works that make use of the sounds of nature and animals (birds, seals, whales) in a kind of non-nostalgic, anti-new age gesture. For Hegarty, these later works are of interest because they point to a place beyond the nature-technology divide, and move from a Batailleian “general economy” to a “general ecology of noise” (162).

There are numerous omissions in *Noise/Music*: the comments on amplification in rock music (chapter 4) would seem to invite a more material consideration of the guitar amplifier itself, along with a host of electronic instruments including the first synthesizers (we might even imagine a Kittler-esque chapter called “Amplifier, Synthesizer, Contact Mic”). While Hegarty does mention the important developments of *musique concrète* in Paris (Henry, Schaeffer), the analysis is quite brief, especially for a movement that has so influenced contemporary electronica and glitch. Likewise, the relative omission of the first electronic works at WDR radio labs in Cologne (Eimert, Beyer, Stockhausen) and the Columbia-Princeton Electronic Music Center (Ussachevsky, Luening), would seem to be important, given the centrality of technology in contemporary avant-garde music. The last chapter on sound installation does cover important precedents, but we miss the important work being done today by Carsten Nicolai, Achim Wollscheid, and Thomas Köner, to name a few.

Finally, while Hegarty’s analysis of Japanese noise and Merzbow is both nuanced and insightful, he chooses to omit reference to the many works by Masami Akita/Merzbow that are explicitly composed – the *Music for Bondage Performance* series, and the theatre piece *The Prosperity of Vice and the Misfortunes of Virtue*. Here Akita displays his compositional ability in a way that appears to be in diametric opposition to the swirling chaos of the regular Merzbow releases.

Omissions are, however, unavoidable in a work such as this, and *Noise/Music* closes with a brief chapter on the development of sound art and sound installation, whereby music moves from the spatial site of the concert stage to an investigation of space itself (e.g. public installations or tours; the work of Cage, Fluxus, Bruce Nauman, Janet Cardiff, Francisco Lopez). *Noise/Music* closes with a conclusion on the difference between listening and hearing, and the connection between music and community, posing the question whether there can be something like an alternative community predicated on noise (difference, alterity).

The motif of negativity pervades *Noise/Music*. Noise is negative in the sense that it is defined (following Attali) as that which society excludes, in order for it to delineate the contours of normativity. But then this means that noise – as that which is negated, excluded, relegated to the outside – is also part and parcel of a political economy, one which in fact necessitates noise in order that signal can exist at all. A major term, *A*, always requires a minor term, *a*, in order for *A* to exist and to persist as such – even, and especially, when *a* explicitly defines

itself as against *A*. The problem, then, is that *a* can only ever be the opposite of *A* (that is, $\sim A$), and the question of what *a* is positively, in itself, is always undermined by this compromise, this *ressentiment*. This is the logic of recuperation, well known to the earliest theorists of the avant-garde, from Baudelaire to Benjamin. Hence the metonymic series of signal/noise, music/sound, meaning/meaninglessness, interior/exterior, and so on.

For Hegarty, the genealogy of avant-garde music he traces at once works against and yet is defined by this logic. If “noise” represents, for Hegarty, the impossible dream of a pure exteriority, then *Noise/Music* is about the final gasps of that dream as it crosses from modernity to postmodernity, perhaps finding its culmination in today’s total indistinction of high and low musical forms (e.g. remixes of minimalist composers, symphonic heavy metal, highbrow hip-hop, mashups, and so on). For Hegarty, the relation between noise and negation follows three broad phases: the incorporation of noise into musical forms (prog rock, punk, krautrock), then noise as the distortion of musical forms (industrial music), and finally the destruction of musical form itself (Japanese noise). In so far as the broad spectrum of noise music takes up the avant-garde’s dream of exteriority, *Noise/Music* shows how the logical conclusion of this pursuit is not just the negation of form itself, but, in a way, silence. Noise as absolute negation would not simply be silence, but the silence of listening.

Let us return again to the point made earlier concerning *Noise/Music*: noise is a negation that is not itself negative. In what way is noise a negation? There are several relationships to consider: noise vs. music (noise as the arrangement and/or perception of meaningful, ordered sound), noise vs. silence (noise as the presence or absence of sound), and noise vs. signal (noise as the background “chaos” from which musical order is selected). In each case noise is either something subtracted to or in excess of a normative state – silence, music, or information.

In the history of modern music in the West, noise as a form of negation can have different results. Noise can be negation in terms of renewal, as when an older form must be negated so that a new form can be introduced, and music generally raised up (this is, arguably, the project of Schoenberg and the Viennese school, and later, of post-war movements, from serialism to the electronic music of the WDR). Noise can also be negation as a form of purging and purification, a cathartic expenditure of the past whose aim is not to raise up, but to open up (Futurism, Dada, Industrial music). Finally, noise can be negation as a form of privation or extraction, a tactical move in which the anchor of musical form is extracted, leaving a dispersion of fragments and pieces – not raising up, not opening up, but a spreading out (stochastic music, Japanese noise, spectralism).

Each of these roughly corresponds to the three relationships above: the noise/music relation is expressed in noise as a negation resulting in a “raising up”; the noise/silence relation is expressed in noise as a negation that is an “opening up”; and the noise/signal relation is expressed in noise as a negation that is a “spreading out.”

The concept of noise that Hegarty evokes is therefore defined by negation, but that negation is not negative – not simply privative or destructive. But neither does it still hold to the naïve promise of a musical praxis outside of what the always-shifting norms of the music industry calls “music”. If noise is negation, then it is a peculiar type of negation, one that, as Hegarty’s book shows, is as proliferative and generative as it is subtractive or privative.

At its limits, noise music is antinomial – this is perhaps the truth of all avant-garde practices. The excess of Japanese noise, for

instance, gives way to the quiet minimalism of “onkyo” pieces, mostly silence with interspersed clicks, cuts, and glitches, like a digital rendition of Morton Feldman. Or, to take another example, the motifs of eroticism and death that preoccupy many “tablecore” Japanese noise performances gradually gives way to noise as ambient sound (works by the later Monde Bruits and Sian). Or, interestingly, the excess of noise culminates in works such as K. Mizutani’s 1997 release, *Transcend Sideways*, or recent Merzbow albums such as *Merzbuddha*; something that is neither noise nor silence, neither

affect nor intellect, neither distraction nor concentration – which is tantamount to suggesting that noise becomes a form of meditation.

