'Memories of a sorcerer': *notes on Gilles Deleuze-Felix Guattari, Austin Osman Spare and Anomalous Sorceries.*

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My aim here is to introduce the philosophers Deleuze-Guattari[i] to readers perhaps unfamiliar with their work and indicate something curious about their work, which is that it appears to have some sort of relation *in a practical sense* to the concept of the sorcerer. Whilst not a central figure in Deleuze and Guattari's work, the sorcerer and the witch are themes that do crop up in their texts more often than might be expected and play more than a simply 'metaphorical' role. I think that Deleuze and Guattari can provide a resource for those interested in sorcery, magic and witchcraft in two ways: firstly they can provide theoretical tools which can challenge or at least complement structuralist, constructivist and historicist accounts and so can be of use to researchers attempting to understand these phenomena; secondly, they can provide a theoretical resource for those *within* the magical community who at times attempt to theorise their practise with what are essentially philosophical concepts.

Series, structure and anomaly

Gilles Deleuze died in 1995, committing suicide through defenestration after having endured considerable physical difficulty with breathing. He was part of the French post-structuralist movement that consists of figures such as Lyotard, Foucault, Derrida and Lacan. He was always, however, a slightly oblique figure, never quite following the same lines of thought as his contemporaries. Like all the post-structuralists, he shared a concern with Kant, Hegel and Nietzsche but unlike his contemporaries Deleuze took his inspiration not only from Nietzsche but also from Hume, Spinoza and Bergson as well as numerous people 'outside' philosophy such as Gregory Bateson.

One of the driving forces of the 'post-structuralist' movement in philosophy was a 'theoretical anti-humanism'[ii]. This anti-humanism placed itself in opposition to any thought that centred on Man as the primary analytical category. Deleuze's particular contribution focussed on developing concepts of 'immanence' and 'difference' which put forward a univocal ontology – that is, which put forward a unified being, a thought of life that has no 'outside' or 'duality' but which contains within itself its own means of development. This univocal universe is full of flux and becoming, a constantly shifting ocean of change. The role of Bergson in Deleuze's thought is to give him the means to make this 'univocal ontology' move and evolve; the ideas of a *vitalism* which can be found within Bergson's Creative Evolution, for example, play a critical role for Deleuze[iii] because they provide an organic model of the universe that corresponds to the philosophical ontology. John Marks has also noted that in Deleuze's work, "*vitalism is a way of connecting with, of being in the* ***presence*** *of, this pre-individual world of flux and becoming*[iv]" and thus vitalism forms a way of both modelling the universe as a universe of becoming that allows the creation of a way of thinking that enables us to understand this constant flux.

Vitalism is still, as it were, a model. It is an interpretation or account and there is then the problem of what a concrete vitalism of thought and life would mean. To this end Deleuze uses a concept of 'desire' as the name for the flow, which includes the

flow through us. Desire, crucially, is not a desire *for* anything that is lacking, as in both Freud, Hegel and Lacan[v]. Desire is a constituting activity of becoming, it is the individual current within the oceanic mass. In this essay, looking specifically at the practices of the sorcerer and their becomings, the streams of desire are something that the sorcerer will 'plug into'. "*Becoming begins as a desire to escape bodily limitation*"[vi] according to Brian Massumi and whilst this does not characterise all becoming it points to the practices of the sorcerer with which this essay is concerned.

Having sketched out the twin concepts of vitalism and desire in terms of their role within this essay I want to now turn to one of Deleuze's late works, written alongside the radical 'anti-psychiatrist' Felix Guattari, in order to explore becoming in more detail. Early in the seventies, Deleuze and Guattari had begun work on a two part work called 'Capitalism and Schizophrenia', the first part of which was Anti-Oedipus, where the concept of desire is most apparent[vii]. The second part of 'Capitalism and Schizophrenia', not published until the eighties, was called A Thousand Plateaus. I want to discuss 3 subsections of the tenth chapter of A Thousand Plateaus that go under the heading, '*memories of a sorcerer*'[viii]. I will first sketch a little of their context.

