

Introduction

The Transverse Way

Du côté de chez Deleuze

Near the end of Marcel Proust's *A la recherche du temps perdu*, as the narrator reflects on time and the complex interconnections among events that surge forth in involuntary memory, he considers the figure of Mlle de Saint-Loup, and asks:

Was she not – are not, indeed, the majority of human beings? – like one of those star-shaped cross-roads in a forest where roads converge that have come, in the forest as in our lives, from the most diverse quarter? Numerous for me were the roads which led to Mlle de Saint-Loup and which radiated around her. Firstly the two great “ways” themselves, where on many walks I had dreamed so many dreams, both led to her: through her father Robert de Saint-Loup, the Guermantes way; through Gilberte, her mother, the Méséglise way which was also “Swann’s way.” One of them took me, by way of this girl’s mother and the Champs-Élysées, to Swann, to my evenings at Combray, to Méséglise itself; the other, by way of her father, to those afternoons at Balbec where even now I saw him again near the sun-bright sea. And then between these two high roads a network of transversals was set up.¹

A network of transversals, of crisscrossing diagonal paths, interconnects the two “ways” that structure the book, the Guermantes way and the Méséglise way. Yet what is striking about these transversals is not simply that they interconnect. As Deleuze points out in his *Proust and Signs*, they interconnect entities that are closed in upon themselves, seemingly without communication with anything outside themselves. The Guermantes way and the Méséglise way, says the narrator, were like *vases clos*, chemical retorts, or sealed glass vessels. The two ways existed “far apart from one another and unaware of each other’s existence, in the sealed vessels of separate afternoons” (vol. 1, p. 147, translation modified). The same is true of every experience of involuntary memory in the *Recherche*. As the narrator observes when he reflects on the multiple associations tied to a given sensation

... the act or gesture remains immured as within a thousand sealed vessels, each one of them filled with things of a colour, a scent, a temperature that are absolutely different one from another, vessels, moreover, which being disposed over the whole range of our years, during which we have never ceased to change if only in our dreams and our thoughts, are situated at the most various moral altitudes and give us the sensation of extraordinarily diverse atmospheres. [vol. 3, p. 903]

1 Marcel Proust, *Remembrance of Things Past*, trans. C.K. Moncrieff and Terence Kilmartin (New York, 1982), vol. 3, pp. 1084–85.

Transversals provide communication among incommunicables. The multiple sealed glass vessels of the *Recherche* are interconnected, says Deleuze

... by *transversals*, which make us leap from one profile of Albertine to another, from one Albertine to another, from one world to another, from one word to another, without ever gathering the multiple within the One, without ever reassembling the multiple in a whole, but affirming the very original unity of this particular multiple, affirming without uniting *all [tous]* these irreducible fragments within a Whole [*Tout*]. [PS 153/126]

The function of transversals is to assemble multiplicities, yet in such a way that the differences among entities are not effaced but intensified. As Proust's narrator says of a railway trip, "the specific attraction of a journey lies not in our being able to alight at places on the way and to stop altogether as soon as we grow tired, but in its making the difference between departure and arrival not as imperceptible but as intense as possible."² Transversals, like Proust's railway journeys, are the passages that render maximum intensity to the differences between multiple locations.

Deleuze's way is the transverse way, the diagonal path connecting incommunicable ways, a trajectory that intensifies the distances between locations. His way is also a way of doing – a practice of making transverse connections, of assembling multiplicities that affirm their differences through their connections. In Proust, Deleuze first came upon the notion of transversality, but he met it as well, in a different guise, in the early work of his frequent collaborator, Félix Guattari. In *Psychoanalysis and Transversality* (1972), which assembles Guattari's papers and interventions from the 1960s, Guattari reflects on the difficulty of bringing genuine change to the structure and operation of psychiatric institutions. He identifies two dimensions in psychiatric institutions, "a verticality that you find for example in an organizational diagram with a pyramidal structure (directors, subdirectors, etc.)," and "a horizontality like that which takes form in the hospital courtyard, in the ward for the disturbed, even more so in the wards for the senile, that is, a certain state of affairs in which things and people arrange themselves as best they can in the situation in which they find themselves" (PT 79/17). The problem, as he sees it, is to change both vertical hierarchies of authority and horizontal modes of interaction, to put into effect a "maximum communication ... among different levels and above all in different directions" (PT 80/18). In a hospital, "the 'coefficient of transversality' is [measured by] the degree of blindness of the staff," and the modification of the institution involves an intensification of transversality such that blindness decreases and there is "a structural redefinition of the role of each individual and a reorientation of the whole group [*ensemble*]" (PT 80/18). Transversality is "a contrary and complementary dimension to the generative structures of pyramidal hierarchization and sterilizing modes of transmitting messages" (PT 84/22). By increasing an institution's coefficient of transversality Guattari hopes to form a "group-subject" (as opposed to a "subjected group"), one capable of shaping itself according to its own needs and desires.

