

“Our quarrel can be formulated in a number of ways. We could approach it by way of some novel questions such as, for example: how is it that, for Deleuze, politics is not an autonomous form of thought, a singular section of chaos, one that differs from art, science and philosophy? This point alone bears witness to our divergence, and there is a sense in which everything can be said to follow from it.” –Alain Badiou

“Freedom, and by the way, what Freedom? ‘Subject-group,’ Freedom as Subject. Deleuze and Guattari don’t hide this much: return to Kant, here’s what they came up with to exorcise the Hegelian ghost.” –Alain Badiou

“It definitely makes sense to look at the various ways individuals and groups constitute themselves as subjects through processes of subject-ification: what counts in such processes is the extent to which, as they take shape, they elude both established forms of knowledge and the dominant forms of power. Even if they in turn engender new forms of power or become assimilated into new forms of knowledge. For a while, though, they have a real rebellious spontaneity. This is nothing to do with going back to ‘the subject,’ that is, to something invested with duties, power, and knowledge. One might equally well speak of new kinds of event, rather than processes of subjectification: events that can’t be explained by the situations that give rise to them, or into which they lead.” –Gilles Deleuze

With *Being and Event* recently translated, Alain Badiou has now enjoyed over a decade of philosophical clamor in English. His contentions with Deleuze over multiplicity, ontology, truth and the event (among other things) have already sparked numerous responses in various forms. The continued explosion of material onto the academic scene comparing these thinkers could be due to Badiou’s energetic polemical nature and the fact that he continues to produce boldly precise criticisms of Deleuze. One of those criticisms involves pointing out that Deleuze does not consider politics to be an autonomous form of thought. For Badiou, this exemplifies the reasons for their divergence and everything can be said to follow. This paper is an attempt to answer this provocative thought with a conjunctive analysis of the various political concepts that we find in these thinkers in order to imagine how the situation might proceed otherwise than divergence. The problem concerns a different current of thought that creates a space of affirmation for the coexistence and hybridization of the assemblages that populate the theoretical worlds of Badiou and Deleuze-Guattari.

Fidelity and Nomadic Thought

Jumping straight to the heart of *Being and Event* we find in Meditation 23 the introduction to the concept of fidelity. I say concept, but we find within the notion of fidelity a complex network enveloping not only the event and the subject, but also the State and possible counter-states involved with an *other* legitimate count. The most straightforward definition of fidelity begins the meditation: “I call *fidelity* the set of procedures which discern, within a situation, those multiples whose existence depends upon the introduction into circulation (under the supernumerary name conferred by an intervention) of an eventual multiple” (232). Therefore, fidelity is three things: (1) a functional relation to the event, (2) an operation of the count-as-one of the regulated effects of an event by marking multiples as to their (non)-inclusion the groupings of multiples related to the event, and (3) a process that includes these group-multiples in the situation by operating on the terrain of the state of the situation, effectuating another count that legitimates a new space of political representation (233).

A process of fidelity must always make enquiries into situations because of its finite nature with respect to the infinity of situations themselves. An enquiry is a term that Badiou gives to any “*finite* series of atoms of connection for a fidelity” (234). Fidelity requires faithfulness “to the event that we are” because it is “an almost-nothing of the state, or...a quasi-everything of the situation” (235). Here Badiou highlights the statist aspect of fidelity clearly: fidelity, as another count, oscillates between a break with the old state of affairs in which presented multiples are unrepresented, to the establishment of a new, *legitimate* count in which hitherto excluded multiples can be said to be included and represented. These two moves are coextensive, but there

are two negative forms in which fidelity can present itself, and philosophy must safeguard itself from falling into these traps.

The two illegitimate claims of fidelity can be reduced to a statist or spontaneist thesis on the one hand and the dogmatic thesis on the other. On the side of the former, a multiple is said to be connected to the event only under the condition that it belongs to it. Badiou equates this with the view that “the only ones who can take part in an event are those who made it such” (237). On the other hand, a dogmatic fidelity would claim to be coextensive with the presentation of the situation: this amounts to positing that “every multiple depends on the event” (237). Either a limited number of representatives *belong* according to the statist thesis, or a maximum number of presented multiples are in fact represented in the guise of the state of the situation’s goal to make sure all multiples are accounted for. Between these two operations that are linked to statist functions, Badiou proposes a generic fidelity. This typology of fidelities allows for Badiou to claim that the generic type is “definitively distinct from the state if, in some manner, it is *unassignable* to a defined function of the state; if, from the standpoint of the state, its result is a particularly nonsensical part” (237). In fact, this nonsensical part constitutes a real fidelity because it “establishes dependencies which for the state are without concept, and it splits—via successive finite states—the situation in two, because it also discerns a mass of multiples which are indifferent to the event” (237). Fidelity, in its truly legitimate power, must sever itself from the state and begin an arduous journey that I can only describe as a becoming-nomadic. If the fidelity is to perform legitimately both its role as count and as operator of connection, then it must effectively de-center its procedure through a nomadic escape route from the state—it must become-imperceptible in rendering itself unassignable and nonsensical to the dominant state of affairs.

