

Study for ‘Memories of the Apocalypse’

*Memories of the Apocalypse**. We have never stopped repeating that becoming is a dangerous affair, although there is much more to say about the risks and failures of plan(e)making than we have so far. One must be ever careful lest the weight of the strata will come crashing down or otherwise slip away like dust and silt. Sometimes one wakes up, passes through a door and is swept along on an unexpected journey. Perhaps one takes up driving after a long time. And sometimes there is a risk of being led toward disaster, or else disaster seems unavoidable as the plane of consistency is drawn too fast and revealed for what it can become. A car crash is a haecceity – a fleeting moment between two questions: “What happened?” “What will happen?”

Since we insist on the reality of becomings, so we must insist on the reality of their attendant dangers. That the perils were always there is often apparent only after a disaster transpires or else they are perceived but deemed to be inconsequential. And yet Ahab does not chase the white whale alone. Although he may convince his crew to follow him through the white wall their families and friends are left behind on dry land, wondering and grieving; left behind knowing nothing of that mad becoming-whale.

* Author’s note: This text is an attempt to engage with Deleuze and Guattari’s *A Thousand Plateaus* (1987), which remains one of the most influential works in contemporary geography through a *fictional* or *apocryphal* addition that was not, but perhaps could have been a part of an early draft. It develops the different risks of becoming-animal, imperceptible etcetera in conjunction with apocalypse or revelation and could, for instance, be read after page 290 of the *Minnesota University Press* edition of *A Thousand Plateaus*. My goal in writing this has been threefold. First, it is a way of explicitly and implicitly emphasizing certain problems in *A Thousand Plateaus* that could have been discussed in more detail in the original text and which pertain to various disaster and risks. Second, it responds to a particular imagery of ruined cities and abandoned fields as apocalyptic. Third, it is a methodological experiment with writing apocrypha (or, less charitably, the worst kind of fan-fiction) for an academic audience that can hopefully be useful for the reader as such. Of what utility this exercise may be is a point that is up for discussion, but apocrypha possess a long history that is sometimes overlooked in favor of more “respectable” literary forms. Throughout, I have tried to remain close, but not slavishly so, to the content and style of Brian Massumi’s translation of Deleuze and Guattari’s prose. I have mostly limited my examples to sources and authors that Deleuze and Guattari discussed in *Anti-Oedipus*, *A Thousand Plateaus* and their interviews and correspondence from the 1970s. In a few places I have cited authors whom they did not, but whose work seemed thematically plausible or otherwise important to include.

Revelations occur when secrets seep into the blinding light of day or are covered by the folds of night. Two moments at which one can say: “No more subterfuge. No more shadow”. Midday, and Zarathustra’s laughter is resounding throughout the diatremes of Earth. Something has happened, and at the same time the fact of this something is revealed for what it is. A revelation is the ruination of the strata – what remains of them once their most intimate secrets have been uncovered. To the full body without organs we have already added its empty and cancerous counterparts. Now we can say that there are at least two dangers facing becomings-animal, becomings-woman and becomings-imperceptible. Either the fugue lines become lethal and turn to self-abolition and utter ruination or else they turn on themselves, bounce back into black holes with very different consequences compared to the former case. All of this is a vast oversimplification. A more accurate description must consider the concrete effects of the abstract machines in question. The question is not if the machines are abstract, since they clearly are. The question is if they can be disentangled from the concrete assemblages they effect and the planes they draw.

Diseases, virulent infections and plagues can be considered through their affects and means of propagation; what they can do and the speed at which they travel. Spread in secret, an infectious disease remains hidden in a population until it suddenly strikes with incapacitating consequences. The first victim of an illness is normally ignored, even after his or her symptoms are obvious for all. This victim, or stranger, is a dark harbinger of what is to come and is thus anteceding the arrival of the plague itself by probing new lines of transmission⁸⁰. After the initial odd cases of now-sick strangers arriving healthy at the city gates, or of pale figures stalking the hinterlands, events accelerate. The coming of the plague is an event. It is nevertheless possible to provisionally enumerate at least three principles belonging to the plague-assemblage as long as we understand that such a list is not to be considered exhaustive.

