

Becoming Hole (The Hiddener Abode)¹

1972: *Becoming Hole*

That day, Deleuze and Guattari deputized each wolf.

It is time, they said, stroking them on the rough fur of their heads. They loaded the wolves in Deleuze's car and headed from Paris to the ferry at Calais. The wolves raised quite a ruckus in the roadside inns in which they bunked on the way, catching hold of any number of fille de chambres' end-quarters in their reeking jaws, wolf-drool running in foul rivulets down one or several female asses. They were thrown out night after night, and Deleuze in particular really hated repacking the car. *Wolves will be wolves*, Guattari shrugged. Deleuze pulled anxiously at the collar of his itchy crewneck.

It was, frankly, a relief to Deleuze when they made it to Calais and then crossed the Channel to Dover. The inns were buttoned up to the point of being stifling and elitist, it was true, but at least every night wasn't a replay of the clamor of La Borde. No fille de chambres to be found, and the wolves had to content themselves with a dry portion of beans on toast and an early bedtime. There was a lot of grumbling amongst them. Still, they were all well-rested when they made it to 20 Maresfield Gardens in London.² The brick mansion looked ornate and imposing in the dark, the oriel windows poking out of the night-silvered masonry like chemical stains on calotype paper. Somehow it reminded Deleuze of Guy, and he was going to tell a funny story about the time they had a contagious giggling fit over how revolutionary some homosexuals think they are – their absurd claims about fighting the man in bed, and their refusal to get out there and walk a simple picket.

*It's as if homosexual desire could only be inscribed where repression has inscribed it*³, Guy had shrieked—flecks of baguette flying onto the backs of his hands, the table, the air between them—and Deleuze could barely understand him.

Where what has inscribed it?! He kept yelling.

Repression! Repression! Guy would gasp. *God how these faggots love the police. The police and toilets – two opposite poles of one incredibly depressing phantasm.*

He paused for effect.

Toilet spasms are like banking transactions, Guy had said, and left it at that.

Deleuze laid back on a bunch of pillows. He felt the world cracking open, and it all made sense to him suddenly when Guy said it: all the axiomatics of capital gushed together in one obscene flow. *A flow of cum running in the shadows, as disincarnate as money, checks of cum behind the grate of a bank teller window.*⁴

—but then he remembered that Guattari got jealous whenever he went on about Guy.

We need to make love to them, Guattari was saying.

Make love to who? Deleuze asked, muffling his voice by pulling his crewneck off over his head. He was trying to seem casual, as if he'd been listening. *Them!* Guattari gestured back at the car, the wolves scratching and growling at the steamed-up windows.⁵

Yes, of course: Them, Deleuze whispered, casing the Freud residence for guards. But it would be so uncouth—*so un-British*—to actually guard anything except the obvious castles for the tourists. The lawns stretched tranquilly under the streetlamps.

By “making love,” of course, Guattari meant naming the wolves—uttering their singularity, the singular multiplicities of each wolf.

Fly free Communist Horizon! Fly free Freckles! Fly free Desert-Wasp! Fly free Gilberte-Naked-in-my-Mouth! Fly free Roaring Assemblage! Fly free Grey Horde! Fly free Multiplicity of Multiplicities! Fly free my Woolly Bolsheviks all! howled Guattari, opening the car doors and running with them toward 20 Maresfield. He broke the upper pane in the museum door with his elbow and threaded his arm in, unlocking it. He turned, panting, with his brown curls falling over his eyes. Only Freckles ran through. The rest flew in a jumble at the stained-glass bay windows and the multi-paned turrets, or crawled fast and low for the small casement windows lining the seam where the building met the lawn. Desert-Wasp lunged at the second-story oriel, slamming into the bricks instead. She hit the ground with a surprisingly soprano squeak. The sound of glass breaking crackled around Guattari, and a cloud of shards bloomed up when they streamed inside, leaving behind the resin of wolf-sweat - like refinished floor beams, or newly-tilled soil - in the night air.

Deleuze cleared his throat. *After you*, he offered, sweeping his hand toward the open door as if Guattari hadn't just been caught in an embarrassing reflex attempting to lead the pack. Guattari fake-smiled at him using just his eyes.

The wolves did not immediately set about tearing apart the mansion. They padded slowly and lightly, inspecting all the rooms. They were bizarrely respectful of the Library with its dark cherrywood bookshelves and glassed-off oriental *tschotskes*. *These are the absurd fruits of imperialism*, urged Guattari, gesturing to the hundreds of jade and meerschaum figures populating Freud's desk, ready to be toppled. The wolves sniffed and moved on.

The dining room, conservatory, and Anna Freud's study all received a cursory review by the pack, with some whiffing at the grand table and at the blue and gold metallic Edo-period rug, their nails catching in the silk fibers, to inspect the walnut-inlaid parquet floor beneath for crumbs.

Guattari skittered along after them, trying to recover himself from his unseemly urges toward revolutionary leadership. Deleuze was hissing something in his ear about – *We're just following them—let them map it*—but before he could respond with an affirmative sigh, they were in Freud's treatment room—preserved as he had left it—and Guattari's eyes were adjusting to the sight of it.