But now we are back to where we began with fidelity: linked to the state in its role as operator of connection and inclusion, fidelity can be nothing less than a “counter-state,” otherwise known as “*within* the situation, another legitimacy of inclusions.” (238). Here is where the genuine role of the subject shines forth. In fact, the subject is split in a definitive way in Badiou’s theory: between *subjectivization* and *subjective process*. The former is linked to the concepts attached to intervention—the circulation of the name of the event—and the latter is linked to the concepts attached to fidelity—the operator of connection grouping multiples related to the event. Since Badiou holds that “A non-institutional fidelity is a fidelity which is capable of discerning the marks of the event at the furthest point from the event,” it becomes imperative for Badiou to split the event in two and argue for an additional supplement in order to assure fidelity’s legitimate actualization (237).

This is the fabulous moment in Badiou’s edifice, where, like the event, the subject disappears as it appears. This occurs only insofar as Badiou is careful to mention: “I will call *subject* the process itself of liaison between the event (thus the intervention) and the procedure of fidelity (thus its operator of connection)” (239). Yet in the next paragraph, Badiou proposes a radical hypothesis: “If, however, we suppose that there is *no relation* between intervention and fidelity, we will have to admit that the operator of connection in fact emerges *as a second event*. If there is indeed a complete hiatus between...the intervention and the faithful discernment...then we must acknowledge that, apart from the event itself, there is *another* supplement to the situation which is the operator of fidelity. And this will be all the more true the more real the fidelity is, thus the less close it is to the state, the less institutional” (239). Not only will this fidelity be more legitimate because it is less institutional, but it will also be legitimate insofar as the subject’s two halves never join to constitute it. Like Descartes and Lacan, Badiou divides the

subject, except along other boundaries: the subject of fidelity and the subject of connection. Since Badiou defines the subject as the corresponding link between these two halves, the true faithful process requires us to think of processes of subjectivity without a subject.

Badiou writes with this same thought in mind in his *Metapolitics*: “(Bourgeois) ideology is characterized by the notion of subject, whose matrix is legal and which subjects the individual to the ideological State apparatuses: this is the theme of ‘subjective interpellation.’ It is crucial to note that ideology, whose materiality is provided by the apparatuses, *is a statist notion*, and not a political notion. The subject, in Althusser’s sense, is a function of the State. Thus, there will be no political subject, because revolutionary politics cannot be a function of the State” (63). So Badiou’s convoluted remarks about the subject become clearer with these statements, especially the subject of politics: not only is there no subject in so far as fidelity and intervention must be split to render a counter-state (or counter-count) legitimate, but also there is no political subject in so far as this subject is merely understood in terms of ideological state apparatuses that pre-establish socio-symbolic coordinates through which we must then come to occupy through a sort of becoming-accountable via the state. For Badiou, ontology has nothing to say about the event, but it also has no consistent stance toward those subjects that are presumably faithful to the events that inspire truth procedures, *procedures that remain vital insofar as they articulate concrete divisions between the subjects that arise through disparate conditions, such as love, politics, science, and art*. This is the first indication that there is a crack in Badiou’s theory of the autonomy of these conditions and their respectively singular subjects.

It almost seems ironic that two terms that Badiou utterly despises come to take on a fuller and broader significance when brought to bear upon this theoretical slippage. I’m referring to

nomadic multiplicities and the lines of flight that constitute the speed of their deterritorialization. As early as *Anti-Oedipus*, Deleuze and Guattari formulate some sketches for what seem to be two powerful concepts in light of this impasse. For example, how is the operator of connection supposed to be evaluated in terms of its proximity to the state (or the count of a projected new one)? Fidelity must become nomadic in order to develop the group-multiplicities that depend on the event. A sedentary fidelity will ultimately lapse back into resurrecting the old body of the former count and will never be able to develop the consistency and rigor of a new subjective space for the representation of the excluded. Even Badiou's rendition of St. Paul can be read in this way—the apostolic discourse spread through a nomadic, epistolary intervention that steadily worked through a universalism for the construction of an egalitarian count (otherwise known as the Church). Fidelity must become nomadic, and this means that it has to be able to map out the lines of flight escaping and leaking from major power centers. A nomadic enquiry and fidelity is necessary insofar as the state is hostile to the wandering void and indifferent towards events and the truths they inspire.