Proust's transversals and Guattari's transversality might seem distant from one another, but both may be seen as dimensions of Deleuze's transverse way. Proust's

2 Proust, *Remembrance of Things Past*, vol. 1, p. 693.

transversals provide connections in experience, linking sensations and memories, and thereby putting in communication incommunicable worlds and durations. They also make possible the work of art that is the *Recherche*, itself a structuring of transversals that emphasizes the singleness of the work as a heterogeneous multiplicity. Hence Proust's transversals concern the domain of the aesthetic in its largest sense, that is, the realm of sense experience and the realm of art. Guattari's transversality is primarily a social and political concept, but in Deleuze's view, and in Guattari's, the social and the political are inseparable from sensation and creation, whether that creation takes place in the arts, the sciences, politics, or any other sphere of human endeavor.

The term "transversality" does not occupy a central place in Deleuze and Guattari's collaborative works, but it does appear in *Anti-Oedipus* during the authors' exposition of the goals they foresee for "schizoanalysis." One of these goals is the formation of a group subject, whose "libidinal investments are themselves revolutionary." Against the stratified libidinal investments of subjected groups, it "opposes real coefficients of transversality, with neither hierarchy nor group super-ego" (AO 417–18/348–9). In their next book, *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*, Deleuze and Guattari do not mention the group subject or transversality, but they do speak about the immediately social and collective nature of Kafka's work and of his desire to form a "people to come." This "people to come" clearly is a version of the group subject shaped by "real coefficients of transversality," and in *Kafka* they argue that literature as a whole has as one of its primary aims that of inventing a people to come. Finally, in their last collaborative effort, *What Is Philosophy?* (1991), Deleuze and Guattari go even further and state that the arts, the sciences and philosophy, despite their fundamental differences, share the common task of creating a people to come (QP 206/218).

The line of thought from "transversality" to the "people to come," then, leads to a consideration of the social and political dimensions of the arts, and, ultimately, to the fundamental question of the relationship between the ethical, which I take in a broad sense as the domain of values and action, and the aesthetic. Proust's transversals are constituents of experience and means of artistic construction, but they also are the tools for forming connections, and hence modes of thought that might be extended to any domain. One might say that the transverse way as mode of thought, finally, is the activity of forming transverse connections that intensify differences and bring forth new possibilities for life, in the arts, the sciences, politics, philosophy, and all other spheres of action. My effort in this volume is to explore Deleuze's transverse way of thinking and some of the transverse pathways he traces within the aesthetic and between the aesthetic and the ethical.

Although Deleuze does not develop a formal ethics as a discrete component of his philosophy, there is a sense in which the ethical permeates all his work. In the first essay of this volume, I trace the outlines of what might be deemed Deleuze's immanent ethics, in which value emerges as a constituent of the unfolding real. From the vantage of this immanent ethics, I consider a series of subjects involving the arts and social practice. In "Minority, Territory, Music," I examine the concept of "the minor" in literature and music, using "territory" as a means of connecting the two. Deleuze is an advocate of minor literature, whose ethical dimension lies in its effort

to invent a new collectivity, an as yet nonexistent "people to come." I argue that for Deleuze music shares minor literature's basic ends, and that both have as their project the deterritorialization of territories and the invention of a future collectivity that only coheres to the extent that it remains a force of deterritorialization. The ethical concern of the second essay, "Violence in Three Shades of Metal: Death, Doom and Black," is that of violence in popular culture, specifically that of violence in three forms of heavy metal music: "death metal," "doom metal" and "black metal." My argument here is that Deleuze's approach to music and deterritorialization helps clarify the relationship between violent action and artistic practice, and that death, doom and black metal are not direct forms of violence, but, like all modes of artistic practice, ways of shaping materials that can be appropriated for any number of social ends.

In "Search, Swim and See: Deleuze's Apprenticeship in Signs and Pedagogy of Images," I approach the ethics of art through a consideration of Deleuze's scattered remarks on education. In *Proust and Signs*, Deleuze follows the course of the narrator's apprenticeship in signs, which Deleuze regards as a training in the art of "thinking otherwise." That apprenticeship, I show, resembles the process whereby one learns to swim, as Deleuze describes it in *Difference and Repetition*. Learning to think and to swim, I then argue, may be connected to Deleuze's cinema theory, in which learning to think otherwise is a matter of learning to see in a new way. And it is in Godard's "pedagogy of images," I conclude, that Deleuze finds an especially effective method of inducing new modes of vision that function as new modes of thought. Godard's pedagogy of images involves both sight and sound, and in "Tragedy, Sight and Sound," I offer a Deleuzian analysis of the interrelationship of the visual and the aural in Godard's *Prénom Carmen* (1983). Godard's pedagogy of visual and sonic images, I try to show, teaches us to stop seeing and hearing the clichés that clutter the world and to see and hear the new that is already there.

