

Brian Massumi



Couplets

Travels in Speculative Pragmatism

COUPLETS

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THOUGHT IN THE ACT

A series edited by Brian Massumi and Erin Manning

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B R I A N M A S S U M I

Couplets:
Travels in
Speculative
Pragmatism

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DUKE UNIVERSITY PRESS DURHAM AND LONDON 2021

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Printed in the United States of America on acid-free paper ∞

Designed by Matthew Tauch

Typeset in Quadraat and Meta by Westchester Publishing

Services

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Massumi, Brian, author.

Title: Couplets : travels in speculative pragmatism / Brian Massumi.

Other titles: Thought in the act.

Description: Durham : Duke University Press, 2021. | Series: Thought in the act | Includes bibliographical references and index.

Identifiers: LCCN 2021004649 (print)

LCCN 2021004650 (ebook)

ISBN 9781478013730 (hardcover)

ISBN 9781478014669 (paperback)

ISBN 9781478021964 (ebook)

Subjects: LCSH: Experience. | Pragmatism. | Arts—Philosophy. | Political science—Philosophy. | Perception (Philosophy) | Affect (Psychology) | BISAC: PHILOSOPHY / General | LCGFT: Essays.

Classification: LCC B105.E9 M374 2021 (print) | LCC B105.E9 (ebook) | DDC 144/.3—dc23

LC record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2021004649>

LC ebook record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2021004650>

Cover art: Simryn Gill, detail from *Naught*, 2010–. Objects in the shape of zeros found on walks. Courtesy of the artist. Photo by Jenni Carter.

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NOTE TO THE READER

The essays collected in this volume span a period of thirty-three years, from among the very earliest I published to the most recent. They have been selected to cover close to the full the range of topics my work has addressed.¹ Most are previously published, scattered in time and far-flung in publishing context. Their content intersects with that of the published books but also supplements them in important respects.

The essays are not presented in chronological order, nor are they necessarily grouped by subject area. They have been paired in order to suggest cross-connections, on the chance that different transversals might form than in a reading process framed by conventional categories or ordered to suggest a linear development of ideas.

There is, of course, no imperative that the essays be read couplet by couplet. They can be traveled in order from the beginning, the last of one couplet connecting the first of the next. Or they may be dipped into here and there in spot visits following the reader's inclinations, composing informal couplets along the way. However the book is approached, it is hoped that transversal connections will emerge among the essays and, for readers familiar with them, with the books. This book is made for meandering.

Previously published texts have not been significantly edited. The changes are largely restricted to updating bibliographical citations (for example, when a book cited in French subsequently appeared in English translation, or an essay later appeared in a collection that became the standard reference). The previously unpublished essays were in various states of incompleteness and have undergone revision to round them out. Newly added notes have been enclosed in brackets. The dates attached to each title indicate the year of composition, which does not always coincide with the year of publication.

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Couplet 1

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2019

Extreme Realism

In Sixteen Series

Series 1

Everything must be somewhere. (Whitehead 1978, 46)

Real is . . .

Located.

But not restricted to simple location.

The real includes potential. Potential is real. Its mode of reality is “proximate relevance” (Whitehead 1978, 46). Proximate: to a somewhere everything must be. Relevant: in expressing “a fact of togetherness among forms” (32). The fact of togetherness is the relation of the thing that is somewhere to occasions beyond itself: its inclusion in its own “real constitution” (59) of the elsewhere and elsewhen of its being such.

“Everything is positively somewhere in actuality, and in potency everywhere.” (Whitehead 1978, 40)

A process set up anywhere reverberates everywhere. (James 1950, 371)

Real is . . .

Relational.

“This is the direct denial of the Cartesian doctrine, ‘. . . an existent thing which requires nothing but itself in order to exist.’” (Whitehead 1978, 59)

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Series 2

“The vague always tends to become determinate, simply because its vagueness does not determine it to be vague.” (Peirce 1992a, 323)

Real is . . .

“Indetermination, rendered determinate.” (Whitehead 1978, 23)

The concrete fact is the here-and-now of elsewhere and elsewhere in potency, tending to become.

Real is . . .

Determined to be determined.

But never so determined as to be without remainder.

There is always more.

Real is . . .

Excessive.

“While our [all-too-human] motto is *Exactly what is necessary*, nature’s motto is *More than is necessary*,—too much of this, too much of that, too much of everything. Reality is redundant and superabundant.” (Bergson 2007, 178)

Series 3

“Say ‘now’ and it was even while you say it.” (James 1996b, 254)

Real is . . .

Transitional.