The three sections come within a chapter titled "*1730: Becoming-Intense, Becoming-Animal, Becoming-Imperceptible …*" which consists of 14 subsections, the first twelve of which are subtitled '*memories of*' something. The chapter begins with a discussion that quickly leads to a distinction between *series* and *structure.* This distinction is between two different forms of analogy. Analogy is divided between analogy of proportion and analogy of proportion*ality*, the first being the analogy of the series and the latter that of the structure. The analogy of proportion is of the form '*a* resembles *b*, *b* resembles *c*, …' and as such posits a first term from which resemblance originates, "*a single eminent term, perfection or quality as the principle behind the series*"[ix]. The analogy of proportionality is of the form '*a* is to *b* as *c* is to *d'*. In this form of analogy there is no single series but rather a set of differences distributed across structures. The structure of '*a* to *b'* and the structure '*c* to *d*' and it is the differences between the elements that form the basis of an analogy. Whilst this may seem an obscure philosophical distinction it in fact represents two radically different forms of mapping the world. The first analogical structure of the series is assigned, as an example, to Jung and the notion of archetypes as analogical representations[x]. In contrast with Jung the next figure in the text is Levi-Strauss, whose analysis of totemism brings forward, according to Deleuze and Guattari, a system of *internal homologies* rather than external resemblances. What fundamentally shifts when employing one form of analogy or another is the emphasis in the analysis and understanding of the forms under observation. In the former case we attempt to observe relations of identification or identity between terms, whether *a* resembles *b* and perhaps, through a series of steps, whether we can connect *a* to *z*. In the case of the structural approach we examine not the terms in themselves but rather the *relations* between terms. It is precisely this method that we would employ if we were to approach the translation of a symbolic system we thought of as an unknown language. The alphabetical series of a language would be constructed through discovery of internal homologies, which would begin to assign positions within the system to the elements based upon the existing knowledge of known languages.

These two systems, of series and structure, offer modes of becoming. To understand this, first think of the distinction between a difference *in kind* and a difference *of degree*. A difference in kind poses a break between the differentiated elements, forming different sorts of things. A difference in degree poses a difference between elements within a kind, measurable according to a unified criterion. There are, for example, differences of degree between temperatures but differences in kind between temperatures and pressures even though these two structures can be brought into formulaic relation under the laws of physics. The first system we are looking at then, of a series based upon resemblance, offers a basic ontology of continuity, with differences organised according to degree; whereas the second system, of structural relations, posits a pluralistic or regional ontology with differences of kind, in particular between 'Man and Animal'. In passing, however, we can note two ways in which these analogies might organise an understanding of magic. In terms of a series, whose pre-eminent term might be rational control of nature or something along those lines, we could argue that magic resembles science in its attempts to establish control or understanding of nature. Its resemblance is such that magic might be said to be 'lower' in form than science but might be assimilated into the history of science as a pre-cursor in a process aiming at the same goal. It would thus be brought within a 'historical series' that posited a particular goal or end point to progress. Alternatively we might say that magic plays a structurally identical role to science within a particular society, operating as a sort of technology that we understand as different from, but again assimilable to, our own culture. The first account would be one of series, the second one an account of structures.

Deleuze and Guattari, however, suggest that the two forms of structure and series *both* ignore or reject something fundamental which can be named as *the anomalous*. In particular, whilst these two forms of understanding may well prove useful, Deleuze and Guattari asks whether "*there is still room for something else, something more secret, more subterranean:* ***the sorcerer*** *and becomings (expressed in tales instead of myths or rites)?*"[xi]. The sorcerer is introduced at this point as the figure of the anomaly. This can be perceived as simply a metaphorical use of the term 'sorcerer' and whilst a metaphorical use is indeed part of what is going on, 'metaphor' is a poor word to describe what Deleuze and Guattari are doing. Their method is to use 'conceptual personae' to express concepts, figures through which a philosophical concept is described and 'diagrammed'[xii]. The sorcerer is central to their thought as just such a conceptual persona.

The figure of the sorcerer is introduced alongside what are called '*blocks of becoming*', which are these anomalous events indicated by the date in the title of the chapter, 1730. "*From 1730 to 1735, all we hear about are vampires*"[xiii]. This is an example for Deleuze and Guattari of the blocks of becomings. These blocks of becomings are not fixed points from which something becomes something else - this is the central aspect of their argument. The blocks of becomings in this particular instance are what Deleuze and Guattari will call 'becoming-animal'.