1. *Double Reciprocity*. A stratoanalytic approach to the bubonic plague should begin with a symptomatological inventory of its effects on the body. The distinctive pustules associated with the disease are zones of combat between the affected and unaffected parts of the body, but this does not entail a concentric propagation from one bubo to the next. In this situation the arborescent lymphatic and cardiovascular systems become the staging grounds for the appearance of new pustules in quite different locations from one another. Moreover, the most common localization of the outbreaks to the armpits and inguen is indicative of the vampiric tendency of bacteria like *Yersinia pestis* upon the lymphatic system without which the disease could not progress. The corporeal combat is correlated with a similarly distributed

tensile metamorphosis of the mind⁸¹. Sometimes, the noetic content of the plague is expressed in the form of a feverish delirium, bordering hysteria or a disjointed dream. Sometimes it takes the shape of apathetic resignation before the inevitability of death. Between such extreme attitudes the veritable battle that is the plague is enacted. But despite the specificity of these phenomena, it is evident that plague is not limited to effecting passions of the body and mind at the individual level, but constitutes a molecular or particulate liberation pertaining to haecceities. The plague enters into an assemblage with the body and despite modifying the organism more or less predictably does not lead it in any determinate direction, and rather carries it every which way in an aberrant and unpredictable manner. This can be transposed to the social stratum where plague-stricken regions are often home to mad festivities and spontaneous carnivals testifying to the transmogrification whereby collective behaviour is put at the service of the plague as if to celebrate and welcome its ordeals.

2. *Cartography*. It used to be held that no epidemic ever struck by chance. While some diseases are indiscriminate in scope and make everyone their potential victims, others remain highly selective and more ruthless in certain geographical areas. The basis according to which a selection is made is itself highly variable, although there are those writers who have made guesses about its operational basis. Take the case of Procopius who provides a first-hand account of the Plague of Justinian, an affliction that “seemed to move by fixed arrangement, and to tarry for a specified time in each country, casting its blight slightly upon none, but spreading in either direction right out to the ends of the world, as if fearing lest some corner of the earth might escape it”⁸². It is crucial to recall that prior to Pasteur’s microbial revolution, epidemics were entirely religious or mystical events. The dynamisms of disease thus conceived are, however, poorly understood if they are interpreted in the language of divine retribution. As Procopius attested, it seemed as if only the most base and reprehensible remained unaffected precisely because they were forced to don masks of false benevolence. In other words, Procopius’ account of the plague is characterized by a certain suspension of bad faith, but this is itself a misguided notion. Although all would have their due share of pestilence, this share can only be articulated with reference to an aleatory principle not unlike Lucretius’ swerving atom. The plague is an altogether foreign force that makes a mockery of the very terms of moral justice to the benefit of a very different selection that can only be understood from the perspective of a cartography capable of accounting for both the extension and intension of the disease.

3. *Alliance and Segmentation*. Plagues are accompanied by conspiracies that multiply without reason, apparent revelations that pop up here and there and rumours about coming death. And when the plague finally arrives its secrets are no longer a private affair as the entire world is delivered to delirium. That disasters are capable of transmogrifying societies is well known and it is not surprising that migration and nomadicism has been associated with the spread of disease as a cutting edge of deterritorialization. José María Arguedas describes an epidemic that arrives from afar, striking terror in all peoples⁸³. Before the approaching plague, Indians and Spanish; colonized and colonizer are alike. Plague stricken becomings. In all this, the first principle that we enumerated must not be forgotten: a becoming-intense proper to the plague's unique capacity for reciprocity. A pure intensity of disease that is no longer reducible to explanation on microbial grounds. Instead the plague implies relations of movement and rest, relative speeds and slownesses alongside and against more or less developed strata. Entire societies have collapsed when their components have started scuttling and dancing across an eroding ground. It is an unfortunate fact that there are those paranoiacs who seek to mete out responsibility, always asking about who is to blame – “who sent these agues and buboes to us, why now and here?” That this way of thinking is not limited to the language of divine providence is shown by Foucault's analysis of the segmentation of the plague-stricken city. Although it is of interest in its own right, the same paranoiac model that characterized the city's response to the plague can be generalized across contexts and it is even suggested that the prison and delinquency (the form of content and form of expression) proper to disciplinary power developed from an increase of society's degree of organization in response to the plague⁸⁴. It would be a serious mistake to conclude from this that nomads and migrants can be construed as allies of the plague and, as Foucault shows, there exists an entire history of how the state has taken advantage of the spread of disease. There is no deterritorialization without the possibility of reterritorialization and a simultaneous development of more rigid forms of segmentarity and disciplinary techniques. That rumours, conspiratorial ideation and xenophobia are common responses to the plague further belie the moral ambivalence of contagion and its simultaneous uptake in systems of cruelty and doctrines of judgment.