All seven wolves were standing, mounting, reposing on, sniffing, scratching at, and licking Freud's couch at once.

They were everywhere. Crammed on it, stumbling over each other's paws, tails flicking in each other's faces as they swarmed across the qashqai rug that draped the legendary daybed. The couch was a teeming hive.

Guattari's eyes kept focusing in and out of the spectacle. How to describe it? A many-headed hydra of a couch. A landscape of rank, grey-headed boils bursting out of a bloody, vaginal-red tapestry. 7 pairs of smoky feet stampeding over blazing night basins and honeyed shards of sunseting sky. Maybe *pairs* was not the right word, Guattari corrected himself – too organized, too *organismy*. 14 wild smoky feet stampeding over blazing night basins and honeyed shards of sunseting sky.

And he was aware of a kind of steam raising all around the couch—a mephitic cloud of old wool: the strange combination of hot dust mixed with the underwater-scent of wet seaweed, a bloom of pheromones waving in the deeps.

They were digging into the couch, mouthing at it. They were frantic sculptors, hollowing out a cloacal chasm. Their snouts rooted deep into the fibers, throwing chunks of horsehair onto the floor.

They're can't be regressing, Deleuze coughed under his breath, All of them were weaned quite properly. We watched it, we saw them wean.

It's not a maladaptation, Guattari enunciated slowly, through a hum of static—the sound equivalent of a vhs tape hiccuping on the wheels of a decaying machine—They're schizizing.

The wolves intensified their attacks. The rug was scrambled up under their paws and shoved onto the floor in a hectic mound—an arrangement something like an anarchic rectal expulsion splatted violently onto the floor from a great height. Horsehair flew everywhere.

And then, as quickly as it began, the wolves disappeared—whether into the hole or the cloud of horsehair, it didn't much matter.

A wolf is a hole, Guattari and Deleuze uttered together.

And the hole deepened.

They crept close and looked through. What Guattari and Deleuze saw were rats. Rats piling on top of one another. And quitchgrass spreading rapidly under them—a carpet—then creeping up vertically to create a floating canopy of flat, hairy leaves. Potatoes strewn on the grass were fed upon by the rats until the grass was littered with crumpled potato husks, dark rejected eyes and sprouts.

They've torn apart the couch—Deleuze assessed quietly to himself—replaced the inexorable repeat of Oedipus with the unleashing of desire. Rats, grass, potatoes, all scrambled and connected, interpenetrating. Not at the genital zones, but at their skins, tails, molecules.

Through the hole, everything is “castrated”—which is to say that nothing is. Everything plugs into everything—as with the psychotic Judge Schreber, everything homosexualized, receptive, a hole; holes plugging into other holes.⁶ Through the hole—at least when Deleuze and Guattari look through, in their delirium—everything is sheer immediacy: the torn-down veil of castration finds behind it all of the social and natural world arrayed as on one infinite and infinitely accessible stage.

*A wolf is a hole,*⁷ they hum.

What they mean is that a wolf and a hole are not identical so much as synthetic with each other, synthetic with each other’s utterly unspecific particles of matter. *Particles of the unconscious, nothing but particles, productions of particles, particulate paths, as elements of molecular multiplicities.*⁸

And it’s beautiful (hypothetically). If a *hole is no more negative than a wolf*, then (hypothetically), there is no castration. The vagina is not a miserable hollow. It’s a wolf. Or a potato, an anus, a field of quitchgrass.

*A hole is just as much a particle as what passes through it. Physicists say that holes are not the absence of particles but particles traveling faster than the speed of light. Flying anuses, speeding vaginas, there is no castration.*⁹

Deleuze and Guattari are utopian thinkers. All wolves are holes, and all holes wolves. Didn’t they once say that *desire produces reality or stated another way, desiring-production is one and the same thing as social production?*

*It is not possible to attribute a special form of existence to desire, they claimed—a mental or psychic reality that is presumably different from the material reality of social production. Desiring-machines are not fantasy-machines or dream-machines, which supposedly can be distinguished from technical and social machines.*¹⁰

The house of Oedipus is studded throughout with portals, pores. Is in fact utterly porous. This is because, for Deleuze and Guattari, the home and the social world are equally coded by capitalism’s deadening logic, and the home is thus subject to the same process of abstraction and commodification that governs the social world. The production of the desiring subject is one moment within the larger process of production in general. You can think about this in terms of Marx’s schema, which you’ve already realized by now.

Under capitalism, labor is measured not by its quality but by its quantity. Your wage has nothing to do with you, but with an average amount of time calculated to produce a certain commodity. And no matter who you are as a person, what your day was like, or what you felt or did or thought or dreamed up while you worked, your time-unit of labor is just an abstract quantity—substitutable for any other time-unit of labor.