The role of the animal within shamanic practice and as an aspect of the sorcerers art is indisputable in its existence if not in its exact function. Brian Bates, in his attempt to reconstruct an 'indigenous' neo-shamanic practice of the British Isles cites an example of 'animal workings'. He first suggests, using the divinatory role of the crow as an example, that there was a central role for animals within the world view of the

Anglo-Saxon world of the first millennium and from which he is drawing his inspiration[xiv]. After a brief 'universalist' move in which he suggests other more contemporary indigenous cultures also have a clear role for animals with shamanic practice[xv], he then suggests that there is an inherent alienation in the way in which we have divorced ourselves from animals and asks how we might work to "*re-establish a degree of connection, identification, respect and even a sense of the sacred presence of animals*"[xvi]. Bates is not unaware of the problem of 'pretence' in any attempt to work with 'finding a power animal', that is, establishing some sort of sacred or magical-shamanic link with an animal. As he says, "*done superficially it simply confirms our casual attitude towards the animal world, and our propensity to use animals like a psychological fast-food dispenser: instant guardian animal*"[xvii]. What Bates carries out is a six month long program of meditation, imaginal activity, visualisation and practical association. The critical climax of Bates' account comes when he describes a session in which a participant is associating with a bear. She is engaged in what Deleuze and Guattari call a 'becoming', in this instance a 'becoming-bear'. Bates says, "*when she walked into the room, on all fours, and then sat back on her haunches, she* ***was*** *a bear … her 'performance' transcended mimicry; it was much more than the sum of its parts*"[xviii].

Bates' account, makes a claim to a transcendence of mimicry. This opens up the problem of the 'reality' of the situation as well as the problem of our belief in this reality. Was she really, in any sense, *a bear?* The issue of belief and truth is still embedded within studies of shamanism and to a large extent is always posed when looking at magical practice rather than the history or theory of magical texts. Alan T. Campbell draws on a distinction from the philosopher Alasdair MacIntyre when approaching this issue. MacIntyre, he says, distinguishes between understanding and belief, "*making the point that an effort of understanding has inevitably to be made from the outside. If you're already a 'believer' there's no 'understanding' effort required. It's* ***because*** *we don't believe that we have to make the interpretative effort*"[xix]. MacIntyre's distinction is made in the context of Christian religion and in the tradition of 'rational theology' but it echoes a sceptical problem articulated very simply in a distinction drawn by Wittgenstein: "*The game of doubting itself presupposes certainty*"[xx]. The whole game of questioning reality, if taken as a game of doubting, puts the issue of belief in the foreground. This is the sceptical cul-de-sac. To begin from a position in which disbelief in the phenomena prompts an attempt to understand it is to engage in a form of delusion itself, to cover over our own presuppositions contained in the worldview within which we are inevitably – always, already - situated. Issues of belief and the reality of the phenomena will rapidly fall into the dichotomy of the believer/understander, the insider/outside. We will find ourselves in an endless ramified series of questions about whether *it* is real, whether it be spirits, magic or the sorcerers practice itself. These are, in many ways, false problems.

The task is not to question whether what is happening is real, is out there, a 'fact' or objective thing, but to pursue further the question of 'what is happening'. The serial/structural models might aid in one way in cultural and historical analysis, but I have already suggested that Deleuze and Guattari argue that these will avoid the *anomalous*, precisely those events which seem the most 'unreal'. It is as a 'strategy of understanding' that the notion of a *block of becoming* might prove useful. The analysis of these blocks of becoming, as they pose them, have no beginning point or

end point and thus no substantive realities or objects whose reality status needs assigning. It the wrong question to ask whether the woman is in fact a bear, since this simply confuses the block of becoming, in this case a becoming-bear, with the reality or object that we might call 'bear' within a different context. "*Becoming is never imitating*"[xxi].