Judging by this case we were perhaps wrong or vastly oversimplifying things when we said that rhizomes can be associated with cartography and with maps. (This is not to say that revelations brought about by abstract machines are limited to contagions, even if the latter may be a propaedeutic case.) What we must say in addition is that even cartographers can fall back onto the strata; are just as complicit in drawing rigid lines, are just as prone to fail at

constructing the plane as anyone else and are just as likely to climb trees and survey their territories from above. To the cross, the gavel and the couch we must add the sextant. Cartographers, no less than other disciples of God, can speak according to the terms of a transcendent judge. In order to understand this it is imperative to reconsider the misfortunes that can occur in the passages from one plane to the other and return to the stakes of plan(e)making.

It is clear that there were always risks tied to becomings and it can even be said that becomings were only ever exercises in managing incalculable and necessary risk, not to just oneself, but to the assemblages one enters into. Perhaps risk constitutes the relationship between becomings and an apocalyptic sensibility that sometimes connects to images of deserted landscapes and ruins and sometimes leaps into a musical register. Did Messiaen's Quartet make it possible to reappropriate the Nazi war machine if only for a fleeting moment? Sometimes there are less morbid cases, such as in Woolf's novel where a man travels to Constantinople, returns as a woman and leaves the great city on its path to decline. Talk of ruins and apocalypse has always been a question of the extreme points of becoming, but the association of revelation with eschatology in the New Testament precisely reverses this relationship and subordinates revelation to an expectation of destruction as a matter of interiority or analytic necessity.

The Gnostics believed in the existence of a divine spark that had been imprisoned in their bodies. In order to free their souls from this corporeal imprisonment they required a higher knowledge that could be attained through certain spells and incantations. We are not to be mistaken for affirming either the eschatological or the Gnostic view according to which the strata must be purged, but still, can one sorcerer not borrow a little magic from another? Is there not a certain superiority of the plane of consistency even if it is never sufficient for salvation? Perhaps as long as it is merely a matter of freeing oneself from the strata that are always purporting to impose their transcendence. The whole point of what we have called pragmatics is to draw another plane for that which is no longer oneself, but this is never the same as to have done with this world. The point is to have taken a chance and to have risked shattering the world into a thousand inseparable pieces, each of which can be the key to returning to the forms and subjects on the plane of organization. Moreover, the two planes are always drawn together, perpetually birthing one another and never without repercussions. And between them other planes are always made and unmade. Whenever we have warned of the dangers facing the plan(e)maker we have been careful not to say that disaster is the inevitable result of becomings-animal, becomings-molecular and becomings-imperceptible,

that every becoming ends in a violent explosion or catatonic collapse, either on an empty or cancerous body without organs; but it is time we entertained this possibility. To dissolve the strata or wrest free of their grasp is a dangerous business. Is it nearly enough to say that the risks are ever-present and cannot under any circumstances be eliminated? For is there ever a chance of something like lasting success beyond the threshold? Is ever the plane of consistency grasped as more than a fleeting moment between its fates in self-abolition and catastrophe of return? Would this mean that becomings-animal, woman, molecular or imperceptible are never to be attempted or only that one must be ever more vigilant? The last question itself suggests that there is such a choice to be made.

In either case we cannot let the well-worn names of Artaud, Nietzsche, Lawrence and Fitzgerald fool us into believing that we will be saved, that toying with so many Rhinoceroses' horns will be enough, that multiplication will leave us a little better off than before, that a sip of water will redeem us, make us free from judgment and in possession of our power (*pouvoir*). We are saying that much more is at stake, that joy is always permeated by a terrible cruelty, soaked in it through and through. Beyond Professor Challenger and Randolph Carter and beyond even the accursed Ahab there have existed yet more unfortunate souls. An old violist is swept away like a bird carried by a foul wind. "It was more horrible than anything I had ever overheard, because I could now see the expression of his face, and could realise that this time the motive was stark fear. He was trying to make a noise; to ward something off or drown something out – what, I could not imagine, awesome though I felt it must be. The playing grew fantastic, delirious, and hysterical, yet kept to the last the qualities of supreme genius which I knew this strange old man possessed"⁸⁵. A window that is also a threshold opens and the old man is no more. In his place are only speeds and slownesses, movement and rest; an "unimagined space alive with motion and music" without "semblance to anything on earth". All around "him", now caught up in a becoming-bird, lie sheets of music or upturned leaves. It is no coincidence that this is a dream of the schizoid Lovecraft, "the *least* sensuous of all living beings... tending to view and enjoy all things as a passive, detached, and sometimes remote spectator"⁸⁶. Behind every schizoid disposition of this kind there is pent-up schizophrenia waiting to be unleashed. And when the moment comes, everything is staked.