The minor mode of a nomadic fidelity enquires into different molecular flows, invents and sustains lines of flight that are not mere metaphors as Badiou assumes them to be. In *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari give a good example of a refined understanding of Badiou's project: "The law of the State is not the law of All or Nothing (State societies *or* counter-State societies) but that of interior and exterior. The State is sovereignty. But sovereignty only reigns over what it is capable of internalizing, or appropriating locally" (360). Here the question of the operator of connection in a fidelity is transposed onto a problematic relating the 'internalizing' function of the state's count and the externality of the multiples presumed to be illegal according to the state-of-the situation. Deleuze and Guattari are unequivocal when it

comes to this principle of leakage or drift from the state's power to assure its own count: "Every central power has three aspects or zones: (1) its zone of power, relating to the segments of a solid rigid line; (2) its zone of indiscernibility, relating to its diffusion throughout a microphysical fabric; (3) its zone of impotence, relating to the flows and quanta it can only convert without being able to control or define. It is always from the depths of its impotence that each power center draws its power, hence their extreme maliciousness, and vanity" (226). These three zones correspond to Badiou's state-of-the-situation, the alternate space opened up through another count, and the zone of impotence that relates to the multiples that escape the state's capacity for representation. Fidelity must be able to seize upon and alter the terrain of this impotence. By locating these weak zones, a successful nomadic count attains the potential for destabilizing the official state of the situation. But the power that is unlocked by the event has to organize itself in such a way that the new count is a truly revolutionary investment; otherwise, the state can always contort its surface in order to axiomatize revolutionary desire back into preconscious class interests.

The Reactionary and the Revolutionary

This leads us into a deeper discussion of fidelity insofar as Badiou comments on a fault in the construction of his system in his *Ethics*. In the "Preface to the English Edition" written 12 years after his main work, Badiou writes: "The subject cannot be conceived exclusively as the subject faithful to the event. This point in particular has significant ethical implications. For I was previously unable to explain the appearance of reactionary innovations. My whole theory of the new confined it to the truth-procedures...I was then obliged to admit that the event opens a subjective space in which not only the progressive and truthful subjective figure of fidelity but

also other figures every bit as innovative, albeit negative—such as the reactive figure, or the figure I call the ‘obscure subject’—take their place” (lvii). Badiou’s concept gains extra clarity in relation to what Deleuze and Guattari analyze in terms of the revolutionary and the reactionary poles of a social body. They theorize these terms through a synthesis of two concepts: the split between subject-groups and subjugated-groups and the division between pre-conscious interests and unconscious libidinal investments. Through developing the interactions between these two concepts we will be able to understand how Deleuze and Guattari thoroughly provide a theory that is subtle enough to see the dangers in a simple opposition between the reactionary and the revolutionary.

In *Anti-Oedipus* Deleuze and Guattari stress that the duality of revolutionary/reactionary does not function in the same way on the preconscious and unconscious levels: “The preconscious revolutionary break is sufficiently well defined by the promotion of a *socius* as a full body carrying new aims, as a form of power or a formation of sovereignty that subordinates desiring-production under new conditions. But even though the unconscious libido is charged with investing this *socius*, its investment is not necessarily revolutionary in the same sense as the preconscious investment. In fact, the unconscious revolutionary break implies for its part the body without organs as the limit of the *socius* that desiring-production subordinates in its turn, under the condition of an overthrown power, an overthrown subordination” (347). What becomes clear in the pages that follow this is the fact that these are two ways of looking at desire: on the one hand, desire refers to a break “between two forms of *socius*, the second of which is measured according to its capacity to introduce the flows of desire into a new code or a new axiomatic of interest (348). But this is to still invest the new *socius* with values that subordinate desiring-production to the criteria of possibility that are pre-established with the former *socius*. On the

other hand, the unconscious revolutionary break “is within the socius itself, in that it has the capacity for causing the flows of desire to circulate following their positive lines of escape, and for breaking them again following breaks of productive breaks” (348). Again, Deleuze and Guattari are unequivocal when they write, “Truly revolutionary preconscious interests do not necessarily imply unconscious investments of the same nature; an apparatus of interest never takes the place of a machine of desire” (348). The task of the unconscious libidinal investments, then, is linked to the making possible of the logic whereby the intervention and the procedure of fidelity—undeniably dislocated due to the criterion of legitimacy—are able to function by “subjugat[ing] the large aggregate to the functional multiplicities that it itself forms on the molecular scale” (348). Could it be possible that the finite enquiries of a fidelity are molecular in the sense that they subordinate the state of affairs to a network of alternative legitimate inclusions, thereby creating novel processes of selection of the counting operations that effectuate positive political representation?