Eugene Thacker is Associate Professor in the School of Literature, Communication & Culture at the Georgia Institute of Technology. He is the author of *Biomedica* (2004), *The Global Genome* (MIT 2005), and co-author with Alexander Galloway of *The Exploit: A Theory of Networks* (2007).

Baboon Concepts

Dorothy L. Cheney and Robert M. Seyfarth, *Baboon Metaphysics: The Evolution of a Social Mind*. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2007.

By Anne Zeller

Cheney and Seyfarth begin this odyssey through the evolution of the mind with a quotation from one of Charles Darwin’s notebooks: “He who understands baboons would do more towards metaphysics than Locke” (1). Darwin wrote this in 1838, just two years after returning from his voyage on the *Beagle*, and years before he had clearly formulated his theory of Natural Selection. What Darwin understood, however, was that animal behaviour, and by extension human behaviour, was based on a combination of innate, inherited tendencies and reasoning based on experience. This combination of underlying causal mechanisms was responsible for both physical activity and the life of the mind. Thus, Darwin became excited by the possibility that his developing theory of small variations becoming reified by their contributions to successful life and reproduction was just as relevant in tracing the course of mental development as for tracing morphological evolution.

Like Darwin, Cheney and Seyfarth base this book on a solid foundation of observations taken in a natural setting. Their earlier work on vervet monkeys, *How Monkeys See the World* (1990), drew on many years of observations in Africa and provided a firm foundation of observation and experiment to support an interpretation of vervets as highly social monkeys who are best known for their complex communication system, incorporating learned vocalizations to refer to different varieties of predators. As their research revealed, vervets also use a wide variety of additional vocalizations in very specific ways.

Cheney and Seyfarth moved on to studying baboons in 1992 partly because baboons live in larger social groups and are among the most intensely studied African terrestrial monkeys. Terrestrial primates are much easier to keep track of and conduct experiments with since they are easier to see than primates who disappear into the crowns of trees and can thus escape the observer. Early research on baboons was partly based on their use as a model for the development of early hominids. Since group life is essential for survival on the African savannas, how do non-linguistic forms organize themselves, escape predators, and raise their young while still finding enough to eat and safe places to sleep? More modern models are based on the

chimpanzee (taxonomically closer to humans), but functionally, baboon groups face more similar lifestyle challenges to early hominid groups.

However, Cheney and Seyfarth are more interested in the complex social network which baboons develop and how their mental abilities in developing, remembering and understanding social relationships impact their reproductive fitness. There are several theories about what selective pressures drove the mental capabilities of primates (and other animals). Was it ecological pressure, the need to find sufficient high-quality food, and the need to use social reinforcements to escape predation? Or was it the need to live in a complex social group in order to survive? Those who argue that ecological pressures are most relevant cite the need for groups to construct mental maps of the resource locations in their ranges, which may spread over tens of square kilometres and to predict when various food sources may become available. The argument is that leaf-eaters with small ranges and a monotonous, easily found diet have less extra brain development than forms that must search out ripe fruit, hidden resources and use complex foraging techniques to extract their food.

The Social Intelligence Hypothesis, which is the viewpoint being supported in this book, is based on the idea that social integration and intelligence are crucially important to both males and females and probably evolved together in a self-reinforcing spiral (Jolly 1966). The authors spend the first two chapters looking at the history of studies on the intellect from 18th and 19th century philosophers to 20th century behaviourists and the range of evidence that has become available through observations and experiments conducted on a wide variety of animals and birds. The variety of species studied has made it clear that it is not the raw size of the brain that influences intelligence but the organization and relative size of its various parts. Some birds have brain circuitry that expands and contracts during the course of the breeding cycle, allowing them a wide complexity of breeding songs when needed, but not using up cranial space when other activities such as migration were of uppermost importance. Some have very specialized circuits allow them to hide and subsequently find thousands of seeds. Brain differences between monkeys and apes include

both brain/body ratio and also the relative size of the frontal/prefrontal cortices that are larger in apes and still larger in humans. This specialization impacts the level of higher order brain processing such as empathy, logic, conscience, forward planning, and other abstract mental skills.

Chapters 3 and 4 introduce us to the groups of baboons under study and to the ecological situation in which they live. The Okavango Delta of Northern Botswana is a periodically flooded area of savanna, forest and riverbank with highly variable ecology over the course of the year. This provides a wide range of niches for the baboons to exploit and provides a home for many other species as well. The periodic flooding is a major stress especially due to large populations of crocodiles, and to the potential for youngsters to be lost.

The social behaviour and life histories of males and females, including their hierarchal relations, are introduced and an indication of familial complexity, alliances, friendships and Machiavellian intrigues is outlined. For those who do not know much about baboons, these three chapters make it clear how complex their social relations are and how much memory and ability to classify is required to keep 80 to 100 individuals and their complex relationships in mind. Baboons have to know every other individual in the group – including details about age, sex, kin group, rank, friendships and alliances. Male dominance ranks are quite transient as males immigrate and emigrate as well as compete daily for higher rank positions. Female hierarchies are more stable, but the matrilineal groups can be quite large and ranks within them can change as individuals mature.

Once the situation is introduced, the next pair of chapters, five and six, cover a range of naturalistic playback experiments designed by the researchers to test the expectations of the monkeys about how their social world is organized. As with the vervets, Cheney and Seyfarth determine that mothers recognize the calls of their own infants and juveniles and know who the mother is of other youngsters. They explore the ‘grunt’ vocalization used in a wide range of contexts. It can be a friendly reconciliation by a higher ranking female to a lower ranking one, after they have had an altercation. When two females have had a fight, the authors would playback a ‘grunt

sequence' from the higher ranking female (who was out of sight) and this would result in the lower ranking one either approaching or not running from the high rank female when they next encountered each other. If no 'grunts' were played and the high ranking female did not give them herself, the next encounter would usually result in the retreat of the lower ranked female. Thus it was clear that the 'grunts' were effective at reconciling the two individuals. However, a grunt from another female of the high ranker's matriline would also serve to affect the lower ranked female's behaviour. The lower ranked female interpreted the grunt from the other female as a proxy for the intention to reconcile by the female she actually fought with. It was clear that this willingness to approach was only directed at those two members of the high ranked matriline and not to the entire membership. In other words, 'one did not stand for all', but one individual could act on behalf of another. The question becomes: did the lower ranked female attribute an 'intention' to reconcile to the female who had not grunted? She seemed to attribute the 'grunt' as being directed towards herself, but we still do not know what that vocalization actually meant to her.