Every delirium is oriented toward the world and runs off in all directions; Schreber and Rimbaud, Lovecraft and Lawrence. Each delirium takes into its grasp races, peoples and cultures – their becomings are indeed constituted by so many delirious racial machines, peopling machines and cultural machines; machines that deride and chastise as often as they

laugh and cheer. It is clear that this has nothing to do with Kraepelin's and Bleuler's conception of schizophrenia and its supposed association with autism, which is only a consequence of the disruption in the clinical setting of a journey or machinic process on another plane.

It should be noted that the hierarchical picture that this talk of planes gives rise to is nothing other than a misconception and can only be a figure of speech that takes us so far. As we have said, committing to such an account would be to misunderstand the plane of consistency and the abstract machines, neither of which contain references to additional dimensions, and pertain to no forms or accounts of formation. At its limit there is not even the constitution and reconstitution of this or that assemblage; only longitudes and latitudes; blockages and flows. Degrees of delirium at noon.

None of this is to stop us from understanding the profound ambiguity of believing oneself to have crossed the threshold or have done with the judgment God. On the one hand, there is the initial struggle against the great strata, the lines of flight and the unnatural participations, the alliances that have nothing to do with the admissible lines of descent. But on the other hand, there is the reversal after which the struggle against the strata may become a struggle on behalf of a new center that coalesces around the subject that replaces the eschewed God by exhausting its own relations, occupying every identity at once. "I, Antonin Artaud, am my son, my father, my mother, and myself"⁸⁷. A new God that will not tolerate your judgment any more than you tolerated His. It is not man that threatens to replace God. It is above all the tyranny of the Self (*Moi*) which risks taking His place even if this Self emerged as the sole repose following a painstaking struggle against the pretensions of priests and psychiatrists. It is because of this horizon that construing plane of consistency as a plane of formation in contrast to a plane of forms would amount to a severe misunderstanding. For the return to the subjective stratum via a solipsistic right would only serve to ossify the content of the racial, sexual and cultural deliria that first dissolved it. Is this perhaps the entire truth of becoming? A perverse revelation after which one returns to a new fixation instead of remaining perpetually imperceptible, carried like another leaf by the wind...

It is true that sometimes a becoming is too violent, an unnatural participation much more than a body can take. That which forces thought to think also breaks the spine as one is taken up by forces that can not be controlled, under whose influence one is inadmissibly folded, unfolded, refolded. The plague is not the only case even if it was informative. When Joan of Arc was burned at the stake at her tribunal's orders, it was really a second or corollary (not implying the presence of a sequence or succession) immolation since she had already left the

plane of her organism long ago. If she felt content before her fate it was only because she had already been taken up in all manners of strange becomings and because the body that was thrice burned was already a mere husk. Rarely has there been a misunderstanding of such grave proportions. For “you can and must conclude that these revelations and visions, if Joan ever had them, proceed rather from evil and lying spirits than from good”⁸⁸. The tribunal could only see and speak in order to distinguish between the good or bad natures of revelation and never did they comprehend that it was only ever a question of becoming and a more profound cruelty. *But even if they had understood this they would have been faced with difficulties. For becomings would pose no less of a threat had these not so often been misconstrued in the moral language of priests, psychoanalysts and professional cartographers.* Behind the veil of morality and facetious framing of the problem there remains a secret jurisprudential matter of real gravity. Beset by her revelations, Joan had traced a trail of blood and fire from Orléans to Reims even if her nascent war machine was appropriated by the strategic interests of a monarch in order to reclaim his realm. It is not nearly enough to recall the personal horrors that those taken up in becomings sometimes happen upon. The stakes are much higher and concern entire towns and cities, peoples and communities obedient to the law of the land, but of apparent innocence.