In his later writings, Deleuze approaches the topic of the people to come via the concept of "fabulation," a notion he takes from Bergson's *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion*, in which Bergson identifies a function of fabulation, or myth-making, that he sees as essential to the formation of the morality and religion of traditional, closed societies. In "Bergsonian Fabulation and the People to Come," I show first how Deleuze turns what is a negative function in Bergson into a positive force by redefining fabulation as an activation of the "powers of the false," a way of falsifying orthodox truths and fashioning new truths, with the ethical aim of fostering a people to come. I then consider the curious fact that in both Bergson and Deleuze fabulation involves no genuine *fabula*, or story, concluding that for Bergson, music is the paradigmatic creative art, since it has no ties to the myth-making function of fabulation, whereas for Deleuze, the visual arts have a special privilege, since they render the new visible without structuring it through any pre-existing stories. In "Re-viewing Deleuze's Sacher-Masoch," I turn to Deleuze's 1967 study of the novelist Sacher-Masoch and his brief reprise of that study in 1991, treating these texts as particularly striking examples of Deleuze's preference for the visual over the narrative. I conclude that what attracts Deleuze to Sacher-Masoch, finally, is the anti-narrative nature of Sacher-Masoch's narratives, in which an aesthetic of suspended temporality, of perpetual deferral and frozen tableaux, proves to be an aesthetic of

the untimely event, and in this regard, an aesthetic that may be seen as an instance of Deleuzian fabulation.

The last three essays of this volume focus on “nomadology,” the subject of an extended section of *A Thousand Plateaus* (1980). Deleuzian nomadism, one might say, is a version of the transverse way, a means of forming connections across the spheres of the arts, politics, the sciences, and culture in general. At first glance, nomadology seems to have little to do with actual nomads, but I argue in “Apology for Nomadology” that a proper understanding of the concept of the nomadic allows us to engage in meaningful analysis of actual nomadic practices in a number of cultural spheres. As an example, I consider gypsy music, first as the product of a wandering people, then as a component of popular and high art culture in East Central Europe, and finally as an element against which Bartók reacts in developing his own Hungarian version of European modernist music. In “Nomadism, Globalism, and Cultural Studies,” I propose nomadism as a means of approaching the phenomenon of globalization, the “nomadic” providing the model of an “open whole” that might lead to a “globalism” that stands in opposition to a Western-dominant process of globalization. I suggest a way in which this nomadic globalism might be related to cultural studies by offering a program for research in comparative poetics, one that would seek to formulate a transcultural poetics through a process of acentered cultural interaction. In my final essay, I review an essay by Christopher L. Miller, in which he offers an extended critique of nomadology that condemns nomadic thought and cultural analysis as arrogant and irresponsible. I argue that nomadology’s claims are not as arrogant as they might seem, and that nomadic thought does not entail an abandonment of rigor or ethical responsibility. Rather, it offers a mode of thought with genuine possibilities for innovative analysis of aesthetics and culture as a whole.

The transverse way is the path in between, the diagonal across the grids of horizontal and vertical coordinates, the zigzag of a line of continuous variation. Its time is that of the *entre-temps*, the meantime or meanwhile, and its space is the middle, *in medias res*, always underway among things. The transverse way connects by affirming differences, constructing transversals that set the incommunicable in communication. Its transversals are agents of transversality, forces with the social and political function of bringing forth group subjects and inventing a people to come. The transverse way is a way of thinking, a way of making (*poiesis*), and a way of acting, and hence a pathway across the domains of philosophy, aesthetics and ethics. Deleuze’s transverse way is methodic and systematic, but open-ended in its method and system, only to be seized in its ongoing practice. In these essays, I have tried to examine that transverse way in some of its variations, to follow its paths and connections across the arts and into other fields. Each of the essays is intended to be comprehensible by itself, and as a result, some of Deleuze’s concepts are set forth more than once. My hope is that multiple passes at Deleuze’s often difficult ideas will prove more of a blessing than a burden to readers, both in comprehending the ideas themselves, and in observing the ways in which the ideas take on new dimensions in differing contexts. But above all, my object is to articulate some fundamental aspects of Deleuze’s art of thinking, his transverse practice of an immanent ethics of creation that opens new possibilities for life.