“We live, as it were, upon the front edge of an advancing wave-crest, and our sense of a determinate direction in falling forward is all we cover of the future of our path.” (James 1996a, 69)

Real is . . .

Oriented and open-ended.

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Its determination to be determined, on an advancing wave-crest, describes a tendency. What it tends toward are “termini.”

“These termini . . . are self-supporting. They are not ‘true’ of anything else, they simply *are*, are *real*. They ‘lean on nothing.’ . . . Rather, does the whole fabric of experience lean on them.” (James 1996a, 202)

“Nine-tenths of the time these are not actually but only virtually there.”

(James 1996a, 72)

Real is . . .

Ninety percent virtual.

Series 4

Real is . . .

Even when it isn’t.

“To speak of anything, is to speak of something which, by reason of that very speech, is in some way a component in that act of experience. In some sense or another, it is thereby known to exist. This is what Plato pointed out when he wrote, Not-being is itself a sort of being.” (Whitehead 1978, 223)

“He is merely thinking of his forms as including alternative possibilities.”

(Whitehead 1978, 117).

Real is . . .

Ninety percent alternative possibilities.

“The actual includes what (in one sense) is ‘not-being’ as a positive factor in its own achievement.” (Whitehead 1978, 189)

“Fact is confronted with alternatives.” (Whitehead 1978, 189)

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Series 5

Real is . . .

Given.

“In the real world there is always, over and above ‘law,’ a factor of the ‘simply given’ or ‘brute fact,’ not accounted for and to be accepted simply as given.” (Whitehead 1978, 42)

Real is . . .

Unrefusable.

“Matter-of-fact is tinged with the notion of a compulsive determinism.”
(Whitehead 1968, 7)

Real is . . .

Stubborn.

“Reality is insistency. That is what we mean by ‘reality.’” (Peirce 1935, 340)

Yet . . .

There is no avoiding alternative possibilities as a positive factor betokening
the relation of the given to occasions beyond itself.

Fact is confronted with alternatives. As a matter of fact, it is relationally
more-than-necessary.

“A phenomenon of force is both a fact and more-than-fact, a given and
more-than-given, for force directs itself, beyond its present existence,
toward a state it itself will produce.” (Ruyer 1948, 142)

Real is also . . .

What compulsively surpasses the given.

“‘Givenness’ refers to ‘potentiality,’ and ‘potentiality’ to ‘givenness.’”
(Whitehead 1978, 45)

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6 COUPLET 1

Real is . . .

The giving of itself of potential.

Not the thing-in-itself, once and for all. Instead, the ever *of-itself* of the world's potential, ongoing.

This is in direct denial of the doctrine of substance.

“How an actual entity becomes constitutes what that actual entity is. . . .

Its ‘being’ is constituted by its ‘becoming.’ This is the ‘principle of process.’” (Whitehead 1978, 23)

“The universe is thus a creative advance into novelty.”

(Whitehead 1978, 23)

Real is . . .

Process.

Insistently, creatively advancing, to surpass the given, into novelty.

This is the principle of unrest.

“Every ultimate actuality embodies in its own essence . . . ‘a principle of unrest,’ namely, its becoming.” (Whitehead 1978, 28)

“The alternative to this doctrine is a static morphological universe.”
(Whitehead 1978, 23)

Series 6

Real is . . .

Expressive.

Always giving of-itself, it is ongoingly expressive (of potential, determined to be determined).

“It is not experience that organizes expression, but the other way around—
expression organizes experience.” (Vološinov 1986, 85)

“Expression becomes independent in its own right, in other words,
autonomous.” (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 59)

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Real is . . .

Not in the interiority of a subject. Expression is not of the subject, it is of the world.

Series 7

Real is . . .

Effective.

To be real is to produce an effect. Anything that produces an effect is real.

The effect expresses the tension inherent in an antecedent activity compulsively conditioning what comes next, in both its unrefusable givenness and its surpassing the given. Even if the antecedent activity is not itself given, it still is, in effect.

“The objective content of the initial phase of reception is the real antecedent world, as given for that occasion. This is the ‘reality’ from which that creative advance starts. It is the basic fact of the new occasion, with its concordances and discordances awaiting coordination in the new creature” (Whitehead 1967a, 210). The novelty of the new creature’s coordination of the activity it inherits from the antecedent world settles into the world to provide the objective content of the initial phase of a next pulse of process succeeding it, in a snowball world on-rolling, continually self-producing, in an additive roll-over of variation.

“There is only one kind of production, the production of the real.” (Deleuze and Guattari 1983, 32)

“Real activities are those that really make things be.” (James 1996a, 182)

Series 8

Real is . . .

Self-affirming and self-explaining.