For Deleuze and Guattari, this process where we leave aside the question of the specificity of you and your particular labors on any given day in favor of the realm of averages and quantities, has its corresponding (“equivalent”) action in the home. This equivalent action takes a different form, though. You don’t get a wage, but the specifics of you are as irrelevant in the home just as they are in the workplace. You’re made abstract there too. More to the point, something happens to your genitals: you experience *the becoming-private of the organs*.¹¹

What does it mean to say your genitals are privatized? Not so much that you own them, but that they are *enclosed*. In the same way that land and resources are enclosed. For example you can’t just walk down the street and shoot a hawk for dinner. Perhaps when all land was common land, you could hunt for sustenance. But this history of common land makes no difference now: all land—and every fish, deer and fowl on it—belongs either to private individuals or to the State. And if you want to get sustenance, you’re going to have to sell your labor for a wage.¹² That’s just how capitalism works. They take everything away and then you sell them your labor because you have no other options, and they give you part of that profit back as wages, and they keep the lion’s share of that profit for themselves.

Or, to use another example, garbage is enclosed. As you know, once capitalism began to accelerate in the seventeenth century, one of the things they did was make it illegal to glean garbage from the open sewer system of London.¹³ Here I am referring to open channels of shit through which animal carcasses, indigo dye runoff, and rotted vegetables flowed down the sides of the streets, making their way to dump out in the River Thames.

Few people want to eat that, but if you’re hungry enough you might. Except that is not possible. And the reason for this is that, in order to get everyone to sign onto selling their labor, capitalism has to make it impossible to survive any other way. So, shooting hawks and plucking garbage from an open channel of shit is out.

Well your genitals are enclosed too. Except instead of stone walls and sewers, your genitals are privatized through the institution of the family and also—for Deleuze and Guattari—through the institution of psychoanalysis, which affirms that any anxiety or woe we have has to be traced back to Oedipus and how much we hate our fathers and want to sleep with our mothers. It’s the same logic of equivalence and substitution that happens with wages, but this is an equivalence and substitutability to which our desire is subjected.

It all goes back to Pankejeff and his wolves. Freud conjectured: *you know those wolves he dreamt about menacing him outside his bedroom window? Those are his father, he wants to cut Sergei’s penis off and run into the woods with it and pleasure his mother while young Sergei sits and sobs.*

And Deleuze and Guattari objected. *Those wolves are the Bolsheviks, those wolves are the multitudes, those wolves represent all the terror and the possibility of the social world, and of some logic that isn’t Oedipus, that doesn’t reiterate mommy and daddy and all that same shit all the time.*

So that’s the dispute between Freud and Deleuze and Guattari in a very brief and admittedly hastily-drawn little nutshell.

In this way, for Deleuze and Guattari, the worst part isn't that your genitals have been enclosed from other people, so much as that they have been enclosed from yourself—subjected to a logic of the endless substitutability where one thing (wolves, dreams, desires) always means another (father, Daddy, phallus, castration). Oedipus wants to have exclusive hold over your body, your “private parts,” and also your dreams. And you're basically trapped inside. To put it more plainly, the State makes land and even garbage private, and the family makes your genitals private, which is to say that they can only express one thing over and over. The endless repetitions of family grids, quantities, schema of desire. For them, desire is like the wage: both are abstract calculations that have nothing to do with you. And so the family—like the field of production more broadly—is *a system of equivalence that rediscovers everywhere the father, the mother, and the ego.*¹⁴

Against this “system of equivalence,” Deleuze and Guattari have a simple proposition: why can't our desires be recoded in the social world? Let's say we become politicized in relation to the movement of the barricades. Aren't we a different person for having done so? And, for this reason, don't our desires change and flux in accordance with our historical context?

Instead of the inevitable repetition of Oedipus and the privatization of the genitals and desire, Deleuze and Guattari extrapolate something outside of, and beyond Oedipus: the flows of *desiring-production*: a world of interpenetrating, generative desires, *a genealogical network that is not familial: parents only intervene here as partial objects, flows, signs and agents of a process that outflanks them on all sides.*¹⁵

For this reason, when Deleuze and Guattari look through the chasm in the couch, they find potatoes, quitchgrass, and rats—a swarm of desiring-productions. Rather than the primal scene over and over again, and the threat of castration.

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Now at this point we have to confront a particular question, and a rather important one: is it possible to “outflank” Oedipus without overthrowing the whole system, all of capitalism? That is to say: can a hole just be a *wolf*?

Rather than wolfed, shouldn't the hole be—to adapt a logic from Fanon—*stretched?*¹⁶

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I don't mean to be lewd. It's just, I suppose, that I can't get past the fact of context. What I mean by this is that it's fine for Deleuze and Guattari to bolshevize the wolves. Who gives a shit about aristocratic consciousness.

And this recalls to my mind how my ex-girlfriend (the one who radicalized me) refused to watch *Hill Street Blues* together, even though everyone else in the collective was watching it, and it was truly a burden to have to just sit there pretending to understand what the hell was going on during the chatty parts of our Sandinista solidarity meetings. The second we stopped organizing that week's rally or building take-over, they'd all head over to the campus pub and start ranting and raving about that week's episode, and I had no idea what they were

talking about or why people got so exercised over Furillo's latest domestic strife, or Belker's efforts at "anger-management" on the job.

