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Machinic Untimeliness II: Writing Assemblages, Ontologies and Techno-Politics

Inatualidade maquínica II:

Assemblages de escrita, ontologias e tecnopolítica

Inactualidad maquínica II:

Agenciamientos escriturales, ontologías y tecnopolítica

Sara Baranzoni  ^[a]^[b]

^[a] Roma, Italia | ^[b] Guaiquil, Equador

^[a] Pontificia Università Antonianum | ^[b] Universidad de las Artes

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Abstract

The paper “*Machinic Untimeliness II. Writing Assemblages, Ontologies and Techno-Politics*” aims to unfold some functions of the concept of machine in Guattari, with particular attention to the operation of constant transformation of its conceptual layers in the period comprised between *Anti-Oedipus* and *A Thousand Plateaus* and in the Nineties. Starting from the birth of the abstract machine, it will follow its becomings and the several machinations to which it is subjected. In doing this, the paper specifically focuses on 1) the singular philosophical operation (and writing experience) undertaken by Guattari;

^[a]^[b] Doutora no Estudo de Cinema e Artes pela Universidade de Bologna (Itália), e-mail: sarabar@gmail.com

2) the politicization of the concept of machine, which also requires a sort of ontologization; and 3) the technological bifurcation of the same concept in the last formulations of the author. While presenting itself as an independent paper, it is also the second part of a more general work on the conceptual, ontological, techno-logical and political ecological status of Guattarian machines. The first part, "Machinic Untimeliness I. Machine Becomings and Conceptual Machinations", is presented jointly with this article, which is not a simple linear continuation of the previous one, but a perspectival integration, which is made of echoes and refrains, and which in some way claims to further machinate the genealogy of the concept.

Keywords: Abstract Machine. Machination. Machinic Ontology. Concrete Machine. Technical Machine.

Resumo

O artigo "Inatualidade Maquinica II. Assemblages de escrita, ontologias e tecno-política" tem como objetivo desdobrar algumas funções do conceito de máquina em Guattari, com atenção especial para a operação de transformação constante de suas camadas conceituais no período compreendido entre o Anti-Édipo e os Mil Platôs e nos Anos noventa. A partir do nascimento da máquina abstrata, ela acompanhará seus devires e as diversas maquinações a que está sujeita. Ao fazer isso, o artigo enfoca especificamente: 1) a singular operação filosófica (e experiência de escrita) empreendida por Guattari; 2) a politização do conceito de máquina, que também requer uma espécie de ontologização; e 3) a bifurcação tecnológica do mesmo conceito nas últimas formulações do autor. Embora se apresente como um artigo independente, é também a segunda parte de um trabalho mais geral sobre o estatuto ecológico conceitual, ontológico, tecnológico e político das máquinas guattarianas. A primeira parte, "Inatualidade maquinica I. Devires da máquina e maquinações conceituais", é apresentada conjuntamente com este artigo, que não é uma simples continuação linear do anterior, mas uma integração perspectiva, que se faz de ecos e refrões, e que de alguma forma pretende maquinar ainda mais a genealogia do conceito.

Palavras-chave: Máquina abstrata. Maquinação. Ontologia Maquinica. Máquina Concreta. Máquina Técnica.

Resumen

El trabajo "Inactualidad maquinica II: Ensamblajes escriturales, ontologías y tecno-política" tiene como objetivo desplegar algunas funciones del concepto de máquina en Guattari, con particular atención a la operación de constante transformación de sus capas conceptuales en el período comprendido entre el Anti-Edipo y Mil Mesetas y en los noventa. A partir del nacimiento de la máquina abstracta, seguirá sus devenires y las diversas maquinaciones a las que está sujeta. Al hacer esto, el artículo se enfoca específicamente en 1) la singular operación filosófica (y experiencia de escritura) emprendida por Guattari; 2) la politización del concepto de máquina, que también requiere una suerte de ontologización; y 3) la bifurcación tecnológica del mismo concepto en las últimas formulaciones del autor. Si bien

se presenta como un artículo independiente, también es la segunda parte de un trabajo más general sobre el estado ecológico conceptual, ontológico, tecnológico y político de las máquinas guattarianas. La primera parte, "Inactualidad maquínica I: Devenires de la máquina y maquinaciones conceptuales", se presenta conjuntamente con este artículo, que no es una simple continuación lineal del anterior, sino una integración perspectiva, que está hecha de ecos y estribillos, y que de alguna manera pretende maquinar aún más la genealogía del concepto.