The “what” of it is “how” it produces (itself).

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“Reality is just itself, and it is nonsense to ask whether it be true or false.”

(Whitehead 1967a, 241)

Real is . . .

Fundamentally propositional, as opposed to true or false.

A proposition is as “a lure for feeling providing immediacy of enjoyment” (Whitehead 1978, 184). An event throws off lures like spores to the future. It has the power to do this because, activating real potential, its occurrence is surrounded by a “penumbra of alternatives” (185). This penumbra is its propositional content, surpassing the “objective content” of its conditions of emergence, in a future-looking movement into the new determination of a next pulse of process. This is the real’s advancing edge of *speculative* content, not yet subject to any judgment of true or false. What is “entertained” is the advancing potential; what it is entertained by, is process.

“No verbal statement is the adequate expression of a proposition.”

(Whitehead 1978, 13)

“It is merely credulous to accept verbal phrases as adequate statements of propositions. The distinction between verbal phrases and complete propositions is one of the reasons why the logicians’ rigid alternative, ‘true or false,’ is so largely irrelevant for the pursuit of knowledge.”

(Whitehead 1978, 11)

Real is . . .

An enactive speculation on its own production, as a complete proposition.

Real is . . .

Self-entertaining.

Self-enjoying.

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Series 9

Real is . . .

Additive.

Real is . . .

Without negation. It is a complete, self-renewing proposition. Even not-being is being. To say this is not a contradiction. It is a statement about modes of reality.

“Again everything is something, which in its own way is real. When you refer to something as unreal, you are merely conceiving a type of reality to which ‘something’ does not belong. But to be real is not to be self-sustaining. Also modes of reality require each other. It is the task of philosophy to elucidate the relevance to each other of various types of existence. We cannot exhaust such types because there are an unending number of them. But we can start with two types which to us seem as extremes; and can then discern these types as requiring other types to express their mutual relevance to each other” (Whitehead 1968, 69–70). Even being and nonbeing.

“There is not less, but more in the idea of nonbeing than that of being.”

(Deleuze 1991a, 17)

“In the idea of nonbeing there is in fact the idea of being, plus a logical operation of generalized negation, plus the particular psychological motive for that operation (such as when a being does not correspond to our expectation and we grasp it purely as the lack, the absence of what interests us).” (Deleuze 1991a, 17)

“By affirming one thing, and then another, and so on *ad infinitum*, I form the idea of ‘All’; so, by denying one thing and then other things, finally by denying All, I arrive at the idea of Nothing. . . . Negation, therefore . . . is an affirmation of the second degree.” (Bergson 1998, 287)

Not only is there more in the idea of nonbeing than in that of being, in the affirmation of negation there is more than all there is.

Series 10

Real is . . .

Modal.

Modes of reality require each other. All types require other types to express their mutual relevance to each other.

“Existence is all existences; it is every mode of existing. In all and each apart, existence integrally resides and accomplishes itself.” (Souriau 2015, 187, translation modified)

Real is . . .

Mutual relevance.

Mutual inclusion in self-accomplishing production.

“The occasion is one among others, and including the others which it is among.” (Whitehead 1967a, 180)

Remembering that . . .

“There are always ‘others,’ which might have been and are not.”
(Whitehead 1967a, 276)

Series 11

Real is . . .

Modal variation, inclusive of otherness.

“The present occasion while claiming self-identity, while sharing the very nature of the bygone occasion in all its living activities, nevertheless is engaged in modifying it, in adjusting it to other influences, in completing it with other values, in deflecting it to other purposes. The present moment is constituted by the influx of the other into that self-identity which is the continued life of the immediate past [the given] within the immediacy of the present [the surpassing of the given].” (Whitehead 1967a, 181)

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“For modulation is the operation of the Real.” (*Deleuze* 1989, 28)

Series 12

Real is . . .

A plenum.

It is conjunctive.

This is another way of saying that it is relational, and that it continues across the production of relations succeeding each other. Its complete proposition describes a continuum.

“The relations that connect experiences must themselves be experienced relations, and any kind of relation experienced must be accounted as ‘real’ as anything else in the system.” (*James* 1996a, 42)

Real is . . .

Radically empirical.

“Radical empiricism does full justice to conjunctive relations.”
(*James* 1996a, 44)

Series 13

Real is . . .

Disjunctive.

Cut.

“Everything stops dead for a moment, everything freezes in place—and then the whole process will begin all over again.” (*Deleuze and Guattari* 1983, 7)

Cut-flow.

“That is because the breaks in the process are productive.” (*Deleuze and Guattari* 1983, 43)

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Real is . . .