But my ex, she was adamant that we weren't going to indulge these representations of "cop consciousness," and I had to admit she had a point. The police procedural nighttime drama is not quite the same thing as the venerable tradition of the literary detective story—the main aim of which is to totalize the world, stitch together for the viewer the multiple registers of overlapping determinations. Hill Street Blues (from what little I could gather), was full-on cop-consciousness *popo-pornogra-phantasmagoria*. Who gives a shit about what goes on in a cop's mind, was my ex's point. And, relatedly, my point is: who gives a shit about Sergei Pankejeff's consciousness. Who gives a shit about his woes about what he saw or didn't see or how badly he might or might not have wanted to have that organ that made his father so happy¹⁷—how badly he wanted a darling, scrumptious little boo-boo between his legs that his father could joyously pummel. My point is: who gives a shit.

And, in this sense, I'm quite the advocate for Deleuze and Guattari's Bolshevik recoding of the wolves. Because they were onto something having to do with dis-enshrining aristocratic consciousness—dis-enshrining all its wheeling paroxysms and insipid subject-formation. I mean, those aristocratic Russian motherfuckers (or fatherfuckees? They wish!) were poised on the precipice of being swallowed up by the wolves of history, and thank god. So, in this sense, I am with them in saying who gives a shit about aristocratic subject-formation; it's all just a sea of molecules, flows, rats, potatoes, and grass.

But still, and maybe this is just me, endlessly stewing about something, but I have some skepticism about the travels of this theory to our shores here in the crumbling deindustrialized United States.

For one thing, we have no aristocracy to sideline the *question of the consciousness-of*. What we have here is the uncanny absence of history, and our efforts to resist or overthrow capitalism have been going on in any number of ways for a long and miserable time. And the problem is that they memory-wipe us on the regular so that each new wave of protest has to find its way to resistance kind of groping in the dark. Do you know how much work goes into de-politicizing us over here? All the more so now that they're gutting the schools and have already demolished the factories (or, to be more precise, left them sitting there rotting, exhaling their vermiculite quietly, putrescing at the outskirts of Anytown U.S.A.). And so just zipping closed the entire history of Oedipus and saying well, its all just *holes and wolves* now – I mean, well, it's fine to give the big fuck you to aristocratic neurotic consciousness when you're in Europe in 1979 and you have to deal with communist bureaucracies and dusty old Stalinist cranks trying to quash your every youthful burst of revolutionary feeling with the threat of being purged, and all the bureaucrats, the failures of Bolshevism, all the unspooling events that would eventuate in fucking embalming Lenin—when he would in no uncertain terms have hated becoming a divine relic—assigning a Committee of Biological Technologischtshkas the task of scrubbing the mold off his decaying skin with vodka and quinine on a weekly basis.

Sidelining the question of consciousness made some sense in this context. Perhaps not so much in ours.

1990: The Hiddener Abode

I'll tell you reader, I'm a worrier. And what I worry about when I think about what is coming down the pipeline for us over here in the academy, circa 1995, is this: a whole bunch of home-grown Deleuzians who think that setting free our neuroses on a plane of schizophrenic immanence is going to open up some field of "revolutionary" possibility.

I mean, wouldn't that be nice, wouldn't it. But.

And here, I suppose, is the place to move from daddies to mothers. Or, to put it more simply: to raise the question of *housework*. Like the Italian feminists said, all the so-called productivity of the social world depends on housework and the nurturing, comforting labor of the home. As one of those Italian revolutionaries that I met at that retreat with my ex—that time we blew off grad school for a semester to work on the women's collective farm in the hills outside Assisi—was fond of saying, *in production, the exchange-value of labor-power as capacity for production is produced and its use-value consumed; in reproduction, the use-value of labor-power is produced and its-exchange value is consumed.*¹⁸

What this means, quite simply, is that reproduction (i.e. housework/love/making the space of the home a nurturing environment) and production aren't exactly equivalent versions of one another. In the workplace, you generate the exchange-value of the commodity (its exchangeability in circulation), and you use up the labor of the worker (his "use-value"). In the home, it's kind of the opposite: the home produces the use-value of the worker. It feeds, nourishes, clothes, nurtures his body to work another day, and it consumes (uses up) the exchange-value of his labor—the wage which the family uses to buy food, commodities, goods.

As you know, Marx pointed out that the abode of production is "hidden" by the gleam of the commodity. When we see objects on shelves for sale, we don't see the labor that went into them. You could buy a coffee mug, take it home, smash it with a hammer and inspect its shards under a microscope, but there's no way to have access to the labor that went into making it. All you'll have is little bits of mug. You just can't see the processes of production, no matter how hard you look at a commodity. So, the abode of production is "hidden," and the work of *Capital* is to expose the relationship between this abode and the veil of circulation.