This reading is a tempting path to follow. However, at another level the corresponding conceptualization of the subjugated-group and subject-group brings to light just how mistaken Badiou was when he argued in his early essay that Deleuze and Guattari are merely returning to the Kantian subject. For unlike Badiou’s conception of the ‘good’ subject faithful to the event and the ‘obscure’ subject that is vaguely irrational yet innovative, Deleuze and Guattari argue for a more supple theory that allows for us to understand why and how subjugated groups and subject-groups continually spin off and turn into each other. Instead of invoking the fullness or emptiness of the void, these two groups have to be related to indices of the revolutionary or reactionary potential in preconscious and unconscious investments. And unlike the subjugated group that enslaves desiring-production to a pre-formed state, “the subject-group invents always

mortal formations that exorcise the effusion in it of a death instinct: it opposes real coefficients of transversality to the symbolic determinations of subjugation, coefficients without a hierarchy or a group super-ego” (348-349). Another question comes to mind with these lines: is it possible to think of every count, including fidelity’s counter-count insofar as it still remains a statist notion, as supporting the formation of subject-groups if the former is suffused with an inherent, transitory mortality? This makes sense with the definition of enquiry that Badiou gives: the finitude of representation versus the infinity of situations—in other words, because enquiries are by their nature recursive, can we think of mortal fidelities as a concept that can help theorize not only the reduction of the power of the state, but also the exploitation of its weaknesses and blindspots in relation to the events and truths that escape them?

These mortal formations embody the infinity of the organizations of new legitimate subject spaces through mortal counter-states that continually undermine the preconscious interests of exclusive classes. In fact, Badiou has come close to arguing this sort of duality, though with different terms and concepts. For example, his essay “Philosophy and Politics” begins to make more sense in light of the subjugated/subject-group dichotomy: “Any definitional and programmatic approach to justice turns it into a dimension of the action of the State. But the State has nothing to do with justice, for the State is not a subjective and axiomatic figure...The modern State aims solely at fulfilling certain functions, or at crafting a consensus of opinion. Its sole subjective dimension is that of transforming economic necessity—that is, the objective logic of Capital—into resignation or resentment. This is why any programmatic or State definition of justice changes the latter into its contrary: justice becomes the harmonization of the interplay of interests. But justice, which is the theoretical name for an axiom of equality, necessarily refers to an entirely *disinterested* subjectivity” (55). This dualism between the interests of political non-

thought and disinterest as the true subjectivity of political thought finds a similar articulation in Deleuze and Guattari, for they write: “In the subjugated groups, desire is still defined by an order of causes and aims, and itself weaves a whole system of macroscopic relation that determine the large aggregates under a formation of sovereignty. Subject-groups on the other hand have as their sole cause a rupture with causality, a revolutionary line of escape” (377). This revolutionary line of escape *is* justice (in Badiouian terms) insofar as it cuts a diagonal of thought transversal to both the State and its promotions of interests (including preconscious interest groups and their respective subsets). Distinguishing subject-groups and subjugated groups should involve asking about the nature of justice and whether or not these concerns are *disinterested* in terms of the State.

Conclusion: Masses, Classes and Moles

“I learned that [Deleuze and Guattari] had spoken approvingly of my little book *De l’ideologie* for the way in which I put into play, at the core of political processes, the distinction between ‘class’ and ‘mass.’ –Alain Badiou

Love, for Badiou, takes off where politics ends (*Metapolitics* 151). For Deleuze and Guattari, love is the index of the reactionary or revolutionary character of the social investments of the libido (*Anti-Oedipus* 352). Moreover, politics for Deleuze and Guattari pervades the social whole—it precedes being (*A Thousand Plateaus* 203). This can be considered one of the axioms of schizoanalysis because the latter is the “analysis of desire” and is “immediately practical and political whether it is a question of an individual, group, or society. For politics precedes being. Practice does not come after the emplacement of the terms and their relationships, but actively participates in the drawing of the lines; it confronts the same dangers and the same variations as the emplacement does. Schizoanalysis is like the art of the new” (203). Schizoanalysis should be understood to include the self-recursive observer space that the construction of a new political

subjective space entails. It analyzes the ways in which different groups in relation to their desire are already stratified through the segments that divide them. Furthermore, schizoanalysis argues that desire is always contorted by these divisions. This torsion entails an affirmation of the ways that political spaces are consequently segmented by this deterritorialization. This analysis can reveal effective ways of changing our methods of inclusion that must involve a decision that wagers on the becoming-legal of a subject through the process of fidelity.