As separative as it is connective.

We can start with two types which to us seem as extremes and can then discern these types as requiring other types to express their mutual relevance to each other.

“Conjunctions and separations are, at all events, co-ordinate phenomena which, if we take experiences at their face value, must be accounted equally real.” (*James 1996a*, 51)

Real is . . .

Enchainment.

Entrainment.

Series 14

Real is . . .

Transindividual.

“We are more than the individuals; we are the whole chain as well, with the tasks of all the futures of that chain.” (*Nietzsche 1967*, 366)

Series 15

Real is . . .

Felt.

It is felt to be.

To be is to be felt.

To be real is to have an effect. The effect cannot but be felt. Without being felt, it would be without effect.

“Experience and reality come to the same thing.” (*James 1996a*, 59)

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Real is . . .

Panexperiential.

This should not be misunderstood as fundamentally being in a subject, in any sense of the word, much less as being limited to a human subject.

“By feeling I mean nothing but sensation minus the attribution of it to any particular subject.” (Peirce 1931, 332)

“At the heart of the human, there is nothing human.” (Lapoujade 2018, 47, translation modified)

Primordially, feeling is not something that an actual entity has. It is what constitutes its very being, in otherness.

“Constituting an actual entity is one complex, fully determinate feeling.” (Whitehead 1978, 25–26)

A feeling, of the world. Of the influx of the other, modulating the self-identity of the occasion’s immediate past. Of the potential to be otherwise that is otherness.

Real is . . .

Prehension.

A self-constituting grasping of the potential, in whatever mode, whether sensation, perception, or simply a taking account through the registering of an effect, at the heart of nothing human.

“I use the term ‘prehension’ for the general way in which the occasion of experience can include, as part of its own essence, any other entity, whether another occasion of experience or an entity of another type.” (Whitehead 1967a, 234)

Real is . . .

Grasped philosophically in a “critique of pure feeling” (Whitehead 1978, 113).

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Series 16

Real is . . .

Extremist.

It is non-eliminative. It is as extreme as can be in its non-negation. It is all-embracing in its additivity. It is all-proposing, throwing out at every instant a lure for feeling, for immediacy of enjoyment.

Just as philosophy should be.

“Nothing can be omitted, experience drunk and experience sober, experience sleeping and experience waking, experience drowsy and experience wide-awake, experience self-conscious and experience self-forgetful, experience intellectual and experience physical, experience religious and experience sceptical, experience anxious and experience care-free, experience anticipatory and experience retrospective, experience happy and experience grieving, experience dominated by emotion and experience under self-restraint, experience in the light and experience in the dark, experience normal and experience abnormal.” (*Whitehead 1967a*, 226)

Experience human and experience nonhuman.

Coda

“Life is the clutch at vivid immediacy.” (*Whitehead 1978*, 105)

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Realer Than Real

The Simulacrum according to Deleuze and Guattari

There is a seductive image of contemporary culture circulating today. Our world, Jean Baudrillard tells us, has been launched into hyperspace in a kind of postmodern apocalypse (1983b). The airless atmosphere has asphyxiated the referent, leaving us satellites in aimless orbit around an empty center. We breathe an ether of floating images that no longer bear a relation to any reality whatsoever (11). That, according to Baudrillard, is simulation: the substitution of signs of the real for the real (4). In hyperreality, signs no longer represent or refer to an external model. They stand for nothing but themselves and refer only to other signs. They are to some extent distinguishable, in the way the phonemes of language are, by a combinatory of minute binary distinctions (145–46). But postmodernism slurs. In the absence of any gravitational pull to ground them, images accelerate and tend to run together. They become interchangeable. Any term can be substituted for any other: utter indetermination (Baudrillard 1983a, 56). Faced with this homogeneous surface of syntagmatic slippage, we are left speechless. We can only gape in fascination (35–37). For the secret of the process is beyond our grasp. Meaning has imploded. There is no longer any external model, but there is an internal principle. To the syntagmatic surface of slippage there corresponds an invisible paradigmatic dimension that creates those minimally differentiated signs only in order for them to blur together in a pleasureless orgy of exchange and circulation. Hidden in the images is a kind of genetic code responsible for their generation (Baudrillard 1983b, 55–58, 113–15). Meaning is out of reach and out of sight, but not because it has receded into the distance. It is because the code has been miniaturized. Objects are images, images are signs, signs

are information, and information fits on a chip. Everything reduces to a molecular binarism: the generalized digitality of the computerized society (56–57, 134–35).