Palabras clave: Máquina abstracta. Maquinaria. Ontología de la máquina. Máquina concreta. Máquina técnica.

Introduction

When Guattari met Deleuze in 1969, he almost immediately acknowledged his own discomfort with the theoretical enterprise in which direction Deleuze seemed to push, mostly because – he confessed – he had never worked before on theory in a sustained way (Dosse, 2010, p. 5). But this should not reinforce the widespread theory that the encounter with Deleuze had the only effect of conceptually enriching Guattari's chaotic thoughts: conversely, we could rather see Guattari's machination as the ability of repetition by differentiating some components of Deleuze's conceptualization into the strategic features constitutive of their polyphonic theoretical elaboration¹. Indeed, among the *souvenirs* that Deleuze had after their first meeting, there is the fact that some of Guattari's ideas “with which he was not yet sufficiently familiar” (but which he will soon profusely adopt – that is, the machine) would have had the power of affecting the relationship between social structure and unconscious (see Dosse, 2010, p. 6). In turn, Guattari recalls “their exchanges of different versions of their texts” (p. 9). It is precisely on this last point that we would like to begin our focus on *machines*: indeed, this encounter produced a kind of “work machine” for writing thanks to which Guattari was almost caught in an obsession that pushed him to constantly rewrite, reformulate, and resend his own notes, and further, his own texts. As we will notice, this is indeed Guattari's philosophical operation: to constitute collective assemblages of enunciation and bifurcations allowed by new urgencies, contingent necessities, and effective experimentations. A practice that will thus establish the *machine* not only as the metonymy of industrial society or its *abstraction* as the assemblage of heterogeneous parts that are able to transform forces, aggregate elements, and make them work in a particular way, but also as a strategic political tool for analyzing the dynamics and expressions of power at stake, and which finally allows us to come back to its technical dimension precisely thanks to this political analysis. At the same time, we shouldn't be tempted to find any *telos* under this path: the continuous state of variation of Guattari's writing has not an end in itself, but responds to an ethico-political attention to existential mutations brought by different contexts, thus becoming a sort of *alteraction* – that is, a continuous practice of active alteration always attentive to the multiple symptoms that the state of things expresses (Alliez; Querrien, 2008). In this sense, the aim of this text is neither that of conceptually explaining the functioning of machines, nor that of interpreting the several occurrences of the term in Guattari's writings (operation that would end in blocking their movement and reinstalling a structural order), but rather that of *unfolding* some key-points of its genealogy which are linked with precise functions that could be able to shed lights on Guattari's operations. Specifically, we'll concentrate on the period that is comprised *between* the conception and publication of *Anti-Oedipus* (Deleuze; Guattari, 1983) and *A Thousand Plateaus* (Deleuze; Guattari, 1987), when Guattari repeatedly rethinks and rewrites his own intuitions, and on the Nineties, when Guattari recovers several of his ancient formulation and reshapes them in the light of his own “ecological turn,” after the general crisis of the previous decade. All this to show the

¹ Nevertheless, it is important to clarify that in this essay we don't want to take part in the endless debate about whether it is worth establishing which of the two authors (Deleuze and Guattari) has said, thought or written what, nor we want to affirm that talking about assemblages is enough to work around this “problem”. Indeed, what is at stake here is the machine itself, whose only “law” is the general conjunction or movement of processes of deterritorialization, and the repetition that pluralizes and opens it to multiplicity.

heterogenetic character of the concept of machine, which is born and developed in relation with other concepts, political circumstances, affects – in sum, it is merged into complexity.

The Molecular Revolution of Abstract Machines

As it is well-known, *Molecular revolution* has been published in French (as *la Révolution moléculaire*) in several versions, the first one in 1977 being immediately followed by a second (1980) with different contents: as Stephane Nadaud (2012, p. 5) argues in his preface, this is possibly because “Guattari’s thought has the astonishing characteristic of being constantly in motion, of fleeing from everywhere, and of never remaining in a specific place, or just having time to rest a little before leaving again”. Indeed, the years following the first edition were very busy, thanks in particular to the new-born Italian political movement which Guattari joined almost immediately, so that the echoes of this militancy could not pass unperceived in the second edition, which can be thought as a *machination* of the first (indeed, almost all the texts already present in the first edition have been rewritten by Guattari). There is then a third one, edited in 2012 (hence, not by Guattari himself as with the previous two) and composed with the aim of making even more explicit the complex assemblage of enunciation that Guattari’s writing experience expresses². Moreover, continues Nadaud quoting Guattari, “there are two methods of receiving theoretical statements: the academic’s way is to take, or leave, the text as it stands, whereas the enthusiast’s way is to take it *and* leave it, manipulating it as he sees fit, trying to use it to throw light on his circumstances and direct his life” (p. 10)³. If the third version of *Molecular Revolution* definitely bets on the second method, the same that seems to have been adopted for the English translation⁴, we can also state that this plainly corresponds to Guattari’s own treatment, which is not to be confused with a case of multiple auto-plagiarism, but which consists indeed into a deep and continuous machination – sometimes metamorphosized, other times in becoming with his actuality – of his own thought.