Another type of experiment undertaken was to play a sequence of 'fear bark' and 'grunt' by two individuals to a third female. If the fear bark was by a lower ranking female and the grunt by a higher ranking one, the listener hardly lifted her head. However, if the bark was by the higher ranking one and the grunt by the lower, the listener looked very intently in the direction of the 'playback' speakers. Cheney and Seyfarth interpreted this response as one in which the listener's expectations of rank order were not met and they were surprised. The control sequence for this experiment was to include a 'grunt' by an even higher ranking female, which seemed to be interpreted as two females grunting to a mid-ranked female who fear barked to a the higher ranked one, all of which would be a normal interaction. A number of different experiments of this general type made it clear that baboons recognize the voices of other individuals, know which matriline to which they belong and their relative ranks. They respond very quickly to the playbacks suggesting that the information about identities is easily retrievable. It also seems clear that they assume a causal relation between vocalizations that are closely spaced in time and location even when they do not see the sender. This recognition suggests "that they are making inferences about both the intended target of a signaller's call and the signaller's motivation" (109). This is a new idea for researchers who "have only recently begun to entertain the possibility that baboons and other monkeys might be able to attribute simple mental states like intent to others" (110).

What reproductive impact (selective pressure) would this ability enhance? The two major factors governing a female's reproductive success are the abilities to avoid infanticide and predation. Predator defence works much better in a group. The most socially integrated females are those who live the longest and successfully raise the most offspring. If an infanticidal male moves into the group, a female needs support from male friends to help protect her infant. She needs to recognize which males already have as many female friends as they can protect and which ones are likely to assiduously protect her and

her offspring. Mothers and sisters can also be some help in protecting, but if they have died a female must establish strong social bonds with other females by grooming, alliance formation, and supporting the kin of their newly chosen social partner. Females can only afford so much time to establishing and maintaining these bonds so they must choose their potential allies with knowledge of their willingness to participate and their ability to help. With a group of 80 to 100 animals, it is not just a matter of associative learning and conditioning which establishes these bonds, but a weighed social choice. There are over 3,000 potential dyads in a group of 80, and a female cannot spend the time to try out each one to find a bond that works. Further, there are many different types of social relationships, mates, friends, kin bonds and enemies, all characterized by differing behaviours and spatial proximity and some relationships are more transient than others. Thus it seems unlikely that all primate social knowledge results from simple learning mechanisms. Instead, it seems probable that natural selection has favoured animals who are predisposed to arranging their companions into rule-governed classes. This ability to classify is the basis of implicit social theories, about kinship, about rank relations, and about behaviour expected between friends.

The conclusions arising from the field experiments lead into a more intensive discussion of the Social Intelligence Hypothesis first discussed by Eugene Marais in the early 1900s. Ethological studies demonstrate that natural selection works on both physical structure and behaviour. Flying, for example, is an activity that requires a particular anatomy. But it also requires a particular behavioural activity. Behaviours are impacted, in fact governed, by the neurological structures supporting them. The mental behaviour of making abstract judgements, categorizing, and learning associations is part of what makes social primates successful. Modern neurophysiological techniques now allow us to ascertain with exactness which locations in the brains of both humans and primates are activated when particular tasks are undertaken. We now know that when animals observe behaviour it affects the brain in the same areas as actually performing it, and this gives a solid base to understanding learning by observation, which is how most primates learn, since direct teaching is rare.

It has been suggested that technology and innovation, rather than skill in social interactions, has governed the development of higher intellect in apes and humans. This is supported by the argument that tool users such as capuchins, chimpanzees and orang-utans have larger prefrontal areas and higher encephalization quotients than monkeys, although they live in smaller groups. I would like to argue that at least for chimpanzees and orang-utans, the number of animals they know may be smaller but that each species lives in a very complex far flung group, in which they only rarely see some of the members. Just because orang-utans are not in daily contact with others does not mean that they do not know and interact with a potentially wide range of other individuals. These include offspring, other females in neighbouring ranges, resident males, transient males, and their own mature daughters. The need to keep social identity in mind over periods of years between interactions should be counted as an attribute of social complexity rather than just focussing on the number of animals

in a group. This also applies to chimpanzees, who only rarely meet some members of their communities. Returning again to Jolly's 1966 version of the Social Intelligence Hypothesis, the authors argue that it is possible that a limited understanding of intentionality and the ability to classify spring from similar selective forces to those supporting the rudimentary technological and innovative skills found in chimpanzees. In other words, the selective values supporting planning, recognizing other's goals and intentions, and the ability to learn from others underlies both social and technological intelligence. The authors argue that these skills are all required in successful baboon communication and therefore spend the last chapters of the book focusing on theory of mind and primate communication.

One of the most interesting questions they ask is whether monkeys have a different type of social knowledge than other gregarious hierarchically organized animals such as hyenas or dogs. They suggest that the baboon's ability to track short-term rank changes, classify others into higher order groups, distinguish within equivalence classes, make indirect causal inferences and recognize social relationships both in their own species and in others, may differentiate primates, but these capabilities have not been tested adequately in other species so we do not know if these are specifically primate capacities.