And so we gape. We cannot be said to be passive exactly, because all polarity, including the active/passive dichotomy, has disappeared. We have no earth to center us, but we ourselves function as a ground—in the electrical sense (Baudrillard 1983a, 1–2). We do not act, but neither do we merely receive. We absorb through our open eyes and mouths. We neutralize the play of energized images in the mass entropy of the silent majority.

It makes for a fun read. But do we really have no other choice than being a naive realist or being a sponge? Deleuze and Guattari open a third way. Although it is never developed at length in any one place, a theory of simulation can be extracted from their work that can give us a start in analyzing our cultural condition under late capitalism without landing us back with the dinosaurs or launching us into hypercynicism.

A common definition of the simulacrum is a copy of a copy whose relation to the model has become so attenuated that it can no longer properly be said to be a copy. It stands on its own as a copy without a model. Fredric Jameson cites the example of photorealism (1991). The painting is a copy not of reality but of a photograph, which is already a copy of the original (30). Deleuze, in his essay “Plato and the Simulacrum,” takes a similar definition as his starting point, but emphasizes its inadequacy (1990). For beyond a certain point, the distinction is no longer one of degree. The simulacrum is less a copy twice removed than a phenomenon of a different nature altogether: it undermines the very distinction between copy and model (256–58). The terms “copy” and “model” bind us to the world of representation and objective (re)production. A copy, no matter how many times removed, authentic or fake, is defined by the presence or absence in its makeup of essential relations of resemblance to a model. The simulacrum, on the other hand, bears only an external and deceptive resemblance to a putative model. The process of its production, its inner dynamism, is entirely different from that of its supposed model; its resemblance to it is merely a surface effect (258, 262–63). The production and function of a photograph has no relation to those of the object photographed, and the photorealist painting in

turn envelops an essential difference from the photograph. It is that masked difference, not the manifest resemblance, that produces the effect of uncanniness so often associated with the simulacrum. A copy is made in order to stand in for its model. A simulacrum has a different agenda; it enters different circuits. Pop Art is the example Deleuze uses for simulacra that have successfully broken out of the copy mold: the multiplied, stylized images take on a life of their own (265). The thrust of the process is not to become an equivalent of the “model” but to turn against it and its world in order to open a new space for the simulacrum’s own mad proliferation. The simulacrum affirms its own difference. It is not an implosion but a differentiation; it is an index not of absolute proximity but of galactic distances.

The resemblance of the simulacrum is a means, not an end. A thing, write Deleuze and Guattari, “in order to become apparent, is forced to simulate structural states and to slip into states of forces that serve it as masks. . . . Underneath the mask and by means of it, it already invests the terminal forms and the specific higher states whose integrity it will subsequently establish” (1983, 91). Resemblance is a beginning masking the advent of a whole new vital dimension. This even applies to mimicry in nature. An insect that mimics a leaf does so not to meld with the vegetable state of its surrounding milieu but to reenter the higher realm of predatory animal warfare on a new footing. Mimicry, according to Lacan, is camouflage (1981, 99; cited in Alliez and Feher 1986, 5111). It constitutes a war zone. There is a power inherent in the false: the positive power of ruse, the power to gain a strategic advantage by masking one’s life force.

Ridley Scott’s film *Blade Runner* (1982) shows that the ultimate enemy in this war of ruse is the so-called model itself. Off-world replicants return to earth not to blend in with the indigenous population as an end in itself but to find the secret of their built-in obsolescence so they can escape their bondage and live full lives, and on their own terms. Imitation is an indication of a life force propelling the falsifier toward the unbridled expression of its uniqueness. The dominant replicant makes a statement to the man who made his eyes that can be taken as a general formula for simulation: “If only you could see what I have seen with your eyes.” If they find out how to undo their preprogrammed deaths,

the replicants will not remain on earth as imitation humans. They will either take over or flee back to their own vital dimension of interplanetary space to see things no human being ever has or will. Their imitation is only a way-station en route to an unmasking and the assumption of difference. As Eric Alliez and Michel Feher (1986, 54) observe, the best weapon against the simulacrum is not to unmask it as a false copy but to force it to be a true copy, thereby resubmitting it to representation and the mastery of the model: the corporation that built the rebellious replicants introduces a new version complete with secondhand human memories.

I said earlier that the simulacrum cannot adequately be discussed in terms of copy and model, and now I find myself not only talking about a model again but claiming that it is in a life-and-death struggle with the simulacrum. The reality of the model is a question that needs to be dealt with. Baudrillard sidesteps the question of whether simulation replaces a real that did indeed exist, or if simulation is all there has ever been (1983a, 70–83). Deleuze and Guattari say yes to both (1983). The alternative is a false one because simulation is a process that *produces* the real or, more precisely more real (a more-than-real) on the basis of the real. Simulation “carries the real beyond its principle to the point where it is effectively produced” (87). Every simulation takes as its point of departure a regularized world comprising apparently stable identities or territories. But these “real” entities are in fact undercover simulacra that have consented to feign being copies. A silent film by Louis Feuillade illustrates the process.

