

**Gregory Flaxman**

*Gilles Deleuze and the Fabulation of Philosophy.*

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To restore Nietzsche's legacy to Deleuze's philosophy: this is the initial premise that motivates *Gilles Deleuze and the Fabulation of Philosophy*. For Flaxman this means bringing the elusive concept of the powers of the false to our immediate attention as the thread running through all of Deleuze's writing. Flaxman says that Deleuze proceeds according to Nietzsche's singular genius to affirm the false as basis for all existence. The correlates of this philosophic fabulation are fiction, style, expression, invention, and art, all of which we might call the powers of the false, and which, portentously, have been largely registered as antitheses, or at least, impediments to philosophy's search for truth, meaning, knowledge, and being. Given the Nietzschean premise that every truth is a fiction, Flaxman argues that the perpetual paradox at the heart of thinking is the motivation for its own overturning, and Deleuze's view of philosophy as concept creation represents the apex of philosophy's incessant renewal.

Flaxman follows the aesthetic pulse that animates the lines of flight of Deleuze's philosophy, not just in terms of his philosophy of art or even the art and literature to which he refers, though this presents itself as well, but in the use of artistic constructs, that is by advocating the centrality of his style and through what he describes as the amorous relations with other philosophers (181). He promises to trace Deleuze's expressive experiments (xiv), which reveal the overwhelming prerogative to 'think and write differently' so as to reanimate philosophy. In effect, Deleuze's conceptual fecundity is a quickening to philosophy, which, circumscribed by the parameters of its own will to truth and immune to its growing immobility and lifelessness, has vampirically sucked itself dry.

The book is ordered according to what Flaxman calls Deleuze's apprenticeship to philosophers, beginning with Nietzsche (Chapters 1 and 2), extending to the origins and history of [Greek] philosophy (Chapter 3), through his inspirational literary encounters (Chapter 4), all culminating in the creation of his own minor style. The remainder of the book traces the possibilities opened by Deleuze's fabulations and orientation towards the future. In Chapter 5, Flaxman situates Deleuze's ultimate question, 'what can philosophy do', in terms of resistance to the present. Finally, in the *Coda*, Flaxman draws all of the insights concerning Deleuze's innovations together to produce a futuristic vision of philosophy, or, rather, to link philosophy to the forces of the future—leading finally to Flaxman's own fabulation, *sci-philosophy*.

The book is permeated with a particular eroticism, derived from the various permutations of 'an unprecedented concept of friendship' (27) which can be described as an affectionate in-fidelity. This is immediately evidenced in Chapter One, 'Friendship and Philosophy', where Flaxman espouses Deleuze's *philia* with Nietzsche. Flaxman argues that Nietzsche's influence has been the subject of a critical excision from contemporary Deleuze scholarship. Rather than following the trend either to distance Deleuze from his Nietzschean heritage, by reasserting the priority of Plato, Hegel, or Lacan (i.e. Badiou, Žižek), or to dismiss those elements of Deleuze's work which are

deemed too Nietzschean (i.e. subjective, anarchic), Flaxman insists upon Nietzsche's priority of place (24), especially for the prerogatives of creativity, invention, and the untimely Outside.

Characterizing Deleuze's project in Nietzschean terms creates a narrative resonance with Chapter Two, 'From Genealogy to Geophilosophy'. Flaxman maps the terrestrial contingencies which determined philosophy. Geophilosophy explains the emergence of the Greek world and the inauguration of its philosophical plane (15) in relation to inhuman forces. The Greek milieu gives rise to the particular formation of philosophy as *agon* because of particular territorial identifications: the myth of autochthony, giving rise to a social diagram based on friendship among political equals—*philia*—and the geographical locatedness that produces a wealth of doxological differences. Flaxman writes that 'it remains for us to follow the deterritorializations of the earth and to make these movements the condition of thinking itself' (87), and it is clearly Flaxman's intent to give the reader a blueprint for such an endeavor.

Chapter Three, 'Deleuze Among the Sophists', addresses the powers of the false in relation to what may be their greatest opponent: Platonism. Flaxman reads Deleuze's promulgation of the simulacrum as extending the trope of thinking as combat (platonic *agon*), which is crystallized under the conditions of Athens and the mélange of opinions, including those of the sophists, precipitated by the Greek world itself. By insisting upon *agon* as the main proliferative element in philosophical discourse, Flaxman reaffirms the importance of the sophist, and, emphasizing Deleuze's awareness of the tension within Plato's thought, locates the paradoxical node of philosophy's relationship to truth within its very beginnings. Deleuze practices the technique of laying bare the device to expose the vying and selective process that belies the invention at the heart of truth and the proximity of sophist and philosopher. Flaxman proceeds to an excellent distinction between the impetus of the classical sophist with regard to simulacrum and that of Deleuze, for whom the simulacrum is less copy than the event of joyful ungrounding itself. Indeed, this distinction provides a theoretical foundation for the titular matter at hand, Deleuze as a philosopher of the false—fabulation as the motor of his thought, and, anticipating Flaxman's conclusion, as the augur of the future of *sci-philosophy*.