Chapter 8 is especially devoted to an examination of the theory of mind and intentionality starting with examples drawn from children. The chapter discusses the age at which infants appear to understand the referential aspects of gaze direction, and in particular, how children can learn new words by watching adults labelling their environment. Within the first year, they seem to understand the intent to refer to the thing the adult is looking at, and by age 1 begin to use gesture and sound to recruit adult attention to themselves and the things they want to focus on. By age 2, children begin to distinguish between ignorance and knowledge in others and have already begun to understand the goals and motives of others. These experiments are contrasted to anecdotes concerning baboons because field experiments are unavailable. Interestingly, some baboons seem more capable of deducing intent, hiding from others, and attempting deception than others. Some will return to rescue their young when facing a long swim in the flooded Okavango Delta while others blithely leave them, to follow or not, as they are able. In other words, some see that the agitation of the youngsters relates to them, and others do not, with the result that some juveniles are lost or drowned. The problem in attributing this type of activity to a 'Theory of Mind' is that it can be equally interpreted in terms of contingency learning ("If I go back for the kid, it will stop screaming"). Various experiments concerning 'seeing' and 'knowing' have been conducted with captive monkeys, chimpanzees and a variety of other species like dogs and ravens. Both of these non-primate species are quite aware of the importance of gaze direction in acquiring knowledge. One dog 'Rico', a border collie from Germany, could be taught the name of an object when the owner merely looked at the toy and said the name. The dog has a receptive vocabulary of over 200 labels, remembered the word in the first trial of retrieving it from a group of items, and continued to recognize it thereafter. Ravens and other seed-caching

birds retrieve their cached items much more quickly when another bird, who had watched them cache the food, was released into the pen than when another bird, who had been present but visually occluded, was released. In other words, the birds acted as if they knew that the one observer had knowledge of where the food was hidden, and the other did not. These abilities suggest an understanding of the potential behaviour of others, which rivals the level shown in monkeys.

One of the attributes of baboons, however, is their use of vocalizations to signal and assess intent. Whether the 'intent' is a state of mind or an 'intent' to behave in a certain way is not clear and would be difficult to assess on behaviour alone. Without the means to access the reasons why a baboon (or any animal) does something, the best we can do is to devise experiments that can be interpreted in terms of a particular theoretical paradigm. The efforts to discuss 'self-awareness' in baboons in Chapter 9 are based on William James' model that self-awareness is made up of several different levels. The most basic is the 'material' level, the self-awareness of one's physical experiences, such as hunger or pain. The second level refers to the 'social' self, our awareness of being a distinct individual, while the third is the 'spiritual' level at which we can engage in introspection and think about what we know. This level can be called metacognition and does not always require a conscious direction of thought. There are things we 'just know' as opposed to the things we can remember learning. These two forms of knowing are characterized as 'semantic' and 'episodic' memory (Clayton *et al* 2003). We know these are distinct because some forms of amnesia affect one type of memory but not the other, thus dividing our self-conscious awareness into several components. Thinking about our own actions and beliefs fires the same neurons in the human brain as thinking about the possible motivations and actions of others. It seems we must be aware of our own motives before we can be aware of others. Children develop this skill; the question is, can animals? They can certainly remember a wide range of individuals, locations and events, but they may not be able to plan in advance in the 'time travelling way' in which humans lay out potential future scenarios. Baboons often behave as if they were planning but since they do not pass the Gallup mirror test for self-recognition, it is difficult to say that they can mentally project themselves into the future. However, whole series of experiments on various primates are discussed in which the animals demonstrate the ability to accurately judge what they know, whether or not they are explicitly aware of doing so. They are certainly aware of whether, even in a noisy active group, a particular vocalization or facial gesture is directed at them. Thus their level of self-awareness may be mainly at James' physical and social levels, but the evidence suggests they see themselves as unique social beings, which is a major step along the way to the development of the interaction between selective adaptations and consciousness.

Humans can be seen to understand their own consciousness because of their ability to use a semantic, syntactic system to discuss what they are thinking about. The study of animal communication has struggled forward from the idea of a totally innate, unmodifiable system to our realization that learning is an important aspect, especially in primate systems. The actual call types may be hardwired and

species specific, but the timing, direction, recipient and context which characterize such vocalizations are highly variable and socially governed. Some primates, and other animals, have distinct calls to indicate specific predators. Of more interest are those species where the males and females use different calls to indicate the same predator, and respond to the males' call, the females' call and the predators' call (eg. leopard growl) as all indicating the same thing. This occurs in Diana monkeys (Zuberbuhler 2000), who are fairly closely related to vervets, the first main species studied by Cheney and Seyfarth. The interesting difference is that the vervets both produce and respond to the same particular predator alarm call, while the Dianas produce and can respond to distinct ones produced by each gender (acoustically quite different) but which mean the same thing. Production and comprehension are two very different aspects of the communication system and the ability to group three acoustically different sounds (predator call, male call, female call) into one class is an abstract level of classification that could be called semantic. The same type of ability occurs in baboons with the male alarm 'wahoo' call and the female's 'alarm bark'. In addition, the authors strongly feel (although they have not experimentally demonstrated) that a baboon 'crocodile alarm' differs acoustically from a 'mammalian predator alarm'. They are certainly responded to differently in an appropriate manner. The other interesting aspect of these calls is that each of them grades acoustically into another type of call. 'Wahoos' are also used by males when competing with each other, while the female 'alarm barks' also grade into the 'contact call bark'. Thus, these sounds have semantic content, learned attribution, and specificity in spite of sounding similar to other signals. Female grunts are also graded from the 'let's all move' grunt to the 'infant contact' grunt but baboons respond appropriately to these as well. Move grunts occur when influential animals are getting ready to move and are differentially given at high rates when the move is potentially dangerous, thus indicating situational context. 'Infant' grunts occur when one female wants to approach a mother with a new infant but are also used in a range of friendly interactions and are thus quite generalized in function but directed towards a specific individual rather than the whole group. The levels of information encoded in these calls argues against the position that they are solely emotional responses. While many people have argued against the referential nature of primate vocalizations, the authors' position is that calls should not be dichotomized, in terms of causation, into these two categories. They state that "the affective and referential properties of signals are also logically distinct" (229) since they may be easily affective for the sender and referential for the receiver. Also, the ability to subdivide 'graded' calls into specific, situational referents argues against a distinction between human 'discrete' words and animal vocalizations.

Having made these points, Cheney and Seyfarth then criticize the representational theory of animal communication. We do not know where in the brain 'meaning' is coded. In fact, according to Quine (1960) we do not really know what meaning is, except for what we each individually mean by a word. But whether or not we mean exactly the same thing by a word, it functions to provide rich information even if the meaning is imprecise. The same goes for primate vocalizations. Baboons know a signaller's age, gender, individual, context,

often rank, and maybe who they are interacting with. Just by listening, the signaller's identity provides a host of social information in a cohesive social group.