Vendémiaire (1919) takes place in the final days of World War I. The plot is simple: members of a well-to-do family from the north of France who cannot fight in the war flee to unoccupied territory in the south to contribute their efforts to the wine harvest. There they meet one of the daughters’ husband-to-be and a sinister pair of German prisoners of war who have obtained identity papers by killing two Belgians and try to pass themselves off as Allies until they can get enough money to flee to Spain. The Germans’ plan is to steal from the vineyard owners and pin the theft on a gypsy woman who is also working on the harvest. The plan fails when one of the Germans, about to be found out, jumps into

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an empty grape storage tank. He is killed by poisonous gases produced by grapes fermenting in the next tank. His corpse is found still clutching the loot, and the gypsy woman is saved. His lonely comrade later betrays himself by getting drunk and speaking in German.

The film is bracketed by grapes. The grape harvest supplies the initial motivation that sets up the situation of the plot, and the grapes themselves rather than any human hero resolve the dilemma. The film is not only bracketed by grapes; it swims in wine as its very element. Every crucial moment is expressed in terms of wine: love is expressed by the scintillating image of the faraway wife dancing in the husband's wine cup; the German menace in its highest expression is one of the escapees stomping on the grape vine; heroism is exemplified by an altruistic trooper who braves death to bring wine back to the trenches to give his comrades a taste of the homeland that will revive their will to victory; when victory does come, it is toasted with wine; and the movie ends with a sentimental tableau of the vines and a final intertitle saying that from these vineyards a new nation will be reborn. "Simulation," Deleuze and Guattari write, "does not replace reality . . . but rather it appropriates reality in the operation of despotic overcoding, it produces reality on the new full body that replaces the earth. It expresses the appropriation and production of the real by a quasi-cause" (1983, 210). The undivided, abstract flow of wine is the glorified body of the nation. It arrogates to itself the power of love, victory, and rebirth. It presents itself as first and final cause. But the war was obviously not won with wine. Its causality is an illusion. But it is an effective illusion because it is reinjected into reality and sets to work: it expresses love, and thereby motivates the man to be a good husband and give sons to the nation rising; it expresses patriotism, and thereby spurs the soldiers to victory. That is why it is called a quasi-cause. It abstracts from bodies and things a transcendent plane of ideal identities: a glorious wife, a glorious family, a glorious nation. ("It carries the real beyond its principle . . .") Then it folds that ideal dimension back down onto bodies and things in order to force them to conform to the distribution of identities it lays out for them. (" . . . to the point where it is effectively produced.") It creates the entire network of resemblance and

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representation. Both copy and model are the products of the same fabulatory process, the final goal of which is the re-creation of the earth, the creation of a new territory.

The power of the quasi-cause is essentially distributive. It separates the good bodies from the bad. In other words, it separates the bodies that agree to resemble the glorious illusion as their model from those that do not, and polices for renegade copies operating with a different agenda. The quasi-cause enables the French patriots to unmask the conniving Germans, and it shows up the gypsy for the true, hardworking Frenchwoman that she is despite her apparent otherness.¹

This account overcomes the polarity between the model and the copy by treating them both as second-order productions, as working parts in the same machine. But it seems to leave intact the dichotomy between the real and the imaginary—until it is realized that the bodies and things that are taken up by this fabulatory process are themselves the result of prior simulation-based distributions operating on other levels with different quasi-causes. Simulation upon simulation. Reality is nothing but a well-tempered harmony of simulation. The world is a complex circuit of interconnected simulations, in which Feuillade's own film takes its place. It was made in 1919, just after the war. Every war, especially one of those dimensions, has a powerful deterritorializing effect: the mobilization of troops and supplies, refugees from other countries, refugees to other countries, families broken, entire regions leveled . . . The film itself is a simulation meant to insert itself into that disjointed situation to help induce a unifying reterritorialization, to contribute to the rebirth of the nation. Vendémiaire is the first month of the Republican calendar.