Blocks of becoming and the role of the pack

The blocks of becoming produce no end result. We do not engage in a becoming-animal in order to end up as an animal, even temporarily, or in the imagination, or on a spiritual level. The blocks of becoming produce nothing other than themselves, neither belonging to a subject (*I become…*) nor ending in an object (*… a bear*). This is the first claim; "*Becoming produces nothing other than itself*"[xxii]. What then are these blocks of becoming? They are processes and activities, but they are not of the imagination, nor are they phantasies, rather they are real in themselves, "*perfectly real*"[xxiii]. It is not a question of imitation because this simply avoids the matter of the becoming itself. We must stay with the phenomena and not assume its reality somehow depends on anything outside itself, either a subject or a term. This is the second claim, "*the principle according to which there is a reality specific to becoming*"[xxiv]. Finally, becomings do not operate through 'filiation', that is, they cannot claim some sort of serial link to an object or image which they resemble either more or less. Rather there is another process that is in play, a process of *alliance*. It is not a matter of "*establishing corresponding relations*"[xxv] such as the macrocosm-microcosm model, but is carried out by a form of folding activity, in which connections, networks of involvement and intertwining are the methods in an activity that is not an evolution but rather what Deleuze calls an involution: "*Becoming is involutionary, involution is creative*"[xxvi]. Three claims are evident then; (1) becomings produce only themselves, (2) becomings are perfectly real and (3) becoming is an involutionary and thus creative process.

This is the background to the three sections of the tenth chapter of A Thousand Plateaus, the rough outline of the route up to the 'Memories of a Sorcerer' sub-sections and I want to now look at the figure of the sorcerer within these sub-sections. Certain aspects of the text will have to be passed over, notably certain particular formulations that would involve me in a far too slow and detailed reading taking me beyond the subject of this essay. One of these tropes or formations within the text is worth noting, however, and that is the way in which they *identify* with the sorcerer. They use the phrase 'we sorcerers' in critical places within the text; in the first 'memory', where they identify a type of knowledge, in the second memory where they deal with a contradiction and in the third 'memory' where they identify a particular practice or method[xxvii]. They also use the phrase 'fellow sorcerers' in the first memory when describing their 'way'[xxviii]. It is worth bearing these identifications in mind in the following account of the argument within the sections under question.

We begin, we sorcerers, with the pack, Deleuze and Guattari argue. "*A becoming-animal always involves a pack, a band, a peopling, in short, a multiplicity*"[xxix]. This is one of the first principles of much of their thought, this notion of a multiplicity, which differs from a multiple in that a multiplicity is singular and not composed of simply numerable elements. A multiplicity is, albeit slightly simplistically, a whole greater than its parts. This must be understood quite literally, in the sense of packs,

swarms, shoals and mobs or crowds where an animal might be said to take on a different form from the more common model of the individual particular; the specific animal is, in this sense, transcended or gone beyond when in a pack mode. Crucially the pack is not some sort of stage within an evolution, which is why I specifically mentioned crowds and mobs. For Deleuze and Guattari "*every animal is fundamentally a band, a pack*"[xxx]. The distinction that is being motivated is in terms of understanding animals in terms of *modes* of multiplicity not simply *characteristics* of the multiple. It is in terms of these modes that we encounter the animal.

At this point the argument draws on an example from H.P.Lovecraft and his story of Randolph Carter in Through the gates of the silver key. Deleuze and Guattari, calling this one of Lovecrafts' masterpieces, recount a passage from section 4 of the story, where a multiplicity of Randolph Carters' come pouring forth[xxxi]. Just before the passage quoted we find Lovecraft describing Randolph Carter's realisation as he passes through the 'Ultimate Gate'. "*Now, beyond the Ultimate Gateway, he realised in a moment of consuming fright that he was not one person, but many persons*"[xxxii]. This passage, pointing explicitly to a notion of a multiplicity of selves, which would be understood as a mode of the human animal, reveals something of the role of the becoming-animal within Deleuze and Guattari's philosophy. The ability to access this mode of multiplicity is what is meant by sorcery.

What we see throughout A Thousand Plateaus is this entanglement between philosophical arguments and examples from fiction. Deleuze and Guattari draw heavily upon literature as a resource for their work. Is the sorcerer, then, simply another name for the writer? "*If the writer is a sorcerer, it is because writing is a becoming*"[xxxiii]. Yet the becomings are not a becoming something specific; they are not, for example, a becoming-writer. It is, rather, that the writers Deleuze and Guattari draw upon work with the method of becoming that belongs pre-eminently to the figure of the sorcerer. In particular the writer and the sorcerer, the writer *as* sorcerer, work with "*feelings of an unknown Nature*"[xxxiv], called *affects*. This affect is a positive created force, a power that derives directly from the pack, from the mode of the animal as pack and which brings forth the multiplicity that will throw "*the self into upheaval and make it reel*"[xxxv].