In this sense, and coming back to the genesis of the machine as a concept, at that time Guattari expresses a series of terminological doubts about it. If after *Anti-Oedipus* the “desiring machine” had already begun to be put into brackets in favor of the assemblage, from the 1973 conference “L’an 01 des machines abstraites” (Guattari, 1994⁵) we can grasp some insight of the shift that will bring to the fore this last notion (that is, the abstract machine, which is still absent in *Anti-Oedipus* but will get center stage in *A Thousand Plateaus*). In particular, while trying to insist in his talk on a “politics of experimentation” (or schizoanalysis), Guattari mentions the necessity of both starting from multiple centers as strata of polyvocal

² As Nadaud (2012, p. 9) explains, this operation has been made trying to avoid any opacity on the editor’s choices and giving all possible philological information, so that the readers can be aware of the decision taken and free to make their own deepening – that is, *de jouer a ce jeu*.

³ The quote is from Guattari’s “La fin des fétichismes” (available on the same book – Guattari, 2012, p. 25), while the English translation is taken from “Molecular Revolution and Class Struggle” (Guattari, 1984, p. 254) since the nearest text, “Everybody Wants to be a Fascist” (published in Guattari, 2008, p. 154-175) does not coincide entirely with the original. About this translation issue, see also Genosko (2017).

⁴ Indeed, *Molecular Revolution* (Guattari, 1984) is not precisely the English translation of *La Révolution Moléculaire*, but a collection of essays taken from *Psychanalyse et transversalité* and the two then existing editions of *La Révolution Moléculaire*.

⁵ This publication is the transcription (freely translated into French) of the recording of the talk given by Félix Guattari at the Columbia University Summer Seminar organized by Sylvère Lotringer in Paris, in July 1973.

expressions that can be found outside of signifying semiotics, and avoiding or at least countereffecting the paranoid reterritorializations that force the polyvocality to adhere to the dominant significations in order to make sense of them. Instead, by accepting a radical polycentrism, a complex work of deterritorialization of fluxes is put in place among what he calls “*les machines de signes*” [sign machines] – and it is to understand how all this is realized that he needed to introduce a different notion of machine, which is neither machine of signs nor machine of material flow: here comes the “abstract machine” (Guattari, 1994, p. 9-10). But Guattari hastens to add that the term is not satisfactory: “*j’en fais très vite cadeau si on m’en donne un autre*”⁶ (p. 10). It is because a specific term is needed, if not “*c’est forcément le Bon Dieu*” [it is necessarily the Good Lord] that will account for what is happening. This is to say that if we have no adequate name to denote the necessary mediation for the operation of connecting material and semiotic systems to transform reality – and thus we do not recur to abstract machines – then we are falling back again into the three paralogisms: “that of the soul with the God of representations, that of the signifier with a machine to produce significations, and above all that of the real” (p. 11). Conversely, with abstract machines there is no cut between representation and production, but still, they are not sufficient: it remains to link them to the processes of deterritorialization that characterize them. Hence, the function of the abstract machine is centered here on a double work of deterritorialization: one that acts on sign machines and the other, which is correlative, on real fluxes (real machines).

But why these machines are *abstract*? Even on this, Guattari seems to show some hesitation. In *The Machinic Unconscious* (published some years later, in 1979), Guattari specifies that one should not confuse them with something that is “simply carrying abstraction” (Guattari, 2011, p. 12). Rather, abstracts machines “convey singularity points ‘extracted’ from the cosmos and history”, to the point that they should perhaps be better named “machinic extracts” or deterritorialized and deterritorializing machines (*ibid.*). So the focus seems to be put once again on the processes of deterritorialization. Yet, as Guattari preserves the expression “abstract machines” despite its ambiguity, it also becomes clear that his target is the very idea of abstract universals, which he wants to confront and, let’s say, “deconstruct” as such. If, as he argues, any abstraction “can only result from machines and assemblages of concrete enunciations”, and since there is no general assemblage that overhangs universals, each time we found one of them it will be necessary “to determine the particular nature of its enunciative assemblage and analyze the operations of power that lead it to lay claim to such a universality” (*ibid.*, slightly modified). In other words, the politic conveyed by abstract machines consists in observing social formations and material assemblages in order to extract (abstract) some of the semiotic components and of the machines “from the cosmic and human history that offers them”, as well as “the assemblages that constitute the nucleus of their enunciation” (p. 14). But even this time we should not get confused: Guattari is not trying to reintroduce a kind of meta-language or enunciation of the enunciation. He rather wants to point out the general movement of deterritorialization as something that precedes any stratification, and by this, to affirm that abstract machines do not work as coding systems applied to the existing stratifications but constitute a sort of “*transformational matter* [...] composed of the crystals of the possible which catalyze connections, destratifications, and reterritorializations both in the living and inanimate world.”