We humans have a very different system to primates but the differences are not those of Bickerton's 'proto-language' and language. Rather, they are systems that differ in size (number of call types) relationship between words and sentences, and differences between production and reception. The call systems of primates have an arbitrary association between sound and referent. The call meanings are defined not just by the referent object but in relation to other calls in the animal's repertoire. Leopard alarms are a different class from eagle alarms. Moreover, the referent (such as a leopard for Diana monkeys) is a concept, referred to by three different vocalizations and cross-modally by visual and olfactory cues. Thus, the cognitive mechanisms that underlie call perception are complex with a "rich conceptual structure in which calls are linked to both objects and relations in the world and to other calls in the species repertoire" (262). The conclusion here is that baboons have many concepts for which they have no words, which is the reverse of the view that thought requires language. This argument suggests that the baboons, and many other primates, behave as if they were capable of *thinking* even if they do not produce sentences and have no syntactic structure. They cannot generate new words, connect them syntactically and may not attribute mental states to others. This differentiates their communication from that of human children. However, their assessment of complex calls relies heavily on rule-based expectations. They can assess the social relations between unseen signallers by the calls and have expectations about the structure of the interaction. The grouping of calls in an interaction has a meaning greater than the sum of the individual calls and this makes the baboon communication system both complex and productive (268).

When evaluating aspects of social knowledge reflected in the communication system, Cheney and Seyfarth list six important precursors of syntax. Knowledge is representational, and based on properties of discrete information (for example, identity). The discrete value traits can be combined into a hierarchically structured set of social relations. Social knowledge is also rule-governed and open-ended, with the potential to add new members to the hierarchy or to construct many messages from a finite group of signals. These signals can be combined and re-combined to provide a variety of narratives and lastly, information can be acquired through a variety of channels. This list of attributes bears an important resemblance to syntax even though primates do not have the use of 'words' as we know them. This is very different from the concept of a proto-language. In some ways, it is the reverse. The mental attributes could have preceded the vocabulary required to express them.

This set of arguments provides a strong basis for the position that social intelligence and the selective pressures required to produce it may have paved the way for the technology, innovation and developing cognitive skills of the hominid line. The human mind is qualitatively different from all other species but the development of a theory of mind could easily have facilitated the evolution of the traits we see as human. These would include empathy (recognition of others' mental states), intentionality (recognition of beliefs),

categorization, motivation to share knowledge leading to cooperation, complex social units and ability to teach, which would allow the development of complex technology. The genetic changes leading to modern phonation abilities are late in evolutionary terms, occurring after the chimp/human split. Since the monkey line diverged from the ape/hominid line at least 20 million years ago, the selective pressures that originally favoured the evolution of social skills have had a long time to produce their complex capable outcomes. In humans, they underlay the development of complex mental abilities, language and technological innovation, while in baboons they support superlative social skills. The thesis of *Baboon Metaphysics* is that all of these attributes are the result of selective pressures fostering the development of social intelligence.

The collection of data from field experiments on a well-studied free ranging population, captive experiments, and material gathered from a wide range of species makes this book very interesting as well as strengthening its arguments. I particularly appreciated the authors' efforts to consider alternative theoretical positions and explanations for their

conclusions. By doing this, they were able to ask and attempt to answer some of the critical questions that might be addressed to their work. The style was easy to read and the referencing and documentation was thorough. I found the index useful and they included a matrilineal chart of one of the important matrilineal lines, in order to give those who do not know baboons well some idea of the numbers of offspring, lifespan and death rate of free living animals. The only matter I felt they did not deal with, which might have contributed to their argument, was the propensity of monkeys to handle things in their natural habitat and to learn about their qualities by doing so. They refer to the fact that few monkeys use tools; yet systematic observation does reveal that they manipulate natural objects in a variety of ways which may be precursors of object use and tool use. To my mind, it is the vast adaptability and learning potential in young monkeys, so well indicated in the macaque cross-fostering experiment they describe, which allows monkeys who live in large social groups to navigate the social levels that they construct. For those interested in the roots of social organization, or the question of language origins, this is an accessible yet

scholarly addition to the literature.

Anne Zeller has published widely on primate behaviour and is an active documentary filmmaker in the area of field primatology. She is Professor in the Department of Anthropology at University of Waterloo.

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Semiotic Pluralism and the New Government Signs

(Homage to Félix Guattari)

By Maurizio Lazzarato

For Félix Guattari, capital is far more than a simple economic category relating to the circulation of goods and the accumulation of wealth. It is a semiotic category that affects all levels of production and all levels of the stratification of power. According to a definition dating from the 70s, Capital is a "semiotic operator". The semiotic components of capital always operate in a dual register. The *first* is the register of "representation" and "signification" or "production of meaning", both of which are organized by signifying semiotics (language) with the purpose of producing the "subject", the "individual", the "I". The *second* is the machinic register organized by a-signifying semiotics (such as money, analog or digital machines that produce images, sounds and information, the equations, functions, diagrams of science, music, etc.), which "can bring into play signs which have an additional symbolic or signifying effect, but whose actual functioning is neither symbolic nor signifying". This second register is not aimed at subject constitution but at capturing and activating pre-subjective and pre-individual elements (affects, emotions, perceptions) to make them function like components or cogs in the semiotic machine of capital.

Social subjection and subjective alienation in signifying semiotics

The capitalist system, through representation and signification, creates and allocates roles and functions. It provides us with a subjectivity and assigns us to a specific process of individuation (via categories such as identity, gender, profession, nationality, etc.) so that everyone is implicated in a semiotic trap that is both signifying and representative. The operation of "social

subjection" on established identities and roles ("rationalist, capitalist subjectivity") is routed through the subordination of the multiplicity and heterogeneity of pre-signifying or symbolic semiotics in language and its representative and signifying functions.

