

GARY GENOSKO

MICROPOLITICS OF HOPE

Anthropologist of micropolitical hope, Barbara Glowczewski, is among the vanguard of key global Guattarian thinkers. Deploying Guattari's three registers of ecosophy to understand the foliatedness of disaster in the anthropocene, she provides a range of examples, from artists' responses to crises and neoliberal betrayals, collective intelligence marshalled against the violence of privatisation, experimentations leading to micro-social innovations challenging the criminalisation of asylum seekers, and political actions against the endo-colonialist policies of settler states. Eschewing victimal discourses traded like stocks by big media, she eviscerates the dehumanising logic of humanitarian care in the form of 'assistencialism' and as some Aboriginals know it, 'sit down money'. Glowczewski's unique voice speaks from her fieldwork among the Warlpiri in Australia, which began in the late 1970s, and her interpretations of dreaming as a kind of becoming caught the eye of Guattari in the late 1980s. Aboriginal individuals and families attempted to mount convincing cases for land titles against a state not above dirty tricks, like destroying ministry archives in the Department of Indigenous Affairs that made holes in the historical records, making claim-building more difficult.¹ This forms part of her criticism of state interventions and bureaucracies against the background of what the Birmingham school cultural studies theorists, referring to youth subcultures, once called 'resistance through rituals'.

However, it is attention to the problems of social scientific method

1 Cp. Lauren Marsh and Steve Kinnane, "Ghost Files: The Missing Files of the Department of Indigenous Affairs Archives", *Studies in Western Australian History* 23, 2003, pp. 111–27; The authors note: "It is of course one thing to formulate statistics on the high numbers of files destroyed. It is quite another thing to assess the collateral damage to the overall content of the archives [...]. That these ghost files would have been useful determinations of Native Title, because the files that remain form the backbone of evidential records for expert witness reports, is plain to see."

that highlight her Guattarian concerns. Guattari wanted to develop a new method of analysis that would not rehearse the centrality of linguistic semiology that marked structuralism. Schizoanalysis became a metamodel that criticised all inherited analytic models of interpretation and sought to look on events as the bearers of the potential for automodelisation that yield new maps of subjectivation. For Guattari,

“schizoanalysis [...] is not an alternative modelization. It is a meta-modelization. It tries to understand how it is that you got where you are? ‘What is your model to you? It does not work?’ – Then, I don’t know, one tries to work together. One must see if one can make a graft of other models”.²

Guattari explains in *Lignes de Fuite* that

“in the present study we have no other ambition than to attempt to appreciate what could be the conditions of a new analytic method whose task would not be limited, in this domain, to an external exam and ‘expert’ interventions, but which would facilitate a collective care-taking in a specified micropolitical field”.³

Guattari is explaining here how the collective production of research reports, of which *Lignes* is an instance, can help address fundamental challenges when faced with the overwhelming elimination of real political options by massive institutional constraints. The proviso he sets out is that despite such limits on political choice, the formation of new micropolitical groups remains not only possible but desirable, but neither on the foundations of universals, nor even on the refounding of conquered territories.

Paying close attention to the specificities of the objects studied, namely, desiring productions in their collective manifestations, requires adherence to a methodological principle that is not neutral:

“Only desire can read desire. We therefore cannot emphasize enough the necessity of a certain *transference of enunciation*: the subject undertaking a study must be ‘enmeshed’ in one way or another with mode of enunciation of the subject of the study.”⁴

2 Félix Guattari, “Institutional Practice and Politics”, in Gary Genosko (ed.), *The Guattari Reader*, Oxford, Blackell 1996, pp. 121–138, pp. 132–33; In this radical post-psychoanalysis the schizoanalyst attempts to discern the emergence of something that might get a patient moving again, by scouting out opportune potentialities among nuclei of autopoiesis, and activating cross-componential hatchings of subjectification by means of found (extracted) or placed (created) elements, enriching (onto-logic) rather than reducing (logic of sets) them.