So what we are left with is a distinction not primarily between the model and the copy, or the real and the imaginary, but between two modes of simulation. One, exemplified in Feuillade's film, is normative, regularizing, and reproductive. It selects only certain properties of the entities it takes up: hard work, loyalty, good parenting, and so on. It creates a network of surface resemblances. They are surface resemblances because at bottom they are not resemblances at all but standardized actions: what those entities do when called upon (the gypsy in this respect is as French as the French). What bodies do depends on where they land

in an abstract grid of miraculated identities that are in practice only a bundle of normalized and basically reproductive functions. It is not a question of Platonic copies but of human replicants. Every society creates a quasi-causal system of this kind. In capitalist society the ultimate quasi-cause is capital itself (Deleuze and Guattari 1983, 227), which is described by Marx as a miraculating substance that arrogates all things to itself and presents itself as first and final cause. This mode of simulation goes by the name of “reality.”

The other mode of simulation is the one that turns against the entire system of resemblance and replication. It is also distributive, but the distribution it effects is not limitative. Rather than selecting only certain properties, it selects them all, it multiplies potentials—not to be human, but to be human plus. This kind of simulation is called “art.” Art also re-creates a territory, but a territory that is not really territorial. It is less like the earth with its gravitational grid than an interplanetary space, a deterritorialized territory providing a possibility of movement in all directions. Artists are replicants who have found the secret of their obsolescence.

In *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari invent a vocabulary enabling them to discuss both modes of simulation without lapsing into the terminology of representation (1987). The key concept is double becoming. There are always at least two terms swept up in a fabulous process that transforms them both (293–94 and ch. 10 *passim*). David Cronenberg’s film *The Fly* (1986) presents an instance of this, although a failed one. A scientist named Brundle accidentally splices himself with a fly as he is experimenting with a machine that can dematerialize objects and transport them instantly to any chosen location, in defiance of gravity and Newtonian physics generally. When the accident occurs, Brundle does not so much become fly, nor the fly human. Rather, certain properties or potentials of both combine in a new and monstrous amalgamation: a Brundle-Fly that can walk on walls and think and speak well enough to describe itself as the world’s first “insect politician.” It tries to purify itself of the fly in it by repeating the process backwards but succeeds only in combining with the machinery itself. In limitative or negative becoming as portrayed in *Vendémiaire*, one of the terms is an abstract identity and the body in question must curtail its potentials in

order to fit into the grid, or at least appear to. In nonlimitative or positive becoming, as in *The Fly*, both terms are on the same level: rather than looking perpendicularly up or down, one moves sideways toward another position on the grid for which one was not destined, toward an animal, a machine, a person of a different sex or age or race, an insect, a plant. The fabulatory process, though as abstract as subatomic physics, is immanent to the world of the things it affects, and is as real as a quark.² The transporting machine is on the same plane as the terms it combines. Its operating principle dips into that world's quantum level, into its pool of virtuality, to create an as yet unseen amalgamation of potentials. It produces a new body or territory from which there is no turning back. The only choice is to keep on becoming in an endless relay from one term to the next until the process either makes a breakthrough or exhausts its potential, spends its fuel, and the fabulous animal dies. Lkening this to interplanetary space can be misleading: there is nothing farther from free-floating weightlessness than this. There is no such thing as total indetermination. Every body has its own propulsion, its own life force, its own set of potentials defining how far it can go. And it moves in a world filled with the obstacles thrown down by sedimentations of preexisting simulations of the "real" persuasion. There is no generalized indetermination, but there are localized points of undecidability where man meets fly. The goal is to reach into one's world's quantum level at such a point and, through the strategic mimicry of double becoming, combine as many potentials as possible. Deleuze and Guattari, of course, are not suggesting that people can or should "objectively" become insects. It is a question of extracting and combining potentials, which they define as abstract relations of movement and rest, abilities to affect and be affected: abstract yet real. The idea is to build our own transporting machine and use it to get a relay going and to keep it going, creating ever greater and more powerful amalgamations and spreading them like a contagion until they infect every identity across the land and the point is reached where a now all-invasive positive simulation can turn back against the grid of resemblance and replication and overturn it for a new earth. Deleuze and Guattari insist on the collective nature of this process of becoming, even when it is seemingly embodied in a solitary artist. Revolutionary or "minor" artists marshal all of the powers

of the false their community has to offer (Deleuze and Guattari 1986, 16–27; Deleuze 1989, 126–55). They create a working simulation that may then reinject itself into society like Feuillade's wine assemblage, but to very different, though perhaps equally intoxicating, effect.

Returning to *The Fly*, the former scientist's only hope for a breakthrough is to convince his former girlfriend to have a child by him and the fly. His hope, and her fear, is that he will infect the human race with Brundle-Flies, and a new race with superhuman strength will rise up to replace the old. The overman as superfly.³ Reproduction, and the forging of a new ethnic identity, are aspects of this process of simulation, but they are not the goal. The goal is life, a world in which the New Brundle can live without hiding and repressing his powers. That possibility is successfully squelched by the powers that be. Brundle-Fly is deprived of an escape route. The original formula, as inscribed in the bodies of Brundle and the fly, was apparently flawed. They did the best they could do, but only reached obsolescence.