The symbolic semiotics of the *body* – (any iconic means of pre-verbal, physical expression – dance, mime, music, a somatization disorder, nervous breakdown, a fit of tears, intensities, movements, rhythms, etc.) – depend neither on *signifying language* nor on *consciousness*. They do not involve a clearly identifiable speaker or a listener who are typical of the communicational and linguistic model; speech does not have a primary role here. These semiotics are driven by affects and give rise to relations that are difficult to assign to a single subject, to a "me", to an individual. They go beyond the subjective *individualizing* limits (of people, their identities, roles and social functions) within which language seeks to confine and to which it tries to reduce them. The "message" does not pass through linguistic chains but via the body, postures, noises, images, mimicry, intensities, movement, rhythm, etc. According to Guattari, the use of signifying semiotics has the following consequences: "This pathic [affective M.L.] subjectivation, at the root of all modes of subjectivation, is overshadowed in rationalist, capitalistic subjectivity which tends to systematically circumvent it" ... "pathic subjectivity tends to be constantly evacuated from relations of discursivity, although discursive operators are essentially based on it" (Guattari 1995: 26).

Folding these modes of expression over signifying semiotics is a political process since, on the one hand, the "appropriation of meaning is always an appropriation of power" and, on the other, there can be no meaning or

representation independent of the dominant significations and representations. The power to act of linguistic and non-linguistic signs must bend to the logic of representation and signification, which neutralize and repress all other functions of language and signs. There is a claim shared by both the capitalist logic of disciplinary societies and the logic of socialism and communism: the relationship with the real has to be mediated. Without signification and without representation, there is no access to the real. In the tradition of the workers' movement, politics is not possible without "realization" (signification) and without "representation" of the people or of the working class by the "party". The ties between semiotics and politics, between the government of signs and the government of the political arena are very close indeed.

Machinic enslavement in a-signifying semiotics

Guattari's concept of social subjection tallies in several areas with the concept of "government by individualization" which, according to Foucault, characterizes the disciplinary society. The functions of "machinic enslavement" however do not have corresponding concepts in either political or linguistic theory, and they represent one of the fundamental contributions by Deleuze and Guattari to our understanding of contemporary societies.

The machinic register of the semiotic production of Capital operates on the basis of a-signifying semiotics that tune in directly to the body (to its affects, its desires, its emotions and perceptions) by means of signs. Instead of producing signification, these signs trigger an action, a reaction, a behaviour, an attitude, a posture. These semiotics have no meaning, but set things in motion,

activate them. Money, television, science, music, etc. can function as sign production machines, which have a direct, unmediated impact on the real and on the body without being routed through a signification or a representation. The cycle of fear, anxiety or panic penetrating the atmosphere and tonality in which our “surveillance societies” are steeped are triggered by sign machines; these machines appeal not to the consciousness, but to the nervous system, the affects, the emotions. The symbolic semiotics of the body, instead of being centred on language, are routed through the industrial, machinic, non-human production of images, sounds, words, intensities, movements, rhythms, etc.

If signifying semiotics have a function of subjective alienation, of “social subjection”, a-signifying semiotics have one of “machinic enslavement”. A-signifying semiotics synchronize and modulate the pre-individual and pre-verbal elements of subjectivity by causing the affects, perceptions, emotions, etc. to function like component parts, like the elements in a machine. We can all function like the input/output elements in semiotic machines, like simple relays of television or the Internet that facilitate or block the transmission of information, communication or affects. Unlike signifying semiotics, a-signifying semiotics recognize neither persons, roles nor subjects. While subjection concerns the global person, those highly manipulable subjective, molar representations, “machinic enslavement connects infrapersonal, infrasocial elements thanks to a molecular economy of desire”. The power of these semiotics resides in the fact that they permeate the systems of representation and signification by which “individuated subjects recognize each other and are alienated from each other”.

Machinic enslavement is therefore not the same thing as social subjection. If the latter appeals to the molar, individuated dimension of subjectivity, the former activates its molecular, pre-individual, transindividual dimension. In the first case, the system speaks and generates speech; it indexes and folds the multiplicity of pre-signifying and symbolic semiotics over language, over linguistic chains by giving priority to its representative functions. In the second case, however, the system does not generate discourse: it does not speak but it functions, sets things in motion, by connecting directly to the “nervous system, the brain, the memory, etc.” and activates the affective, transindividual relations that are difficult to attribute to a subject, an individual, a me. These two semiotic registers work together to produce and control subjectivity in both its *molar* and its *molecular* dimensions. As we shall see, the same semiotic devices can be devices both for machinic enslavement and for social subjection. (Television, for example, can constitute us as a subject, as a user or it can even use us as simple relays for transmitting information, a message or signs which trigger an action-reaction sequence!) We have the privilege of being subjected simultaneously to the effects of both.

The valorisation of symbolic or pre-signifying semiotics and the affirmation of their creativity and their power to act (phenomena which are independent of language), accompanied and supported the political affirmation of minorities in the 60s and 70s. These subjects and modes of

expression are in fact those of minorities: of women, children, the insane, the sick, of sexual, linguistic and social minorities. In reality, the issue is one of the semiotics and modes of expression of “everybody”, since we are dealing with the semiotics and modes of expression of the body. Semiotic pluralism is a key element in Deleuze and Guattari’s critique of the “majority” subjectivity of capitalist societies.

In these conditions, Guattari’s political problem is how to clearly distinguish “a politics of signification” from “a politics of expression” that would also constitute a politics of “experimentation”. It is something of an ungrateful task given that the entire history of the workers’ movement, in particular its Marxist component, has used processes of subjectivation totally attuned to the politics of signification and representation of disciplinary societies (where the relationship to the real must be mediated by consciousness and representation).

A-signifying semiotics

The importance of a-signifying semiotics (money, machinic devices for the production of images, sounds, words, signs, equations, scientific formulae, music, etc.) and the role they play needs to be emphasized. They are ignored by most linguistic and political theories even though they constitute the pivotal point of new forms of capitalist government. It is because of them that a new distribution between the discursive and non-discursive is being established.

Linguistic theories and analytical philosophy fail to understand the existence of these semiotics and how they operate; they assume that the production and circulation of signs and words is an essentially human affair, one of semiotic “exchange” between humans. They employ a logocentric conception of enunciation whereas a growing proportion of enunciations and circulating signs are being produced and shaped by machinic devices (television, cinema, radio, Internet, etc.). Here, the enunciation is still territorialized and logocentric, whereas capitalism is characterized by a deterritorialized, machinocentric enunciation. Media and telecommunications stand in for what was formerly a relationship of “oral and written”, by configuring new (individual and collective) arrangements of enunciation.