Becoming is ignorant of laws and customs. It follows a combinatorial game of chance to test the limits of bodies, to discover under what circumstances they can endure what affects. We saw that priests have reversed the meaning of revelation, which is to say they have never grasped becomings. For the English clergy, Joan was precisely in communion with the devil, the powers of whom they could only understand in opposition to the laws of God. What was Cauchon to do when he was presented with an enemy of the law, all the more insidious because of her heretical claims to have acted out of divine inspiration? In fact, Joan’s revelations were demonic in a quite different sense. What the tribunal could not understand was that the question of good and evil had ceased mattering long ago, or maybe it never did in the first place; that the source and moral standing of Joan’s revelations were strictly speaking secondary to their intensity of her singularities and of the power of the assemblage which she had been taken up in by being carried along. On the plane she had drawn in her encounter, laws, customs and even life and death no longer seemed to matter – there were only movements and speeds; another kind of multiplicities. When Geoffroy said that combustion is a process that releases organisms from their organization, it was no doubt to make a general point about destratification. While combustion is indeed characterized by a release of smaller particles, it is also a becoming-molecular of the molar aggregate so that it

is never just the body on the organic stratum or the Self (*Moi*) on the subjective stratum that combusts or passes away in combustion. We can now see that the way in which destruction can be an inevitable outcome of becoming is only intelligible in relation to its concrete instantiation in a way that forecloses any universal answers.

This is why psychoanalysts, like priests, have never understood the nature of revelation. The death instinct is the exemplary case. Freud would have us believe that the organism is subjected to a concrete, though unknowable drive toward death, which he went on to extend through the social machine, thereby effecting the demise of desire, and consequently of revelation. The inversion of revelation in the anticipation of an “apocalypse” that we already saw in the case of Christianity is only repeated by psychoanalysis. This is because the death instinct inextricably links incalculable risk with a drive toward the inevitability of death and destruction. The problem is precisely the reification of Thanatos as a separate instinct, somehow distinct from Eros. The problem is not death per se. The problem is how death is inscribed within primary process itself. Sabina Spielrein did not know how to have done with this theatrical organon that shackled the unconscious and its abstract machines and it was precisely this misstep that enabled Freud to draw his ridiculous conclusions⁸⁹. Psychoanalysts have never understood that death and disaster are both to be conceived in relation to a wild dance at noon, a veritable festival of cruelty during which disruption is only one of many concrete possibilities. Neither have they appreciated that one is always already upon this stage, that one occupies its edges in a continuous sliding off of it to the hum of one or a thousand tiny machines. Instead the creative and destructive tendencies were amalgamated and opposed; one always following from the other when in fact it is never a problem of sequence and implication, but of an open series in which creation and destruction only mean continuation and disruption. Contrary to the chronic fixation on the mutual implication of life with death in psychoanalysis, there is the Proustian schema with its fleeting time, the consequences of which are by no means less troubling than what was implied in the psychoanalytic circumscription of the Libido. The name for this death is indeed catastrophe or apocalypse, but it is always an accident that can occur on the far side of a white wall or threshold even in those cases where the accident is a matter of concrete inevitability on a line of abolition. For death is only ever one of many extrinsic outcomes and can never be reduced or assimilated to an instinctual drive.

In one of J. G. Ballard’s works, a character goes on a journey, a becoming-imperceptible, becomes a fleeting series of images that is itself a sort of perpetual dying. From the viewpoint of the strata, something escapes through an epistratum into a newly associated milieu which

is folded back onto the strata leading to the demise of both, in the middle of which it may seem as if “the planes of his face failed to intersect, as if their true resolution took place in some as yet invisible dimension, or required elements other than those provided by his own character and musculature”⁹⁰. The build-up to the disaster was also described by Van Gogh as an iron wall that separated him from what he could do: a wall that must be undermined at all costs. His realization that this could only be done with the utmost care and effort testifies to his practical ingenuity. The artist’s trajectory demonstrates how difficult this can be, that any moment can be a failure of the requisite patience. From the drab palette of the early works to the sudden outburst of color for which everything would be chanced in an unstoppable march toward a final moment. Was it worth it? Perhaps if one day a painter comes along who is capable of forming an assemblage to the effect of rendering again the lines and commas of Van Gogh’s face, for whom the world will appear as a delirium in which so many features of the landscape appear folded onto so many faces. At work in these paintings will be all kinds of abstract machines that deterritorialize the visage only to discover new milieus for its traits to reterritorialize upon, such as sea urchins and pies. Meanwhile, the no longer human figure will enter a becoming-imperceptible and meld with the ocean waves, with interiors and indistinct features crossed by abstract lines that seem to inevitably end in nuclear blasts. No longer faces or landscapes, nor even a close-up of faces that are also landscapes nor of landscapes that are also faces – only molecular face-traits and landscape-traits resembling nothing, perpetually drifting across the surface of the Earth.