The first memory sub-section focuses, then, on the pack and the multiplicity. One danger might be to of think this pack in terms of tribe or filial community and associated with the notion of pack goes a second characteristic or 'principle'. "*A multiplicity without the unity of an ancestor? It is quite simple; everybody knows it, but it is discussed only in secret. We oppose epidemic to filiation, contagion to heredity …*"[xxxvi]. The object at this point is to try and establish certain principles of method and understanding and to break down or pose alternatives to ideas of series and structure, of lineages. The pack, as multiplicity, works on a level of multiplicities, whereby it spreads through contagion. These two principles form, for Deleuze and Guattari, the path that any becoming-animal will take. A counter-principle is next put forward or rather a counter-point, where each multiplicity will express the 'exceptional individual'. This will be the anomaly.

Whilst every animal has a mode as pack and packs propagate through contagion, each pack will also contain its anomaly or anomalous point. Deleuze and Guattari are explicit in that this seems to pose a contradiction to the model they are putting

forward of the process of becoming. If we begin from multiplicities then how can we logically reach a concept of the 'exceptional individual'? It is a contradiction to put forward both the multiplicity and the exceptional individual. "*We sorcerers know quite well that the contradictions are real but that real contradictions are not just for laughs*"[xxxvii]. What is meant by the anomalous? It is first pointed to by again bringing in Lovecraft and his 'Outsider' or Thing, "'*teeming, seething, swelling, foaming, spreading like an infectious disease, this nameless horror*'"[xxxviii]. The exceptional individual is in fact not a specific, singular individual; Deleuze and Guattari explicitly proffer the term 'individual' only to retract it as they develop their concept, putting forward the idea that this 'individual' is in fact the focus of the affects they earlier brought into the discussion. This is why Lovecraft provides such a perfect example of description in that the Thing, the nameless horror, whilst individuated and specifiable *to a degree* is not in any sense an 'individual' with a sense of continuous self, nor even a physically specific identity.

The anomalous accompanies each multiplicity and this anomalous is in fact nothing other than the "*phenomenon of bordering*"[xxxix]. The anomalous is the specific point at which the pack is divided along a line, where an edge is seen. The difficulty with this concept is that it includes both the situation of an alpha individual within a wolf pack and the situation of mosquitoes in their swarm. There are, it is clear, very different forms of this anomalous individual. It may be a specific animal that divides the pack into left and right, and the alpha wolf, with the pack streaming to the sides in something resembling a flight formation, is a strong image that might be drawn on in this situation. We would see the same thing again in the swarming rats, flowing over the banks and ditches of a woodland and James Herbert's stories of The Rats always feature some sort of over-large, over-intelligent or over-vicious individual that has taken the swarm into a new place, transforming them into a murderous beast of many forms. Within the mosquito swarm, and perhaps the same with flocking birds, the position of the anomalous individual is constantly shifting and the specific individuals flow through this role of the anomalous individual in turn as they become the edge of the whole. It is worth noting that there is no real hint of a leadership within this anomaly and at the point at which the anomalous is assigned to a position of hierarchy, as is the danger in the example of the wolf alpha structure, we find the concept of the pack being transformed again into the state[xl]. It is this curiously difficult distinction in collectivities that Deleuze and Guattari are aiming at. The pack may become the state, the family, the group but in itself is more than these more rigid structures; the pack is a mobile multiplicity, spreading through contagion and with a border formed through anomaly.

"*The relation with the anomalous is one of alliance. The sorcerer has a relation of alliance with the demon as the power of the anomalous*"[xli]. At this point Deleuze and Guattari are attempting to locate the sorcerer within this conceptual structure of multiplicities within which there is a clear and rather privileged place for the sorcerer. This world consists of multiplicities, what are called at other times *aggregates*, which might be visualised as crowds, mobs, swarms or packs. There are many of these, at every level, from the cellular to the stellar, forming a vision of an interlocking, chaotic soup of multiplicities. The primary form of 'communication' and change or exchange between these multiplicities is via contagion, through infection or transformation or the one multiplicity by the other, across borderlines. These

borderlines form a continuously changing series of edges, which trace out lines of rapid communication from one area to another[xlii] and it is in these *borderlines* that we find the sorcerer and where one must go to become a sorcerer. The borderlines are the constant critical areas of becoming. The reason for alliance is that the borderline poses a need to be at once on both sides. To even know that the edge exists it is necessary to have stepped over but in such a way that it is not simply forgotten. Moving from one aggregate to another, whilst it may involve a border crossing, will never produce awareness of the border except as a memory, almost a necessary memory. The alliance provides the means by which the sorcerer is capable of living at the border, since it enables a relation with both sides that enables the border to actually exist as a becoming that is no longer reduced to its terms, to either one side or the other, one thing or another.