The theories that attribute the greatest importance to speech and language or that regard them as the only viable form of political expression (Arendt, Rancière, Virno) appear to underestimate a-signifying semiotics just as seriously, since the process of subjectivation (Rancière) or of individuation (Virno) occurs in a public arena conceived as a theatrical stage where political subjects, imitating the performance of an artist or an orator before an audience, are constituted in their molar or representative dimension. The theatrical metaphor seems to me to be particularly harmful as a way of understanding the contemporary political arena. (Walter Benjamin [1983:108] wrote about this new technology: “Parliaments, as much as theaters, are deserted.”)

The process of subjectivation or individuation is therefore gravely distorted because the a-signifying semiotics and machines redraw and completely reconfigure the public space and its modes of expression

by directly and profoundly affecting the “political word”. Language’s power to act, as exercised in the Greek *polis* and an assumption still implicit in all these theories since Hannah Arendt, is no longer sufficient to describe the “political word”. In the contemporary public arena, the production of the word is organized “industrially” rather than “theatrically”. The process of subjectivation or of individuation cannot be reduced to “social subjection” by completely skipping all reference to “machinic enslavement”. Paradoxically enough, all the contemporary political and linguistic theories that refer either directly or indirectly to the *polis* and/or to the theatre, place us in a pre-capitalist situation.

Video as whatever flow

According to Deleuze and Guattari, it is only with the emergence of the technical means of expression corresponding to the generalized decoding of the flows that characterize capitalism that the capitalist use of language is actualized and becomes concrete. The electric flow may be considered as the actualization of such a flow. Instead of symbols or meaning, the electric flow produces point-signs without signification that generate flows of images, sounds and words that have the potential to take on meaning. The electric flow as such is indifferent to its products. Bill Viola, a video artist, gives us a description of how this a-signifying flow operates: “The video image is a pattern of stationary waves of electric energy, a vibratory system composed of specific frequencies such as those you might expect to find in any sound object” (Viola 1991: 107).

How does one move from the frequencies and amplitudes of electric waves (signs without signification) to images, sounds and words that carry meaning? By modulation. To make sense of the concept of modulation employed by Deleuze to explain the device of power in a control society and which he contrasts with the “moulding” of the disciplinary society, we have to look at the video machine. Television is a device that modulates the (message-bearing) carrier wave by acting simultaneously on its amplitude and its frequency. Rather than capturing images, the camera captures the waves that constitute those images, composing and decomposing them by means of modulation. The production and transmission of an image is in reality the result of a modulation of vibrations, of electric waves, of “visual dust”, to use Bergson’s beautiful image.

So we have an *abstract* and *non-figurative* line (a wave), an analogical flow of electric waves that vibrate like a sound object, and a modulation device (a TV, radio, computer) that tunes in directly to the analogical fluxes by producing figures, words, sounds. The modulation is a modulation of the movements, flows, intensities, vibrations, rhythms of a world before man (a world before the image as we perceive it, a world before sound as we hear it, a world before speech as we articulate it). A world of “pure experience”, before the crystallization of object and subject. A non-“human” world, since it goes beyond our ability to perceive these movements, these intensities, these rhythms. All is movement in the video, all is time – but these movements, this time is non-“human”. “The division into lines and frames

are purely divisions in time: the openings and closings of temporal windows that demarcate periods of activity within an electronic flow. So the video image is a living, dynamic energy field, a vibration that takes on the appearance of solidity only because it exceeds our capacity to detect such minute intervals of time” (Viola 1991: 108).

By modulating these intensities, these rhythms, these movements, the a-signifying machines shape the conditions from which the image, the word or the sound emerges, i.e. the conditions from which the action, the perception or the enunciation emerges. That is the source of their power: they work on all the elements within the process of subjectivation (both linguistic and symbolic), but their point of departure is this “vacuum”, which actually and rightly precedes all signification and representation. They permeate the whole range of modes of expression, both molar and molecular.

Money

What interests us in this context is the relationship between the abstract, non-figurative line and the production of a figure because, in capitalism, money operates in exactly the same way. Investment capital, money as capital, is a flow that is indifferent to any substance, any matter, any subject. It is a totally abstract, non-figurative flow that can generate any figure (any production). In monetary flows, it is the banking system that modulates this abstract and non-figurative flow. The banking device, by modulating the frequency and the amplitude of investment, can generate any figure/production. The banking system converts the abstract line of money as capital into money as cash, as a means of payment.

The money circulating in the banks, which is recorded in company balance sheets, is by no means the same as the money we have in our pockets or that we receive as salaries or benefits. These two types of money – exchange money and credit money – belong to two different regimes of power. What we call “purchasing power” is in reality a lack of power. What we have are monetary signs that are powerless because they represent no more than a possible debiting from a flow of consumption determined by the flows of credit, that abstract line of money as capital. What it amounts to is “cosmic fraud”.

In contrast, credit money (the abstract, non-figurative line) has the power to restructure the economic chains, to determine a displacement of the figures, to influence the creation of possibles (Deleuze and Guattari 1972: 271). Investment capital is capable of a direct, unmediated impact on the real because, as we know, it recognizes neither subjects nor objects, it is routed through signification and representations.

Interactive technologies of the mind

The contents of a subjectivity in a control society depend on a multitude of machinic systems. A review of the most basic, unremarkable gestures and activities which we, living in the developed West, carry out in our daily lives is all that is required to describe this “entering into the machine of subjectivity”. At one time, people used to talk about “entering religious life” in similar terms.

I get up in the morning and the

first thing I do is switch on the light by activating a technological device that corresponds to the generalized decoding of a flow peculiar to capitalism. It is a kind of flow that is indifferent to all products and all actualization but, being composed of point-signs without signification, will return and set in motion all the other technological devices that I am going to activate during the day.