After this presentation of the liberation of the simulacrum, Chapter Four, 'The Philosophy of Fiction and the Fiction of Philosophy', addresses the proliferation of Deleuze's experimental affiliations and creative encounters with literature and the concept of minoritization which infuses his entire enterprise. Flaxman makes the point that it is only through aesthetic interventions that philosophy is capable of detaching itself from the dominant forms of power. Fiction does not apologize for its beginnings nor does it eschew style in the conveyance of thought, and it is via these conceits that a minor philosophy shall proceed. Flaxman's treatment of Kafka is extremely illuminative of the stakes of the minor and the becoming-other of language that it requires. He clarifies how the minor, beset by impossibility, yields invention and how Kafka's creative interventions happen through sobriety and subtraction rather than excess and overcoding. In the section entitled 'Minority Report', Flaxman brings his literary background to bear on Deleuze's development of the style of free indirect discourse, effectively showing that the deterritorialization of the subject exemplified by this linguistic tactic becomes a process for all philosophy, finally, linking these inventive processes to politics and the fabulation of a people to come.

In Chapter Five, 'Philosophy in an Inhospitable Age', Flaxman presents Deleuze's critique of our 'communication society'. In our present age, concept creation is claimed by marketing and advertising, which is a perversion of the original agonism that galvanized philosophy. Concepts are

emptied out, static products rather than epistemologically lively entities. It is easy to see why the pressing issue for Deleuze, and philosophy, is 'how to resist the present'. The chapter swiftly moves through several Deleuzian methods of resistance. Invoking Deleuze's response to May '68, Flaxman shows that Deleuze constructs a new affirmative politics. To resist the present is to become worthy of the event born from chance irruption which escapes historical causality. Flaxman also emphasizes Deleuze's multiple attempts to introduce chaos back into thought in order to battle the perpetual present of petrifying doxology. Flaxman concludes the chapter by considering the connection between the event and utopia as the untimely. Rather than a deterritorialization of the real world onto another better world (transcendence), we must think of utopia as an intervention in reality by means of another reality. Analogous to the minor, utopia emerges as a problem within the present. Flaxman ends the chapter by equating utopia with belief, which prompts the question: is this a matter of cultivating an attunement, or a new sensibility? While I applaud the intuition to rename or refigure the utopic, especially in the recognition of the importance of the need for something like an affectivity in our philosophic stance, this ending strikes me as too passive for Deleuze's philosophic tastes of experimentation and joyful living. Is this really resistance to the present?

In 'Coda: Sci-Phi', Flaxman turns to the issue of how to reformulate style to resist the present. Style must be derived from the future, not as a consequence but as the affirmation of the unknown. Therefore, we must engage with the most exterior of forces. By reframing the Outside in light of the future, Flaxman introduces science fiction, which is essentially to think beyond the realm of representation. Yet, even this must be qualified according to the untimely and the *imprevisible*. The sci-fi of philosophy has to begin with a recasting of the aesthetic, away from sci-fi which anticipates enlightenment progress, away from aim of perfect rationality and freedom, away from what can be represented in the sensible, because these all limit our inquiry and wandering (297). If 'the apocalypse of world belongs to Deleuze' (304), it is because Deleuze paves the way for sci-phi by understanding the catastrophes of modernity, the three deaths—of god as transcendence, man as reason, world as substance (302)—as the ashes which nourish the future, and the future belongs to *sciphi* as the ungrounded invention of concepts at the limits of philosophy.

This book, while obviously well-informed, is incredibly dense and assumes a familiarity with Deleuze's oeuvre which will likely be an impediment to anyone but the already initiated. Flaxman also takes what can generously be called liberties with several Deleuzian concepts, which could be interpreted as dramatization of fabulation. Yet, for all the playful talk of buggery and promiscuity, it would be remiss to omit one of the most problematic examples: the equation of becoming-woman with 'unmanning' (43), which disturbingly intersects with a description of *reluctant* buggery issuing in the impregnation of other philosophers. This is a blatant misappropriation. Becoming-woman must be situated within the process of molecularization, as the dismantling of rigid codifications and hegemonic paradigms. Also, this kind of irresponsible association gives fodder to those who are already skeptical of Deleuze's appropriation of woman.

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