⁶ This could be (re)translated as “I would quickly make a present (meaning get rid) of it if someone gives me another”.

(p. 16). Then in this case, Guattari asks, how is it possible to say anything about them?⁷ Here is where the “machinic propositions” presented in the first version of *Molecular Revolution* appear (they will disappear in the second version and will reappear in the third one).

Since recapitulating the very precise classification of the machinic propositions as presented by Guattari in his homonymous essay (1984, p. 144-153) would not be in line with the aims of the present text, let's just follow him in stating that they cannot be reduced either to logical or mathematical articulations or to stratified phenomenological manifestations (p. 146). Indeed, what Guattari is looking for to explain the functioning of machines is not a kind of machinic logic, but a “science of *machinics*” – that is, a system of arranging machinic propositions which only needs to grasp the way phyla and rhizomes function (p. 147).

If in 1975 this functioning was already present and brilliantly analyzed in *Kafka. Toward a Minor Literature* (Deleuze; Guattari, 1986), there the major concept at stake was nevertheless the assemblage, which expressed the *concrete* counterpart of the abstract machine: this does not mean that the former is what gives a real existence to the latter, but “it's almost the reverse” (p. 86). At the same time, Guattari was already running forward and thinking to another concept to adjust the processes of deterritorialization to the stratification conveyed by the “Machinic Propositions”. So “Concrete Machines” is the following essay in *Molecular Revolution* (Guattari, 1984, p. 154-162), where they are described as “machines of the kind that actualize the intensities”, and that associate redundancies of representation and diagrammatic redundancies⁸ (p. 154).

As Guattari states, the study of concrete machines is very important as “they should make it far harder for us to try to describe history in terms of significations, above all of significations similar in nature to a particular level of a major power formation” (p. 159) – something that puts into question the whole genealogical perspective as a linear ontology. Indeed, he continues, it is probably impossible to define any genealogy without reference to the concrete machines that came into being escaping molar relationships of forces, that is, without considering the singularities that create links and transversalities, that metabolize the signification of their period infiltrating perception, sensitivity, memory, and other faculties in such a way to cause the socius to crystallize things in *that way*. The genealogical question becomes thus *what concrete machine has led to...?* Nevertheless, and despite of this powerful suggestion, the concept almost disappears in *A Thousand Plateaus*. If it is still traceable in *Machinic Unconscious*, it is so only thanks to a sort of hybridization with (or return to) concrete assemblages of enunciation, so that the abstract machine progressively comes to correspond to the plane of consistency and the concrete one to the phylum (see Guattari, 2011, p. 193). And so that we could legitimately ask *what concrete machine has led to this transformation?*

⁷ “If it is true that abstract machines arise neither from the subject-object phenomenological couple, nor the set-subset logical couple, and consequently escape from the semiological triangle denotation-representation-signification, then how do we conceive the possibility of saying anything about them? What will become of representation when there is no longer a subject to record it?” (Guattari, 2011, p. 16).

⁸ Just to make this more tangible, it is important to note that one of the main examples of concrete machine cited by Guattari are the faciality traits.

Machinic Ontology and Militant Practice

In “On machines”, the text of a conference given in Valence in 1990, Guattari decides to rethink the statute of the machine, because this theme, as he declares at the very beginning, concerned him for a long time and he is “repeatedly led back” to it thanks to his peculiar “form of thought which proceeds by affective axes and by affects, rather than a thought process which claims to give a scientific, axiomatic description” of it (Guattari, 1995a, p. 8).

