

Mineral-bound

'Cause I can't let go, it's chemical

No, I can't let go, it's chemical

I only saw him the day after it happened. He had already been operated upon and clamps were sticking out of his pelvis and legs at odd angles. Though his face was uninjured and unchanged, the various tubes going down his throat and nose, the wires connected to his head, chest and arms, the iv drip, the surgical drains on the wounds, the catheter and rectal tube, made him seem bigger somehow, taller and more imposing. He sunk heavily into the white pillows, his flesh expanding outwards. As I looked down at his body, I stood still and my only thought was: he is not here.

The week before I had been rereading *Wuthering Heights*.¹ I was writing about Ingeborg Bachmann and a scene from her book reminded me of Heathcliff's disturbance of Cathy's grave. Bachmann describes wanting to embrace the skeleton of her lover, filling her mouth and choking on his dust. I thought this had similarities to Emily Brontë's portrayal of the night of Cathy's burial, when as darkness falls Heathcliff digs out her coffin to embrace her one last time.

Except that when I tried to find this passage I realised it was not there. On the night of Cathy's burial it was dark and snow fell, and Heathcliff in his despair does indeed dig away the two yards of loose earth that separates him from her coffin. "I was wild after she died" he explains to Nelly.² He did not attend her funeral and now wants to see and hold her one last time, no matter if she is cold and motionless in his arms. So once his spade scrapes across the lid, he uses his fingers to prise it open and feels the wood cracking around the screws. But just as the lid is about to give way, he stops because he hears a sigh, once, twice, close to his ear, a "warm breath" rather than the "sleet-laden wind."³ At this point, he too knows Cathy is not there, under him, in the wooden box below, but outside "on the earth" above. Despite hers not being a living thing of flesh and blood, he is aware of her

¹ Emily Brontë, *Wuthering Heights* (London: Penguin Books, 1993).

² *Ibid.*, 320.

³ *Ibid.*

presence, the same way one is aware of things in the dark. And so he feels consoled as relief flows from his heart to his limbs, and he can return home.

I didn't find the passage I was looking for, because it was not there to be found - more so, it could not be there for me to find. Like Heathcliff I was looking for the body of my lover, which could be lifted and held, yet as is repeatedly emphasised in the text, this is not how the bond between Cathy and Heathcliff operates. When Cathy compares her love for Heathcliff with what she feels for her husband Linton, Heathcliff's "resembles the eternal rocks beneath";⁴ after Cathy's death, Heathcliff dreams of the happiness of dissolving with her into earth. He strikes one side of her coffin loose, his side, so they would be joined again. Heathcliff feels Cathy's presence constantly, everywhere: if he is in the house she is on the moor, if he is outside she is at the Heights, when asleep in her room Heathcliff feels her outside the window, sliding the panels, resting her head on the pillow.⁵ Cathy is not there under the earth because she is everywhere, earthbound and yet drifting across house and moor. And for me, this is where I begin to find molecules. This bond between Heathcliff and Cathy tends towards what I like to call the molecular.

According to Deleuze and Guattari, there are two kinds of love and only the second can be described as molecular. They first present this distinction in the earlier chapter of *A Thousand Plateaus*, "1874: The Three Novellas, or 'What Happened?'" and then take it up again in the later chapter on becoming, "1730: Becoming-Intense, Becoming-Animal, Becoming-Imperceptible ...".⁶ In the earlier chapter they make the distinction through a reading of Henry James's novella "In the Cage," comparing and contrasting the pragmatic relationship between the central couple - the telegraphist and her fiancé, Mr. Mudge - and the more elusive relationship between the telegraphist and one of her clients.

The relationship between the central couple is clear cut: she works as a telegraphist, Mr Mudge works in a grocery store. Their lives consist of working, going home and dreaming of a future together. Each part of their lives is a well defined segment of a greater aggregate - as are their feelings. These too are segmented and give the protagonists their

⁴ Ibid., 122.

⁵ Ibid., 231.

⁶ Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus, Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi, (Minneapolis, London: University of Minnesota Press, 2005), 192-207, 232-309.

identity. He is a man, she, a woman, he is a grocer, she a telegraphist, her counting of words relates to his weighing of things. The segments fit together in perfect conjugality. Life here is a well-ordered and well-defined line, which while including tenderness and love, is also described by Deleuze and Guattari as being “molar” and rigid.⁷ But when during her work at the postoffice, the telegraphist stumbles upon the secrets of a wealthy couple, another kind of life is revealed, more mysterious, confusing, elusive. This life is only grasped through small fragments, the bit of information that the exchanged telegrams provide and which the telegraphist interprets. Her involvement in the lover’s secrets constitutes this other life, this different, broken up line of minute pieces. Deleuze and Guattari describe this other life as molecular and intense.⁸