But the labor that went into the making of that mug—say, the assembly-line labor that is hidden within its commodified veneer—is, itself, the product of another form of labor: that of the home. Just like you can't see the factory labor that went into making your mug, when the worker sells his labor power on the market, you don't see everything that went into producing that particular commodity (his labor)—the one that he exchanges for a wage. That "everything" includes the labor of the home, the gendered labor of housework and love. The home is in this way integral to the process of production, although it is hidden within its folds. Invaginated, you could say. The moral of this story is that there is another "hidden abode," in addition to Marx's more well-known hidden abode of production.

So then: the home is a *hiddener* abode?

This hiddener abode, the home, is the foundation upon which the hidden abode of production rests. I mean, Stuart Hall knew this, and was he just shouting into the void when he asked: what do we really know about *ideological, cultural, sexual reproduction*? When he pointed out that the work of the home wasn't just material, it was symbolic, *reproducing not only the cells of the body but also the categories of the culture*.¹⁹

Look, the primal scene raises the question of sexuation. I'd love to do away with its specificity when we're talking about aristocrats, because who cares about the process and their experience of their sexuation. But can we do away with its specificity altogether? Don't we have to talk about what makes the primal scene titillating and horrifying at the same time? Don't we have to find language for that?

What if when you see your father and your mother together, what you're seeing is an exciting/disturbing flicker of the hidden abode touching the hiddener abode?²⁰

As quickly as it appears, this suture disappears, invaginating reproduction within the field of production. Hiding it. *Hiddenering* it. In this way, the so-called "primal scene" represents a moment at which we see the use-value of production (the laborer, the care of his laboring body) produced, and then this labor of reproduction sequestered from sight. The disappearance of that suture—the nightmare-like, unfixable yet relentless repetition of the primal scene—that's the naturalization of labor-power as, in itself, "productive."

So then let's say that it's not even just that the spheres of productive and reproductive labor are in parallax, but that, when they overlap or intersect, that's its own kind of trauma. And the primal scene, in this sense, is a glimpse of your mother reproducing the use-value of your father's labor-power. Not Pankejeff's mother and father, obviously, since they were creepy aristocrats and it's already been pointed out that it's very unlikely he saw them f*cking to begin with since he didn't even sleep in the room with his parents anyway; he slept with his nanny. But my point is, if we're talking about the primal scene as a trope of subject-formation and sexuation, what if we were to include the possibility that the "trauma" of it has something to do with the momentary visualization of the touching of abodes. Just for a flicker. A flicker that dissolves into the murk of nightmarefetish almost instantaneously. In a way it's sexy. But only in a very disturbing way.²¹

Let's face it, maybe Deleuze and Guattari were a bit too faithful to a rather vulgar sort of Marxism. Too faithful, really, to get this fetishistic aspect of the primal scene—it's charge. What I mean to say is that the primal scene circulates through the socius in a way that has an effectivity. In Marxist terms, the primal scene might be a "real abstraction"—an abstraction with material effects. I'm asking about the composition of this real abstraction.

Put another way: here's another thing one of those Italian feminists taught me. That, for Marx—and especially the Marx of the *Grundrisse* that Deleuze and Guattari, and after them the autonomists loved so much—there is no distinction made between reproduction and commodity production.²² I mean, like Federici (and probably your mother too) pointed out, things have to happen to the commodities that the worker buys to reproduce himself. A dead chicken doesn't just spontaneously become soup. Labor intervenes to transform those commodities into sustenance, and not only that, but this labor is done "lovingly."

Because the thing is, the home and the workplace—they're both subject to the brutal abstract law of capitalist productivity. But differently so. And the primal scene—well what if we said this scene is the scene of these two different logics of capital basically intersecting. Or, not intersecting, but—it stretches the wolf-is-a-hole paradigm, doesn't it? And yet for Deleuze and Guattari wolves are holes are potatoes are quitchgrass, are, etc. etc. And if we take this extinguishing of the specificity of the abodes of production and reproduction to its logical conclusion, we're going to run into a problem. Because a view of production generalized throughout the social world and indistinguishable from the specificity of reproduction, occludes, as Spivak would have it, the question of subject predication and the entire international division of labor as well.²³ Without the specificity of reproduction, of the international division of labor: well it's all just the delirious idealism of "speeding vaginas" isn't it?

Deleuze is down on his knees, wagging with his fingers behind his back to Guattari to come look. Guattari, who's gazing out the window for the wolves. *You have to crawl*, Deleuze is saying, *you have to become wolf (or become- baby, he's thinking, but he doesn't say this)*.