Indeed, after *A Thousand Plateaus* and during the Eighties, Guattari’s discourse about the machine undertakes a slight change in line with the need of deconstructing the dominant narratives where “the machine is treated as anathema, and where there prevails the idea that technology is leading us to a situation of inhumanity and of rupture with any kind of ethical project” (Guattari, 1995a, p. 8). In his previous formulations machines didn’t depend on *techne* and therefore they were not to be confused with technical objects, but at the same time they fled any univocal definition: yet according to Guattari in face of the subsequent epistemological and political disorientation we need to reconceptualize them beginning from their *being*, as that which is at the crossroads of the being in its inertia and its character of nothingness, and of the subject, as subjective individuation or collective subjectivity (*ibid*). Again: *what concrete machine has led to this transformation?*

We left Guattari in the Seventies with a very different conception of the machine – as he and Deleuze explain in their *Kafka*, “a machine is never simply technical”. Indeed, “it is technical only as a social machine, taking men and women into its gears, or, rather, having men and women as part of its gears along with things, structures, metals, materials”, and it “is not social unless it breaks into all its connective elements, which in turn become machines” (Deleuze; Guattari, 1986, p. 81). And still, in the same fashion but some year before, both authors wrote in the “Balance-Sheet for ‘Desiring Machines’” (Deleuze; Guattari, 2009, p. 90-115) that “[t]he object is no longer to compare humans and the machine in order to evaluate the correspondences, the extensions, the possible or impossible substitutions of the ones for the other, but to bring them into communication in order to show how *humans are a component part of the machine*, or combine with something else to constitute a machine” (p. 91). And this is not at all a metaphor, they affirm: *human constitute a machine* to the extent that they are part of an ensemble that works under specific conditions. At the same time, the human-machine relation is not a question of adaptation, extension or substitution, but of the constitution of a system which has nothing to do with a mechanical lineage that begins with a tool, even when a tool is involved⁹: indeed, both the human *and* the tool are or can become components of a machine (p. 92-93) that acts as an “engineering agency” *machinating* them (p. 110). It is in this sense, then, that the “Balance-sheet” already contains the seeds that make possible for Guattari to interrogate the technical machine through the inaugural question about which social machine (or, in line with this epoch, which *desiring* machine) makes the emergence of technical one both possible and necessary (p. 111).

However, leaping back to the Nineties, we already foresaw that Guattari’s new programmatic goal is developing a machinic ontology that, in words of Pierre Lévy (1990), should aim to “break down the ontological iron curtain between being and things”. What is

⁹ Indeed, in this same text they posit a difference in nature between tools and machines, even if the same thing can be either a tool or a machine depending on the behavior of its “machinic phylum” (see Deleuze; Guattari, 2009, p. 92-93).

interesting in this effort, is that, instead of coming back to an animist conception of the machine, Guattari proposes the idea that the machine owns a kind of “proto-subjectivity” by which it can develop open and constantly in-becoming ontogenetic elements through its relationship with itself and with alterities. In order to develop this machinic ontology, Guattari borrows the concept of autopoiesis as determined by Maturana and Varela, even though he complexifies it precisely with the aim of accounting for the constitutive relations that the machine maintains with its alterities and its environment. This means that whilst recovering the perspective of Varela, for whom autopoiesis only concerns living beings as self-productive machines that are continually reproducing their component parts, Guattari focuses on an intrinsic limit of autopoiesis itself: that is, the fact that Varela establishes an opposition between biological and social or artificial beings, as for him social systems and technical machines are allopoietic beings that need to search for their components outside of themselves. According to Guattari, instead, there is no need to contrast autopoiesis with allopoiesis, since “allopoietic machines are always to be found adjacent to autopoietic ones”, and for this “we should therefore attempt to take into account the *agencements* which make them live together” (Guattari, 1995, p. 9). It is in this sense that “the essence of the machine is linked to procedures which deterritorialize its elements, functions and relations of alterity” (*ibid*). This would be a kind of different repetition of the *Anti-Oedipus* claim that machines “can operate only by fits and starts, by grinding and breaking down, in spasms of minor explosions” (Deleuze; Guattari, 1983, p. 151). Now the machine itself develops *universes of reference*, or “ontological heterogeneous universes”. Indeed, alongside this ontogenetic element, Guattari doesn’t forget to mention the phylogenetic one, by which technical machines are caught in a phylum that opens “the virtuality of other machines to come” (Guattari, 1995, p. 9) and connects them through elements that constitute the filiation of all the machinic production of the future. In this sense, the combination of ontogenesis and phylogenesis allows the making of a link between technical and non-technical machinic systems, where the technical is nevertheless to be intended as a “subsidiary part” of a more general machinic problematic, and it is to be broadened thanks to the concept of machinic assemblage (which encompasses everything that develops as a machine in its different registers and ontological supports). It is as such that the concept of machine acquires an ontological plurality: “rather than having a *being* as a common trait which would inhabit the whole of machinic, social, human and cosmic beings, we have, instead, a machine that develops *universes of reference* – ontological heterogeneous universes, which are marked by historic turning points, a factor of irreversibility and singularity” (Guattari, 1995, p. 9). This means that a machine is not just “a game of interactions” between its components which develops in an existing disposition of space and time: rather, its “core” is prior to spatio-temporal and energetic coordinates, and it is in this sense that it can be qualified as proto-subjective and able to unfold its own spatio-temporal-energetic coordinates. Yet as such, it also has its own elements of finitude, which can make it explode, implode, or be destroyed. As Guattari (1991) states: “I wanted to forge a conceptual entity that responds not only to the self-regulation relationships of the structure of the system, but that also accounts for those that it develops with the outside. Cause the machine is always in dialogue with an otherness: in its technological and human environment, but also for its phylogenetic links with previous and future machines”. And continues: “In addition to otherness, the machine also establishes finitude: it is born, gets heatstroke, breaks, dies. For this reason, we widened the concept of machine, beyond technical machines,