3 Félix Guattari, *Lignes de fuite. Pour un autre monde de possibles*, La Tour d’Aigues, Éditions de l’Aube, 2011, p. 59 [translated by author].

4 Ibid., p. 62.

In this vein, then, Glowczewski observes the effects of distanciation typical of social science methods, and points out that

“the traditional academic recommendation regarding the need for a scientific distance in order to remain ‘objective’ in social sciences has opened curious filiation tracks in disciplines where the civic, and even political engagement, as well as the utopic spirit that prevailed at their beginning now seem to be frowned upon by many colleagues in France and elsewhere.”

She directs us towards acknowledging the importance of respecting indigenous singularities, and of acknowledging political options, for instance, in 2011 through the emergence of the short-lived First Nations Political Party (renamed in 2013 and de-registered in 2015 for failing to meet the membership floor). Avoiding sterility and resistance to serving as a handmaiden of power, as disciplinarity in the service of social control, are two goals set out by Guattari.

Glowczewski states:

“I believe that anthropology is particularly called to engage in analyses that consider all those relations [natural and social disasters, memories, histories, responses to the agency of victims] in a critical way in order to trigger local and global reflection towards new social alternatives.”

She cites David Graeber on anarchist anthropology, but we could just as well go to Eduardo Viveiros de Castro, who writes in *Cannibal Metaphysics*:

“Anthropology is ready to full assume its new mission of being the theory/practice of the permanent decolonization of thought.”⁵

Not everyone agrees, of course, De Castro is not naïve. It is evident though, that transferences of enunciation are at work in the shift regarding the sources of anthropology’s most imaginative concepts, namely, those societies it studies. Indigenous practices and styles of thought make anthropology run, but whether change on the order of that announced in *Anti-Oedipus* will occur is anyone’s guess, even though the ‘cycle’ of colonialism and exoticism is coming to an end and the era of ontological partition is being remapped.

Guattari revised the transference relation in psychoanalysis, what Freud once suggested in his papers on technique as an unexpected arising in the treatment of neurotics and hysterics: the ‘special interest’ the analysand shows in the analyst for a time, and vice versa if the counter-transference is taken into account. Indeed, when transference becomes

5 Eduardo Viveiros de Castro, *Cannibal Metaphysics. For a Post-Structural Anthropology*, trans. P. Skafish, Minneapolis, Univocal, 2014, p. 40.

resistance a problem arises. Transferential relations are recoded by Guattari as beyond “any actual dual relation”⁶; they are group-based, collective, involving minimally a third element that can be detached, and the avoidance of alienating models that re-establish the social status quo. The encounters of subject groups and subjugated groups greatly interested Guattari in his clinical practice and forms the practical scene of his deployment of transferential relations. Collective assemblages of enunciation may be transferred between groups, with their different degrees of agency, but specifically, also transferred across the subject-object divide in a research setting. The alienating model of social science extraction of knowledge from a study group, and anthropology’s comfortable misrecognition of the source of its own inventiveness, may be overcome if new relations are opened up and more robust transversal connections are admitted that modify the relations at stake, as one gear engaging with another. This is not a recipe for instant cooperation. It does not guarantee mutual understanding. The machinic expression highlights the necessity for co-production of knowledge, but also respect for the amount of play the ‘teeth’ of a situation will tolerate as seen from the inside. Guattari did not much concern himself with official academic research, with its alienating procedures, but if we take to heart his suggestion, then transferences of enunciation build capacities for new organisations and alliances where collective work can be undertaken that involves mixtures of participants with the courage to cast off their blindness (separation, reification, extraction, idealization, etc.). Transference, as Freud stated, involves love. Love of the relationship in research is, as militant researchers remind us, not intellectual, not objectifying, not capitalistic, but rather consists of intensities with which a new collective bond is composed.⁷ This is the future road of anthropology that Glowczewski advances along directed by the signposts planted by Guattari among others.

6 Guattari, *The Guattari Reader*, p. 63.

7 Cp. Colectivo Situaciones, “On the Researcher-Militant”, September 2003, p. 7. Available at: <http://www.situaciones.org/> [accessed September 2003].