Guattari gets down on his hands and knees and wiggles over to the gaping gash in Freud's couch to look through again. Through the parted lips of the couch, a heavy wooden door faces them, and, through that, a peephole:



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It's like a bombed-out building, this hole. Tortured rubble. Shorn of any hair, any color. The eye flees to the illuminating gas in the ruined picturesque: torn brown weeds and, beyond

that, bright sky, clouds, and shining, erect trunks festooned in dun and silver winter colors. The peephole is ripped at the edges: a dastardly portal birthed in violence, dripping sawdust and splinters. *Primal. Hiddener abode.*

She—this Virgil or Beatrice—offers a vista, the reposing, sheerly submitting and receptive (sleeping? dead?) vagina, divorced from consciousness. Is it “speeding”? Does it “outflank” Oedipus—this vagina that does not organize the body and its pleasures through a privatized genital logic, but registers only as a moment in space-time (through a framing peep-hole)? Is it “speeding” when everything is asleep or dead in a woman but her vagina? Is it “speeding” when her vagina is a mischievous camper after lights out, prowling a forest’s shores, having secrets with Deleuze and Guattari that even she could not know?

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Remember Yorick and his Sentimental Journey—his travels through France and England, his lewd flirtations and his moral conundrums? I gestured to this at the outset of this little screed, but you may have missed it. At any rate, if you read this novelette in your English 201 class (as a way of avoiding tackling *Tristram Shandy*, which some of you must have tried to get away with), and if you remember anything at all about it, you remember the dirty parts. I know I do.

Remember Yorick’s obsession with his recurrent crush, the *fille de chambre*? Oh how he wants to give her his “coins.” And not just give her his coins. That’s never enough for the bourgeois. More specifically, he wants to give a girl his “coins” *while simultaneously lecturing her* on the finer points of morality. Men! God how they get off on being the arbiters of knowledge and “rationality.” It’s a really elaborate and gross fetish, comme ça: *The young girl listened with a submissive attention, holding her satin purse by its riband in her hand all the time. — ‘Tis a very small one,’ said I, taking hold of the bottom of it—she held it towards me— ‘and there is very little in it, my dear, said I; but be but as good as thou art handsome, and heaven will fill it.’ I had a parcel of crowns in my hand to pay for Shakespeare; and, as she had let go the purse entirely, I put a single one in; and, tying up the ribband in a bow-knot, returned it to her. . . I never gave a girl a crown in my life which gave me half the pleasure.²⁵*

Never gave him half the pleasure. Do you like the quantification of sentiments and coin simultaneously? Don’t answer that. People enjoy metaphor. Especially metaphors about vaginas. Here, the vagina and money/cum/pleasure are each other’s tittering little mirrors. Putting “coin” in the “purse” is Yorick’s little winkwink about putting his—

But I could have told you all this in grad school. The point, really, is that by the time we get to Hocquenghem, checks and cum become overlaid, decoded within the same axiomatic. You don’t have “checks”/”coin” standing in for “cum”; you have “checks *of* cum.” Here, cum and coin are not exchangeable but rather co-extensive.

What happened between Sterne and Hocquenghem to turn the metaphorical vagina into a speeding one? To turn the coinpurse *like* cunt into the checks of cum?

For Deleuze and Guattari vaginas/holes are coextensive (decoded in the same axiomatic) with any other particle, and thus the relevant thing (for them) about vaginas is not their

organization of sexuation/the body/Oedipal anxieties, but rather their tendency to—like any other particles—“speed.” The “speeding vagina” has less (for them) to do with Oedipus (less to do with its position vis-à-vis either the phallus or the penis) and more to do with a general intensification of time, or what we might say, *pace* the *Wertkritikers*: time becoming “denser.”²⁶ I want to say that, for Deleuze and Guattari, it *appears* that vaginas are speeding, and they appear so because of this making-dense of time. I only know anything about this because my ex—in all the time that she saved not watching *Hill Street Blues*—read an awful lot in German, and she was constantly going on about this *Wertkritik*. I gleaned a thing or two from it, and it was this: time (or so they say) is becoming more dense as capitalism becomes more productive.

It’s pretty simple. It takes less time (on average) to make the same commodity now than it did, say, fifty, ten, even just five years ago. The reason for this has to do with technological innovations. Once you can frost a whole field with one long squirt of fertilizer huffed out from the gills of a little turboprop plane—and once you have workers surfing superfast robotic platforms to pick those fertilizer-soaked apples, or once you have a car assembled entirely in a whirr of thick orange robot arms—your production is going to really speed up. And since “time” as we know it is not ontological so much as organized by the requirements of the capitalist workday, this increase in productivity means an alteration of time itself. If we take this seriously, we see that Deleuze and Guattari’s account of “speeding” could also be described as a *densification*: the stuffing of each hour with greater productive potential. It’s not exactly that objects are moving faster; it’s that time is denser. And the reason I brought Sterne into this is that you can only perceive a “speeding” vagina in relation to one that is or appears to be slow. And this brings up the question of historicity, interpretation, and the aesthetic. Just bookmark that for later.

Because the thing is, this whole schema is a fantasy. It’s a fantasy to say that time is becoming denser. Consider: you can speed up the production process through massive innovations in technology, but you still can’t exploit a robot arm. You can only invest money in it, and if it breaks, you can’t expect the robot arm’s wife to take care of it for a couple of unpaid weeks; you have to fix it yourself. Surplus comes from exploitation—the difference between what someone is paid, and what they produce for the capitalist. You can only exploit living people, because only living people expend energy on their own survival. That expense of energy: that’s the surplus that the capitalist recaptures for himself. So if production becomes more productive because the ratio of dead (machine, technological) labor to living (people) labor increases, thereby speeding up production, ultimately the rate of profit will fall.²⁷ Among other things, because the capitalist is able to generate and thus recapture less surplus value.