biological, social, urban machines, megamachines, linguistic, theoretical, and even desiring machines. This concept therefore plans the possibility for the machine to abolish itself”.

This last point allows us to avoid any tendency to the universalization of the concept and to remember that at the end, the very concept of machine is always and foremost a *tool*. A tool that should first *work*, rather than pretending to lay foundations. This is also the reason why the concept of machine has changed and needs to keep changing accordingly to the problems and questions (or the universes of reference) that emerge instead of pretending to gain an axiomatic homogeneity. “Si l’on m’objecte : Vous ne dites pas la même chose qu’il y a dix ans, je réponds : Tant pis, ou même tant mieux ! C’est peut-être bon signe !”¹⁰ (Guattari, 2009a, p. 169-170). And as a tool always connected to social fields and formations, the machine is not just something that becomes embodied in different machinic systems, but it can also produce infinitely complex compositions that are able to lead to new social orders. Indeed, already from *Molecular Revolution* we can extract some signs of this productive tendency, precisely when, analyzing the formation and functioning of “The Micro-Politics of Fascism” (Guattari, 1984, p. 217-232), Guattari affirms that instead of structuring what exists into separate domains, we should rather become able to set up “new theoretical and practical machines capable of sweeping away earlier stratifications and creating the conditions necessary for desire to function in a new way” (p. 218).

If this political aspect of the machine has always coexisted with the semiotic one, it is probably its entanglement with the question of the capitalistic treatment of work and workers (as an assemblage of organs and machines) and of the critique of mass movements that are run from the center (which formerly produced the concept of desiring machine) that leads Guattari to the recovery of the technical layer of the machine. To explain it better: unlike fascist ones, capitalist totalitarian machines tend to molecularize, privatize, and divide the worker’s desire energy to regulate it with the support of automatic control systems (Guattari, 1984, p. 227). At the same time, as industrial societies operate from semiotic machines decoding all realities and territorialities, and as technical machines are more and more deterritorialized, Capitalism becomes able to construct and impose models of desire, molding “the right kind of producing-consuming individual” (p. 228) through different forms of “machinic enslavement” [*asservissement machinique*]. At this point, one might be tempted to binarize: on the one hand, a desiring machine which is that of openness, of the collective and of multiplicity, and on the other hand, a technical machine which is that of the structure, of the alienation and the enslavement of human organs. Instead, we should rather consider that the capitalistic exploitation is not limited to humans, but it firstly applies to machinic assemblages – of which humans and their faculties have become part. In this sense, the technical machines should be never analyzed separately as such, but as part of a complex set of socio-technical mutations that Capital diagrammatizes and reterritorializes on dominating formations of power. And this is precisely the statement that orients Guattari’s militant practice, which, after his encounter with Deleuze, will always call also for a theoretical development. At the same time, it is also the germ that will lead the technical machine to be protagonist of Guattari’s last production – technical machine that will be considered not just as an instrument of the capitalistic one, but always within an assemblage able to convey those “molecular revolutions”

¹⁰ “If I am objected: You are not saying the same thing as ten years ago, I answer: So much the worse, or even so much the better! That might be a good sign!” (my translation).

that, as systems of almost invisible mutations, deeply modify our relationships with things and reality, opening in their turn to the construction of “new war machines” which can *bifurcate* creating new types of social praxis (Guattari, 2009a, p. 176).