From Diogenes to Artaud, the task of every dog has only ever been to subvert the image of those responsibilities that form the face into a system of black holes and white walls and substitute for them an empty ground beyond ground as the source of all abilities that are attainable by means of an ostensibly irresponsible behaviour. But even the great Cynic sage was a little puppy, as domesticated in fact as he was wild in appearance; ever the faithful hound of Antisthenes and the licensed fool of Athens. We contrast him with the life and reign of Heliogabalus, the accursed emperor. Crowned at the age of fourteen, the incompetence of this child in the eyes of the empire, his incessant debauchery and subsequent assassination by the Praetorian guard. Heliogabalus was all the paradoxes of an anarchic spirit enthroned, seeking and failing to subvert all that was Roman from within, a real contradiction in terms. To crown and raise to eminence one without rule will end in disaster; a double suicide by virtue of unstoppable force: The crisis of the empire and the violent murder of the boy emperor by his own subjects. Crowned anarchy or a rule with only criteria makes a mockery of the law. Such a situation is one where a minoritization element is posited as 1) an object of

supreme importance erected within an order as its grounding principle or keystone and 2) itself an agent of “disorder” at the heart this order. This is not to say that the crowned anarchist avoided the subjectivism that plagues representations of a ground, but neither is it a question of dialectic development. On the contrary, crowned anarchy does nothing but amplify subjectivism until it becomes solipsism; until the stratum becomes so rigid that it collapses under its own weight. Through his excesses the opulent emperor would stage the collapse of himself and the state apparatus with it. He brought all of Rome into an apocalyptic destratification that his subjects were not prepared to depart upon. Heliogabalus was not content to destroy himself, he insisted on following a line of abolition so thorough that it would make the empire’s eventual disaster inevitable and for that he had to die, cut down in the latrines of his own guard.

A revelation is the unstoppable procession of becoming, and more precisely it is the point at which any becoming will proceed whatever its cost may be. Following from this a certain practical principle of becoming can be formulated such that if there is no desert in sight, then one is created by salting the earth; if a body does not accord with the affects you want, then it is beaten into form. What secrets will Ahab discover at the bottom of the ocean once he has broken through the white wall of blubber, flesh and brine? One thing faces us with the perfect transparency of a much calmer sea than Ahab sailed, that Moby-Dick never had much of a choice but to offer up his traits – but did the captain choose? Perhaps not. If it was not he who flew, but a different multiplicity, a molecule, a whale-whaler-ocean assemblage which drifted toward its fate, was it not Ahab himself who first said “Yes” to chance?

Artaud, more so than anyone else, would have us believe that there is a rightful way to struggle against the judgments of God, to refuse them and to enact a transfer of a fascinated Self (*Moi*) onto the deserted Earth inscribed by who knows what signs. That is to say that there is hope, if only because even black cows stir in the night. Artaud never stopped repeating that cruelty is not unbridled anarchy, that there is a method to cruelty, that cruelty is in fact only implacable rigour in disguise. Mere intellectual intuition may no longer be an option to reconcile the organized image of the Earth above – drawn and quartered by sextant and gavel at the hands of cartographers and priests – with the plane beneath. Despite the risks Artaud never stopped calling for an alchemical sensibility, like Nietzsche never stopped decrying the charlatans and peddlers of base values, like Lawrence never stopped staggering through his desert on the other side of the Earth. What does it take to learn what a body can do? For the champions of cruelty secrecy and witchcraft certainly exist as means of flight.

But there are many kinds of secrets abroad in the world, and there are cases where one's route through sorcery is barred. Frantz Fanon spoke of secrets, but ones that would be stolen from him unjustly. "Like a magician, I robbed the white man of 'a certain world', forever after lost to him and his. When that happened, the white man must have been rocked backward by a force that he could not identify, so little used as he is to such reactions. Somewhere beyond the objective world of farms and banana trees and rubber trees, I had subtly brought the real world into being... The white man had the anguished feeling that I was escaping from him and that I was taking something with me... Everywhere he found only the obvious. So it was obvious that I had a secret".⁹¹ Even secrets can be stolen, revealed or diminished by those sad men who do not understand singularities, nor the intensity of an hour in the sun and who will inevitably accuse others of having robbed them of their worlds; and yet, for a brief moment one can cross a threshold on a line of flight away from such bad faith toward ever more uncertain vistas. In the middle, always in the middle, without an ending in sight.