Obviously the falling rate of profit is a problem for capitalism, for the system’s *raison d’être* is profit. But, everyone, I have to tell you this thing. One way that the ruling classes have gotten around this falling rate of profit has been through wage stagnation—paying less for the labor-power relative to what it “costs” to reproduce that labor.²⁸

So what I’m proposing is that even if the time of production is speeding up—because stuffed with more productivity—the time of *reproduction* is actually (relatively speaking) slowing down (or becoming less dense) because the commodity it produces (labor-power) is increasingly devalued. In other words, reproductive labor becomes, in a sense, less

productive. So, this conviction Deleuze and Guattari have about the complete fungibility of the genital-particles for any other particle? It's itself a fantasy. Genitals are calibrated by a different set of speeds—and calibrated by a different calculus of flows—than automobiles, potatoes, and quitchgrass. They just are.

And yet even this last argument is based in a fantasy—that of some utterly distinguishable split between production and reproduction. This, of course, is a distinction only possible to make by bracketing the racialization of labor. Ultimately, we're returned to the question of context, of conjuncture. Just as the freezing of wages is a *political* intervention into the falling rate of profit—a kind of warfare on the people—so too is the question of sexuation, and of the gendered division of labor a political matrix irreducible to either an axiomatics of flow and speed, or that of production as definitively separated from reproduction.²⁹ As Angela Davis pointed out, that line between reproductive and productive labor was never hard and fast. Consider women on slave plantations, laboring in the fields along with the men.³⁰ Sure the home's a prison. But it's only one prison, and it “hiddeners” in a range of ways inextricable from historical context. I suppose another way of putting this is that if you see wolves outside your window, you ought to find out what they want.

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I thank the Critical Theory Seminar at Dartmouth College—and especially Alysia Garrison, Christian Haines, Max Hantel, Devin Singh, and Patricia Stuelke—for the invitation to workshop this piece, and for their learned suggestions. This piece was written in the context of the companionship of Jasbir Puar. If I have bracketed the usefulness of “speeding” as a category of political-economic analysis above, I reintroduce it here to mark the felicity of Jasbir's kaleidoscopic thought and analytic capacities, as well as her generosity and adventurousness as an interlocutor and co-thinker.

¹ The following is theory as “found/faux footage”: lecture notes to *Anti-Oedipus* as written by a lesbian-feminist scholar sometime in the early 1990s.

In considering the found/faux footage genre as a venue for theoretical writing, one may think of Caetlin Benson-Allott's excellent discussion of the horror genre. For Benson-Allott, faux footage diegetically embeds an original context/original filmmaker and a secondary context/filmmaker within the structure of the camerawork itself. There is the original

(usually known) filmmaker who shot the footage, and a second filmmaker (usually unknown), who re-presents the original. In other words, for Benson-Allott, faux footage is structured by the inextricability of questions of context from those of the division of labor.*

The recent explosion of faux footage horror films, according to Benson-Allott, has to do with two simultaneous and countervailing trajectories: the democratizing tendencies of video, and the influence of austerity and autocracy in the industry. Or, put another way: the conjunction of the expansion of handheld video technologies, with the industry's push toward microbudgeting (the war on writer's unions, professional actor's guilds, etc.). In an echoing vein, the theoretical text that follows seeks also to address the question of context in terms of some antinomies of the present.

I intend the piece that follows to be something of a comment on the turn to surface reading within the literary Humanities.** If recent work insists that symptomatic interpretation is no longer relevant due to the manifestation of political meaning at the surface of texts, it is also the case that theory as such has taken on some of the aesthetic, lyric qualities of the texts once in need of such interpretation. I take this to be (in part) a two-for-one kind of efficiency "solution" to the labors of writing and of interpretation that surfaces (so to speak) as a response to an increasingly defunded Humanities.*** In an atmosphere of intensifying scarcity, theoretical writing simultaneously turns toward quantitative methods, while (only seemingly contradictorily) taking on styles of fiction and lyric, absorbing the aesthetic object within itself. In this sense, theoretical writing becomes a kind of microbudgeting which—much like the faux footage horror film—no longer has the need for costly and time-consuming extras, such as "extradiegetic" soundtracks or (in the case of theory) aesthetic texts/object of analysis. If the faux footage film absorbs the extra-diegetic as a horrifying "possession" (pace *Paranormal Activity*), so too might contemporary theory be said to be possessed by its erstwhile object of analysis: aesthetics, style, technique.

Rather than struggle against this tendency in the Humanities, the text that follows approaches this turn at its surface. The result is a theoretical text possessed by a mise-en-abyme of authors and analysts concerned with questions of the division of labor and with the uncanny horrors of the primal scene. All of this transpires within the diegetic frame of the theory.