Closing Remarks. Symptomatological Untimeliness and the Theoretical Concrete Machine

This last sense, that is, the possibility of conceiving of the machine both as something able to empower and weaken processualities (which does not attribute to the machine any moral value) makes us affirm that Guattari adds to this ontologizing operation a dimension that today, following Bernard Stiegler's thought (see 2013), we could call *pharmacological*. Indeed, the machine as mechanism of coupling of assemblages could not hold any predetermined value, but it works as a catalyst of forces that regulate the way in which things are or not kept together. The focus on this aspect, which is at the core of the idea of *mechanosphere* and that fully characterizes (even if not always explicitly) Guattari's very last production, is probably also the one that succeeded in convincing Deleuze to bet on this notion¹¹, as in this way any psychological or semiological reframing or coding of its meaning is totally bypassed. However, in Guattari this potential becomes particularly strategic, in the sense that, instead of insisting on a dystopic and alarming critique of technological transformations as something that should be unconditionally fought, he always makes the effort to conceive of them in their political, aesthetic, and existential ambivalence. So, if according to Stiegler's pharmacological perspective technologies must be studied and analyzed with the aim of transforming their becoming¹² – in Guattarian terms, of machining it – to generate the remedy that they as such contain, the same dynamic becomes evident in Guattari's *Chaosmosis* (1995b) when he states that, whilst it is important to consider the machinic dimensions of the subjectivation processes, it is also mandatory to be aware of how technological transformations act on it through “both universalising and reductionist homogenisations of subjectivity and [...] a heterogenetic tendency, that is to say, of a reinforcement of the heterogeneity and singularisation of its components” (p. 5). Guattari not only exposed the capitalist drive as responsible of the planetary destruction of social assemblages, collective identities, and value systems, which it tried to replace through individualizing identifications and authoritarian schemes imposed with the collaboration of the prodigious development of communicative and computer machines capable of focusing their modulating effects directly on the most vital aspects of human beings, namely, memory, perception, understanding, and imagination: Guattari also advocated a real and fruitful symbiosis of the human with the machine, which is capable of developing its proper subjectivation processes and proceeding toward the production of these so necessary new subjectivities. However, we should not mistake these statements for a techno-enthusiastic

¹¹ See for instance his *Dialogues* (Deleuze; Parnet, 1987), published in France in the same year (1977) of the first version of *Molecular Revoultion*, where throughout the conversation with Claire Parnet Deleuze largely makes use of this term, even if always attributing its paternity to Guattari.

¹² Note that in Stiegler's thought the term 'becoming' has not at all the same emancipatory meaning that it has in Deleuze and Guattari's works. On the contrary, 'becoming' [*devenir*] is for Stiegler the almost incessant auto-reproduction of something without any scope or intentionality, and whose *différance* is 'future' [*avenir*] as the opening of a dimension of right, care, and recuperation of values which allows the possibility of a 'tomorrow'. See Stiegler (2018 and 2019).

approach to the machine, which for Guattari is never the easy solution for all kind of problems. Instead, what he calls for is a clear consciousness of both the heterogenetic and pathological aspects that the machinic interdependence entails.

In this sense, it is also important to recall that already in 1985 Guattari observed that the failure of a certain idea of progress and modernity was bringing with it a collective mistrust in the possibility of inventing emancipatory social practices: moreover, Guattari underlined how the consequent glaciation of social relations, conveyed by the symptomatic expression of the “Winter Years” (see Guattari 2009a), was generally accepted as an inevitable evil, as well as the sclerotization of political visions, anchored in the cynicism of the ideological neoliberal refrain for which “there is no alternative”. And yet, faced with the movement of political implosion and general regressive infantilization that characterized the winter years and to which the media system undoubtedly contributed, Guattari decided to believe in the possibility that media could overcome centralism and top-down dynamics. His own form of criticizing media technologies from an immanent point of view became thus the will to impulse new practices, that is, “rhizomatic” forms of “post-media enunciation” capable to act as specific processes of subjectivation and to constitute a possibility of subversion precisely within these new practices.

More generally, it should be said that a certain capacity for anticipation, in the Nietzschean sense of the untimely, seems to accompany Guattari’s diagnoses throughout his career. In fact, Guattari already developed the idea of the post-media in the late Seventies – that is, in the middle of the media era – as effect of the free radio phenomenon. The radio stations loved by Guattari (above all Radio Alice in Bologna and Radio Tomate in Paris, of which he was one of the creators) represent the most powerful sign of the possibility of developing emancipatory social practices in pursuit of a molecular revolution that goes through the realization of new forms of sensitivity and sociality, by tracing unknown existential territories (Guattari, 2009b). And from Guattari’s point of view, the violent repression suffered by Radio Alice in 1977 was precisely a symptom of the strategic importance of information and communication technologies in political struggles, as key to the production of militant, critical and antagonistic subjectivity.