Thus Deleuze and Guattari argue that there are two very different politics at stake here, macro and micro, which do not envision classes, sexes, persons and feeling in the same way.⁹ In the first, the relation is of a couple where class, sex, person and feeling is well-defined. In the second however, the relation is less easy to locate as it eludes class, sex, feeling. They call it a relation of the double as the fear the telegraphist feels is of her alternate self waiting outside.¹⁰ And even though eventually in the novella everything returns to its former order - the telegraphist and her fiancé marry, as do the other couple, the wealthy lovers - the telegraphist has changed. How Deleuze and Guattari describe this change (somewhat misinterpreting the original English) is crucial. They write,

And yet everything has changed. She has reached something like a new line, a third type, a kind of line of flight that is just as real as the others even if it occurs in place: this line no longer tolerates segments; rather, it is like an exploding of the two segmentary series. She has broken through the wall, she has gotten out of the black holes. She has attained a kind of absolute deterritorialization. "She ended up knowing so much that she could no longer interpret anything. *There were no longer shadows to help her see more clearly, only glare.*"¹¹

⁷ Ibid., 195.

⁸ Ibid., 196.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid., 197.

There was only “glare,” because the telegraphist has become capable of loving. At first, she loved as couples do, her fiancé. Then the secret, something hidden, broke up her relationship and formed a new one of fragments. The secret in this case, took on the form of something unknown - “molecularized, imperceptible, unassignable.”¹² But having dismantled love through the secret, she herself had become imperceptible as her own double, meaning, she had become like everyone else - she is now like everything else. Instead of being an interpreter that examines shadows in a well-order life, she is the glare of all-prevalent light.

When Leonard Lawlor introduces Deleuze and Guattari’s concept of becoming in his essay “Following the Rats: Becoming-Animal in Deleuze and Guattari” he refers to this earlier chapter, and its distinction of the two kinds of love, the love of a couple and the love of everything.¹³ He presents becoming as a result of a rupture in the subject that brings about an hyperbolic and utopian love: this is the love of everyone / the love of the world in its entirety. In this love, one becomes “Tout le monde.”

For Lawlor becoming is a way we experience change.¹⁴ When we experience becoming we change and we do so profoundly, in our very being. We no longer stop and start, in a circular process of constantly beginning anew like a drug user or an alcoholic,¹⁵ but are able to cross a threshold and become open to more choice. When this happens, all the potentialities that were closed off to us through our molar form, are freed. At this moment of freedom I am potentially anything and everything. Lawlor argues that this is what Deleuze and Guattari describe as a rupture quoting from *A Thousand Plateaus*,

I am now no more than a line. I have become capable of loving, not with an abstract, universal love, but a love I shall choose, and that shall choose me, blindly, my double, who has no more self than me [n'a pas plus de moi que moi]. One has been saved by love and for love, by abandoning love and self [...] One has become like everyone,

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Leonard Lawlor, “Following the Rats: Becoming-Animal in Deleuze and Guattari,” *SubStance*, Vol. 37, No. 3, Issue 117: *The Political Animal* (2008), 169-187.

¹⁴ Ibid., 170.

¹⁵ Ibid., 171.

but in a way in which no one can become like everyone [tout le monde, also translated as "all the world"].¹⁶

Once again the distinction made here is between two kinds of love. Lawlor argues that the first kind of love, abstract and universal, is the one we associate with feelings. It is subjective, as in, it occurs between two or more selves or different molar subjects, and it is internal. As Lawlor writes, it is “the sense (sens) of a form and its development, the formation of a subject; it is introceptive.”¹⁷ But the love that I shall choose when I am open to more choice in the experience of becoming - when all potentialities are freed - this is affect. There are no subjects in affect, no sense of self. Affect is what overwhelms to burst out like so much alien vomit. I cannot even say that affect bursts out of me, because there is no more “me” in affect. Affect is blind; affect chooses the double, that other outside of me, that unknowable, imperceptible, molecular secret of minute fragments. “Informal” writes Lawlor, “setting out ways (rather than the development of a form); an affect is a projectile (instead of a feeling that is introjected), a relation outward to the double.”¹⁸

And just as the telegraphist can only see the glare of all-prevalent light, in affect one becomes everyone and no one. Cathy is the earth, the moors and the heights.

In those early days I felt him everywhere and it is easy to dismiss these as memories or images I had of him in these places. I felt him first as the door opened and a warm draft passed by my left ear. A sigh. He was there as the blackbird sat on the windowsill to the street and looked in with its yellow beady eye. So many birds in these last few weeks: the sparrows in Berlin, a stork on a wet field in Poland, magpies in the birch tree. He was there in the sigh of the mattress warmed by the early autumn sun, the give of the pillow.

¹⁶ Deleuze and Guattari quoted in Lawlor, “Following the Rats,” 173.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.