But if crossing a threshold is such a dangerous affair and death can become inevitable, the question is under what circumstances one can afford to probe one's limits and proceed with the requisite caution. It is by no means given that it is the minorities, those with the "least" to lose who have this chance. This is not about invoking powerlessness in order to sing the lament to the wretched of this earth. Quite to the contrary, what is at stake is a jurisprudential question concerning who can exercise a right to not stake everything in a chance encounter, in other words, to manage their own risk. For there is always the chance that becomings are reduced to a mere game of the bourgeoisie who can dictate their own terms while affording to limit their risk by reallocating it elsewhere: "Michaux and Castaneda; heroes who suffered and experimented". But who, when reading the works of these explorers of the limits of this world, recalls the plight of the Tarahumara?

We, sorcerers and cartographers, are always at peril of forgetting who and what else is taken up in our becomings, who and what we pass by on our flights. We risk forgetting that our travels put entire peoples in danger and should never be taken lightly – and although more careful souls can join our dance, on what terms? We are not presenting any ready-made answers, for becoming is a question of jurisprudence that concerns the creation of novel rights and the invention of new ways of traversing the Earth, but is that in itself not the problem? We are warning that there is, on the one hand, always a possibility that a despot makes a claim to jurisprudence only in order to narrow its scope and bring it to a full stop. And on the other hand that the institution of a new right can have disastrous consequences

that are not immediately clear even when the wall is torn down as a final resort. There is an intimate bond between the judge and the cartographer, each of whom can lapse into the other's role at any moment. Even rhizomes can grow into trees that must be pruned unless the entire forest withers; or worse, it may yet become clear that rhizomes were always more insidious than trees. Is this the well-kept secret that is unknown even to those who have found their proper names, those who purport to see the light without noticing the eggshell that lies before their feet? Theirs is the eleventh hour *post meridiem*; when noon turns to midnight and Zarathustra cries.

Notes

⁸⁰ Despite the shortcomings of existentialism, for a fictional arrival of a plague, see Albert Camus, *The Plague* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1948).

⁸¹ Antonin Artaud, "The Theatre and the Plague", in *The Theatre and Its Double*, trans. Mary Caroline Richards (New York: Grove Press, 1958). Artaud suggests that not only is the plague a psychic phenomenon, but one that delimits its spread according to an internal logic whose organization cannot be understood with reference to ordinary methods and concepts.

⁸² Procopius, *History of the Wars: Books I and II*, trans. H. B. Dewing (New York: The MacMillan Co, 1914), Book I, XXII, [7-11]. Procopius also wrote a secret history beside his official accounts of the Persian war.

⁸³ José María Arguedas, *Deep Rivers*, trans. F. H. Barracough (Long Grove, IL: Waveland Press, 1978).

⁸⁴ Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, trans. A. M. Sheridan Smith (New York: Vintage, 1975), pp. 195-8.

⁸⁵ H. P. Lovecraft, "The Music of Erich Zann", in *The National Amateur* vol. 44, no. 4 (March 1922): pp. 38-39, 40.

⁸⁶ H. P. Lovecraft, "Letter to Virgil Finlay (25 September 1936)", in *Selected Letters V, 1934-1937*, eds. August Derleth and Donald Wandrei (Sauk City, WI: Arkham House, 1976), p. 310.

⁸⁷ Antonin Artaud, "Here Lies", in *Selected Writings*, ed. Susan Sontag (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1976), p. 540.

⁸⁸ *The Trial of Jeanne d'Arc*, trans. W. P. Barrett (New York: Gotham House, 1932), p. 183.

⁸⁹ [TRANS: Sabina Spielrein, "Destruktion als Ursache des Werdens," *Jahrbuche für psychoanalytische und psychopathologische Forschung*, issue 4, vol. 1 (1912), pp. 465-503. Spielrein served as one of the major sources of inspiration for Freud's attempt to "go beyond" the pleasure principle. Spielrein builds on Nietzsche to discuss the adversarial relationship between creation and destruction within ontogeny and reproduction of the collective.]

⁹⁰ J. G. Ballard, *The Atrocity Exhibition* (London: Triad/Panther, 1979), p. 8.

⁹¹ Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks* (London: Pluto Press, 1986), p. 128.