To conclude: what we have analyzed until this point is a philosophical operation that consist in a complex grouping of independent and heterogeneous terms, which are produced and reinvented through times and events, encounters and writings, and which thus inaugurate a conceptual production which acquires the functionality of the machine itself. In this sense, as David Cooper affirms in his introduction for *Molecular Revolution* (Guattari, 1984, p. 1-4), Guattari’s writings are not at all “anti-theoretical”, as some consider, but represent “a new type of theoretical activity that would avoid the simplifying reduction to containing structures such as the dyadic and triadic situations of psychoanalysis [...] or of C. S. Peirce’s relational logic” (p. 2). Indeed, he finds his own rigor in the affirmation that “theory has an essentially creative function, like art”, and it should aim to a kind of polyphony similar to what happens in music, so that “his [Guattari’s] totally explicit aim is to destructure a consciousness and a rationality over-sure of itself and thus too easy prey to subtle, and not so subtle, dogmatisms” (p. 3). A similar argument can be found in Deleuze’s Preface to the English edition of *Dialogues* (Deleuze; Parnet, 1987, p. VII-X) when Deleuze explains what it mean to write “between”: between other books that have been written, between somebody and someone else, between the lines and the points that “functioned simply as temporary, transitory and evanescent points of

subjectivation”, to the extent that “what mattered was [...] the collection of bifurcating, divergent and muddled lines” which constitute the book (or in Guattari’s case, the conceptualization) “as a multiplicity and which passed between the points, carrying them along without ever going from the one to the other” (p. IX). So even if sometimes elements such as “focuses of unification, centres of totalization, points of subjectivation” (p. VIII) appear, it is what is “between” these elements, “the between”, that matters. At that time, the *Rhizome* had already appeared¹³, and *Dialogues*, as well as *Molecular Revolution*, was written precisely *in between*: between the two main books co-authored by Deleuze and Guattari (*Anti-Oedipus* and *A Thousand Plateaus*), between Deleuze and Guattari themselves¹⁴, between the revolutionary spirit of ’68 and the freezing “winter years” of the 80s, and thus collecting “bifurcating, divergent and muddled lines” that made the previous points grow – another figure of machination.

In some sense, we might trace another *between*, by affirming that *Dialogues* theoretically describes what its coetaneous *Molecular Revolution* does in practice. We may list as effects the conceptual invention as writing machine, the inquiry for the conditions under which something is produced, the valorization of multiplicities, and the tracing of several lines. In Guattarian terms, “the problem therefore is not to put up bridges between already fully constituted and fully delimited domains, but to put in place new theoretical and practical machines, capable of sweeping away the old stratifications, and of establishing the conditions for a new exercise of desire.” (Guattari, 2008, p. 156). So, it doesn’t matter to him if his jargon appears to be too complicated or exoteric: he claims his own effort to invent a language and terms worthy of the questions that need to be addressed each time, a kind of “minor language” able to connect with specific problems and to produce singular effects (Guattari, 2009a, p. 165). And the most suitable effect of a language is never of the order of comprehension, but of efficiency: either it works, or it doesn’t. As such, a theoretical expression should thus function as a tool, as a machine, without any superimposed reference, but it should be always open to all domains. It is here, thus, that we might resume the interrupted destiny of the *concrete machine*: inasmuch as this machine is capable not just of integrating, but of articulating the singularities of each considered field with heterogeneous components, it will deploy its power of deterritorialization towards the highest charges of transversality (p. 168). All this always with the performative aim of transforming the given reality, and with the consciousness that this can’t be done without making the political effort of changing the coordinates of its sense worlds.

¹³ *Rhizome* is here taken in both senses of the concept itself and the title of the first chapter of *A Thousand Plateaus* (first published independently as an essay in 1976), since the two are to be considered – among other potential senses – as a possibility to rethink the book-form and writing in general. On this, see also Baranzoni; Vignola, 2017.

¹⁴ Important considerations on the four-handed work *between* Guattari and Deleuze has been made by François Dosse in the Introduction to his *Intersecting Lives* (2010). It has to be said that the aim of this paper is not at all to define “who” is speaking (or writing) in each moment, but the complex machination that intervenes continuously – once again – *between* them.

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