We will wager against Badiou that there is no strict division of the conditions of philosophy into four sutures—instead the social field is overflowing with a blossoming of subjects that are segmented in different ways, and these types *are not reducible to static categories like love, science, art, and politics*. In fact, Deleuze and Guattari make this clear by arguing that “art and science have a revolutionary potential, and nothing more, and that this potential appears all the more as one is less and less concerned with what art and science mean...but that art and science cause increasingly decoded and deterritorialized flows to circulate in the socius, flows that are perceptible to everyone, which force the social axiomatic to grow ever more complicated, to become more saturated, to the point where the scientist and the artist may be determined to rejoin an objective revolutionary situation in reaction against authoritarian designs of a State that is incompetent and above all castrating” (*Anti-Oedipus* 379). This can occur when the scientists and artists become unbound from the state and therefore become-nomadic. This will allow them more freedom from the sedentary domain of the state and cause the flows of their productivity to enhance the depth and energy that has to suffuse fidelity in order to force it to get up, move about and enquire into the situation.

But doesn't the social axiomatic relate to the functionality of the state's accountability? In other words, when Badiou stresses that, in forming a counter-state, "fidelity operates on the *terrain* [my emphasis] of the *state* of the situation," we should understand fidelity to subordinate the "conditions" of philosophy to the deterritorializations that unlock molecular flows on the *terrain* or topography of a new representative subjective space. This should hold for all four of the conditions, and once we understand that desire creates real effects in the terrain of fidelity, we should be able to theorize more abstractly about the operations under which collective statements are formed.

This brings me to Deleuze's seminar "Dualism, Monism and Multiplicities (Desire-Pleasure-Jouissance)." Deleuze refers to a book called the *Sexual Life in Ancient China*, and in it we find descriptions of "manuals of love and manuals of military strategy are indiscernible" (92). Through the torsion of deterritorializations, what seem to be unrelated discursive areas somehow become twisted in a parallel genesis. In other words, Deleuze theorizes that there are social transformations at work that produce a co-development of seemingly autonomous cultural spheres. Deleuze follows this thread up by trying to find a conceptual gateway to these phenomena without the concepts of structuralism or Marxism. In fact, Deleuze goes so far as to invoke an abstract machine and a machinic point, the latter designating, for a given collectivity and at a given moment "the maximum of deterritorialization as well as, and at the same time, its power of innovation" (93). Another paper topic would be able to analyze Badiou's conditions in terms of abstract machines that cover a social space and refer to machinic points that indicate the speeds at which machinic assemblages of love, war, science, and art can be deterritorialized and reterritorialized according to—what Guattari would have called—existential refrains and incorporeal universes of value (93).

The social axiomatic is being challenged in other ways as well. For the terrain of a fidelity is crisscrossed by flows and segments: “one distinguishes between the molecular aspect and the molar aspect: on the one hand, *masses or flows*, with their mutations, quanta of deterritorialization, connections, and accelerations; on the other hand, *classes or segments*, with their binary organization, resonance, conjunction or accumulation, and line of overcoding favoring one line over the others” (221). Masses and classes? Sounds familiar—let’s see if we can detect the slightest hint of admiration in the footnote attached the section I just quoted:

“Alain Badiou and Francois Balmes advance a more objective hypothesis: masses are ‘invariants’ that oppose the State-form in general and exploitation, whereas classes are the historical variables that determine the concrete State, and in the case of the proletariat, the possibility of its effective dissolution; *De l’ideologie* [Paris: Maspero, 1976]. But it is difficult to see, first of all, why masses are not themselves historical variables, and second, why the word is applied only to the exploited (the ‘peasant-plebeian’ mass), when it is also suitable for seigneurial, bourgeois masses—or even monetary masses” (*A Thousand Plateaus* fn. 20, p. 537).

This small footnote can allow us to see a much broader picture concerning fidelity. There are a vast multiplicity of fidelities that spread throughout the social body with preconscious interests and unconscious investments. These multiplicities are also variable in their typology and are constructed and revised, divided and revisioned through singular processes. Each ‘mass’ has to be analyzed along with the abstract machines to which the process of creating a new subjective space endows itself with actuality. Different masses, too, are striated and segmented by the hierachization of class interests that tie the former to promoting their interests back into the given state of the situation. A transversal of thought must be crafted in order to render these interests

indifferent by light of the truths that chance to infuse the social body with enough energy to transform—for better or worse.

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–Taylor Adkins

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