While I am having my breakfast, I listen to the radio. The usual spatial and temporal dimensions of my sound world are suspended. The usual sensory-motor patterns on which the perception of sound is based are neutralized. Voice, speech and sound are deterritorialized since they have lost all connection with a body, a place, a context, a territory. Radio broadcasting does not render “the direction, the limits and the structure of the sphere of the enunciation but only the connections between sound intensities” (Cardinal 2004: 46). The “radio doesn’t capture sound fragments as tangible qualities relating to an object, but rather as an unlimited series of modes, of passive and active forces of affection”. “Sound is composed of elementary forces (intensities, pitch, interval, rhythm and tempo) that have a more direct impact on people than the meaning of words: that is the very basis of the art of radio”, according to Arnheim (cited in Cardinal 2004: 52).). But that too is the basis of government in control societies.

Before going out, I make a phone call to let someone know that I’ll be half an hour late. Where does communication take place? At home? At the home of the person I have just phoned? In the telecommunications device? What is the context for this enunciation?

In the street, I withdraw money from a cash machine where an electric, computational, telematic device, emitting only point-signs without signification, satisfies my request by giving me access to monetary signs which I then put in my pocket. These signs represent a flow of purchasing power that, as we know, has no power in reality other than that of being exchanged for other goods-signs, which are openly displayed in the passage in the subway that I have to take. The ticket machine is a system of regulation and control that is devoid of meaning but that can produce signification because it constantly reminds me of the balance of my powerless signs and it continually modulates my need to work.

Before going into the subway, I buy a newspaper. Reading the daily paper, I am confronted by the capitalist specificity of the writing and by another machine of signs and information. In this context, let us quote Gabriel Tarde who, at the end of the 19th century, had already stressed how different this mode of “mute” enunciation was when compared with the model of the Greek *polis*: “The Greek political orators composed speeches to be delivered within a very short time frame, in a space which never exceeded the range of the human voice”, before a small group of individuals who were “removed momentarily from all other surrounding influences”, [the speech itself being] composed by the orator in a “similar frame of mind”.

The task of the newspaper appears to be completely different. “The newspaper targets a far wider but more dispersed audience made up of individuals who, while they are reading their article, remain subject

to all sorts of distractions. They can hear the buzz of conversation around them in their groups or in their cafe. They can hear ideas that run counter to those of the writer.” Newspaper readers, like radio listeners, never see the writer or his/her gestures or facial expressions and, unlike radio listeners, they don’t hear his/her voice or intonation either. In contrast to the orator who can make a lasting impression on the minds of his audience with only one speech, several articles are required to achieve the same result since “the article is only one link in a chain of articles generally emanating from a number of different writers who make up the newspaper’s editorial board”.

Since the French Revolution, the very long and complex “silent, appealed discourse” has been leading our democracies. A newspaper’s greatest difficulty is to build up an audience/readership and then keep it; its audience cannot be created and retained by using a body of coherent ideas and deploying well-structured arguments, both of which are available to an orator using rhetoric. “The subject of the newspaper is composed of numerous, incoherent subjects, which are supplied every morning by the big event of the day or of the previous day. Imagine if couriers had constantly come up to Demosthenes during one of his harangues against Philippe to bring him some piece of breaking news and then his speech was entirely structured around the narration or interpretation of all this information” (Tarde 2004: 259).

On my return home, I watch the news on TV, along with eight million other French people. We form a huge neural network, a network of bodies and souls, affects, emotions, passions, all simultaneously synchronized. We form a huge nervous system exposed to the slogans and watchwords of power. Who is speaking from the TV set and who is speaking to whom? The talking head is only the terminal in an “industrial” arrangement producing the enunciation; the editorial board, journalists, freelances, contract workers are only component parts in this arrangement (and not necessarily the most important in the chain of production). The presenter’s voice is a “polyphony”, but not a pleasant one. It echoes the voices of the governments in power, of advertisers, of other print and electronic media and of CEOs whose “cultural” project consists of dispensing with the need for brains in corporate marketing departments.

In every house, each of the eight million viewers finds himself/herself too at the centre of an arrangement, at the intersection of a series of flows. The ways of mobilizing attention, of organizing the programmes, of presenting the topic tally in several areas with the experience of reading a newspaper or listening to the radio. But the new elements appear to be linked to the technological specificity of the device. So, in front of my television set, “I am the intersection point, 1. of a perceptual fascination provoked by the screen’s luminous animation bordering on hypnotism, 2. of a relationship of capture with the narrative content of the programme combined with a lateral awareness of surrounding events (water boiling on the hob, a child’s cry, the telephone ...), 3. of a world of fantasies inhabiting my daydreams. My sense of personal identity is thus pulled in different directions” (Guattari 1995:16).

Before going to the cinema, I answer the emails I've received during the day and enter a completely different writing and communication device where "active, responsive comprehension" (to use Bakhtine's words) that were neutralized by the television can now be exercised. I enter another public arena.

I go to the cinema, just in time for the last showing where once again I experience the "ordinary" suspension of the world. This time the suspension affects perception and its usual coordinates in space and time. My sensory-motor system is faulty since the images and movements no longer depend either on objects or on my brain, but are automatically produced by a machinic device. Cinematic editing upsets the connections between situations, images and movements by making me enter into other spatio-temporal blocks. In pre-signifying or symbolic semiologies, the substances and forms of expression exist in parallel and are not articulated in linear fashion as they are in language. In a film, there are different lines of expression: the sound line, the visual line, the line of light, of colour, etc. "The issue is not about a syntax or a key that would impose coherence on the relationship between these

different lines" (Guattari 1993:92).

The political question that we need to ask in the face of the processes of subjection and enslavement outlined above is the following: how do we escape these relationships of domination and how do we develop practices of freedom and processes of individual and collective subjectivation using these same technologies?

Maurizio Lazzarato is a Paris-based independent social and political theorist and regular contributor to the journal *Multitudes*. His many books include *Intermittents et précaires* [with A. Corsani] (2008), *La révolutions du capitalisme* (2004), *Puissance de l'invention: La psychologie économique de Gabriel Tarde contre l'économie politique* (2002).

Translated by Mary O'Neill

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General Editor: Gary Genosko
Address: Department of Sociology,
Lakehead University
955 Oliver Road, Thunder Bay, Ontario,
Canada P7B 5E1
Tel: 807-343-8391
Fax: 807-346-7831
Email: gary.genosko@lakeheadu.ca
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