A final note: what follows is under a set of formal constraints, the most constraining of which is that, because it is found footage, the text cannot make reference to anything published after 1995.

References

* Caetlin Benson-Allott, *Killer Tapes and Shattered Screens: Video Spectatorship from VHS to File-Sharing* (University of California Press, 2013).

** The bibliography here is long, but a recent illuminating analysis of this turn is Sarah Brouillette and David Golumbia's "Neoliberal Tools (and Archives: A Political History of Digital Humanities)" (*Los Angeles Review of Books*, May 1, 2016). I am thinking specifically of their section, "Computing in the Humanities, Computer as the Humanities," which gives a historical overview of the turn to quantification methods in literary studies.

*** I explore a different angle on surface reading in “The Birth of Theory and the Long Shadow of the Dialectic,” PMLA, vol 130.3 (2015).

² Home of Anna Freud; Later, the Freud Museum.

³ Guy Hocquenghem, *The Screnball Asses* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2009), p. 4

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ The wolves had been stolen, of course. Or, as Guattari preferred: emancipated. Better yet: *ecstatically orphaned*. Originally, they had been the Odessian aristocrat Sergei Pankejeff’s familiars – daemon fellow-travelers. These wolves, primal scenesters, had haunted him since toddlerdom, when he had seen – or fantasized he saw – his parents up to *something*. Cf. Deleuze and Guattari, “1919: One, or Several Wolves,” in *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, trans. Brian Massumi, 1987).

⁶ Daniel Paul Schreber, *Memoirs of My Nervous Illness*, (New York: NYRB Books, 2000).

⁷ Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 32.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, 30.

¹¹ Ibid., 144.

¹² Cf., E.P. Thompson, *Whigs and Hunters: The Origin of the Black Act* (London: Penguin, 1990).

¹³ Cf., *The Sever and Paving Act* (1670).

¹⁴ Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*.

¹⁵ Ibid., 100.

¹⁶ “[A] Marxist analysis should always be slightly stretched when it comes to addressing the colonial issue.” Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (New York: Grove, 2005), 64.

¹⁷ *Putatively happy, putatively happy*. Once again I have to remind myself that men don’t *just get to enjoy*. In fact (or so they say), this is the ruse of Oedipus: everyone else is constrained, but the Father is the specter of sheer enjoyment. He operates outside the bounds of the Law, able to fully enjoy himself on the body of the mother. And so everyone – men included – is plagued by the fantasy of the fully-enjoying father. Or so I tell myself at those moments when I feel haunted by doubt that I can ever enjoy the body of a woman the way that Daddy can.

¹⁸ Leopoldina Fortunati, *The Arcane of Reproduction* (orig. published 1981, New York Autonomedia, 1995).

¹⁹ Stuart Hall, “Brave New World,” *Marxism Today*, October 1988 (pp. 24-29).

²⁰ See Fredric Jameson, “The Vanishing Mediator: Narrative Structure in Max Weber,” *New German Critique* 1 (Winter 1973) pp. 52-89.

²¹ But there’s a specificity to this disturbingness, I think. So basically, to boil this down: when your father and your mother copulate, the “trauma” of this is the making- apparent of the violence of reproductive labor, the foundation for the extraction of surplus at the point of its most “loving” disappearance: the home (/hole).

²² Cf. Silvia Federici, “Wages Against Housework,” (Power of Women Collective/Falling Wall Press, 1975).

²³ Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, “Scattered Speculations on the Question of Value,” *Diacritics*, vol. 15, no. 4, (Winter 1985), pp. 73-93.

²⁴ Marcel Duchamp, “Étants Donnés”.

²⁵ Laurence Sterne, *A Sentimental Journey*, (New York: Oxford, 1984), p. 64.

²⁶ Cf. Robert Kurz, "The Apotheosis of Money: The Structural Limits of Capital Valorization, Casino Capitalism and the Global Financial Crisis," *Krisis* 16/17, Horlemann Verlag, Bad Honnef, 1995.

²⁷ Anwar Shaikh, "An Introduction to the History of Crisis Theories," *U.S. Capitalism in Crisis* (U.R.P.E, 1978).

²⁸ "The value of the means of subsistence of the total workforce is therefore the abstract labor-time socially necessary for their maintenance and reproduction, and hence is the measure of the value of their labor-power," Anwar Shaikh, "Marx's Theory of Value and the Transformation Problem," in *The Subtle Anatomy of Capitalism*, Jesse Schwartz, ed., (New York: Goodyear Publishing, 1977).

²⁹ See, for example, Hortense Spillers' tracing, in the primal scene, the co-constitution of racial formation and sexual subjection in slavery's "high crimes against the flesh." Hortense Spillers, "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe: An American Grammer Book," *Diacritics* 17.2, 1987.

³⁰ cf. Angela Davis, *Women, Race, and Class*, (London: The Women's Press, 1982). [I]t is something assumed that the typical female slave was a houseservant...As is so often the case, the reality is actually the diametrical opposite of the myth. Like the majority of slave men, slave women, for the most part, were field workers" (5).