How does all of this apply to our present cultural condition? According to Deleuze, the point at which simulacrum began to unmask itself was reached in painting with the advent of Pop Art (1990, 265). In film, it was Italian neo-Realism and the French New Wave (1–13). Perhaps we are now reaching that point in popular culture as a whole. Advanced capitalism, Deleuze and Guattari argue, is reaching a new transnational level that necessitates a dissolution of old identities and territorialities and the unleashing of objects, images, and information having far more mobility and combinatory potential than ever before (1987, 448–73). As always, this deterritorialization is effected only in order to make possible a reterritorialization on an even grander and more glorious land of worldwide capital reborn. But in the meantime, a breach has opened. The challenge is to assume this new world of simulation and take it one step farther, to the point of no return, to raise it to a positive simulation of the highest degree by marshaling all our powers of the false toward shattering the grid of representation once and for all.

This cannot be done by whining. The work of Baudrillard is one long lament. Neither linear nor dialectical causality functions any longer, therefore everything is indetermination. The center of meaning is empty, therefore we are satellites in lost orbit. We can no longer act like

legislator-subjects or be passive like slaves, therefore we are sponges. Images are no longer anchored by representation, therefore they float weightless in hyperspace. Words are no longer univocal, therefore signifiers slip chaotically over each other. A circuit has been created between the real and the imaginary, therefore reality has imploded into the undecidable proximity of hyperreality. All of these statements make sense only if it is assumed that the only conceivable alternative to representative order is absolute indetermination, whereas indetermination as Baudrillard speaks of it is in fact only the flipside of order, as necessary to it as the fake copy is to the model, and every bit as much a part of its system. Baudrillard's framework can only be the result of a nostalgia for the old reality so intense that it has deformed his vision of everything outside of it. He cannot clearly see that all the things he says have crumbled were simulacra all along: simulacra produced by analyzable procedures of simulation that were as real as real, or actually realer than real, because they carried the real back to its principle of production and in so doing prepared their own rebirth in a new regime of simulation. He cannot see becoming, of either variety. He cannot see that the simulacrum envelops a proliferating play of differences and galactic distances. What Deleuze and Guattari offer, particularly in *A Thousand Plateaus*, is a logic capable of grasping Baudrillard's failing world of representation as an effective illusion the demise of which opens a glimmer of possibility. Against cynicism, a thin but fabulous hope—of ourselves becoming realer than real in a monstrous contagion of our own making.

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NOTES

Note to the Reader

1. The exception being the recent work on value (Massumi 2017b, 2018).

Couplet 1. Realer Than Real

1. Parenthetically, it is no accident that there are two German escapees: the simulacrum is a multiplicity that poses a threat to identity and is traveling a line of flight that must be blocked at all costs. Here, the multiplicity is reduced to a doubling because under the Oedipal procedures of capitalism the nonidentity within identity takes the form of a splitting of the subject into a subject of enunciation and a subject of the statement: one of the Germans is obliged to remain mute. On the subject of enunciation and the subject of the statement, see Deleuze and Guattari (1983, 265; 1987, 129).

2. On the “Real-Abstract,” see Deleuze and Guattari (1987, 142, 145–46). “Real” in this context has a different meaning from the definition given earlier: here, it refers to the “intensive” realm of the virtual that “subsists” in reality understood as an extensive system of actualized simulations. On the concept of virtuality, see in particular Deleuze (1991a, 29, 55–61).

3. The allusion to Nietzsche is not gratuitous. For Deleuze (1989, 131), the “power of the false” is another name for the will to power, and what I have been calling positive simulation is described by Deleuze and Guattari (1983, 330–31) as the eternal return.

Couplet 2. On the Right to Noncommunication

1. Colloque de Cerisy, “Cultures: Guerre et Paix,” organized by Tobie Nathan, Olivier Ralet, and Isabelle Stengers, Centre Culturel International de Cerisy, France, August 23–30, 2000. Proceedings, including the French original of this essay, published as “Propositions de paix,” ed. Isabelle Stengers and Tobie Nathan, special issue, *Ethnopsy: Les mondes contemporains de la guérison*, no. 4 (April 2002).

2. The account of the performative here is inflected toward Deleuze and Guattari’s concept of “incorporeal transformation” in the “Postulates of Linguistics” chapter of *A Thousand Plateaus* (1987, 75–110). The main difference is that the