This analysis of the sorcerous sections of Deleuze and Guattari's work needs one final addition before moving on. The overall structure of the analysis Deleuze and Guattari give is one that wants to retain the reality peculiar to becomings. These realities are what Deleuze and Guattari call the blocks of becoming. These blocks of becoming are multiplicities within wider structures of borderline or liminal contagion. The blocks of becoming have no 'beginning' or 'end' point but their dynamics are, however, capable of being further understood as being between the *molecular* and the *molar*. These are not opposites within a single structure but differences in kind. As John Marks says, "*the distinction between the molar and the molecular is not a distinction of scale; it is qualitative rather than quantitative*"[xliii]. The molar is the level of the organised, where we might find the state, whereas the molecular is the realm of desires' flux and flows. The tension touched upon above, where the pack might become the state, is precisely what happens when the pack becomes molar, organised and static, in effect ceasing to be a pack. The multiplicity of the pack is a *molecular* multiplicity.

Deleuze and Guattari do not provide simple models for analysis. What they do provide is a concerted attempt to bring forward working models for a mobile philosophy, a philosophy of becoming. As such they provide a huge resource for the study of phenomena of change and transformation, such as the study of liminal phenomena, of which sorcery and shamanism are key examples. They attempt to provide a systematic way in which we might study such phenomena, although the systems they attempt to establish are *open systems*. Deleuze argues in an earlier collection of interviews "*a system's a set of concepts. And it's an open system when the concepts relate to circumstances rather than essences*"[xliv].

The anomalous becomings of sigils

The concept of becomings, including becoming-animal, is only one concept amongst the open system of Deleuze and Guattari's work. Another fundamental concept, motivated primarily by Deleuze, is the emphasis on a fully affirmative philosophy, one that breaks with the dialectic of Hegelian philosophy, the central tool of which is the power of negation. This philosophy of the affirmative that Deleuze and Guattari push forward might, with minor reservations, be said to be a Dionysian-Ariadnean philosophy. From this point connections with a sorcerer such as Spare can be traced out, starting from the "*point of transmutation or transvaluation*"[xlv] that is central to this Nietzschean inspired affirmation of affirmation. One possible way of thinking

this connection is of two different dynamics coalescing around this point of transmutation, one inspired by theory (the philosopher), the other by practice (the sorcerer)[xlvi].

Having given a brief and theoretical account of an element of the work of Deleuze and Guattari I want then to turn to a specific example of magical practice in the form of the work of Austin Osman Spare. Spare has become inceasingly well known over the last few years because of his association with a form of sorcery that is known as 'chaos magic'. Spare came into the occult scene at the turn of the twentieth century, publishing his first book of text and illustrations, Earth Inferno, in 1905. He is reported to have briefly become a member of Aleister Crowley's magical order, the Argenteum Astrum (AA). Apparently Crowley made the comment "*Artist: can't understand organisation*"[xlvii] with regard to Spare, perhaps indicating a temperament unsuitable to the structures of the AA. Spare's own comments on ceremonial magicians within The Book of Pleasure betray a little more hostility to the ceremonial magics of Crowleyian and Golden Dawn traditions however: "*Others praise ceremonial magic, and are supposed to suffer much ecstasy! Our asylums are crowded, the stage is overrun! Is it by symbolising we become the symbolised? Were I to crown myself King, should I be King? Rather should I become an object of disgust and pity. These Magicians, whose insincerity is their safety, are but the unemployed dandies of the Brothels*"[xlviii].

The Book of Pleasure is perhaps Spares' principal work and what is interesting in the comment above, aside form the obvious hostility to a particular form of magic, is the no less obvious *methodological* objection to the role of symbol and symbolisation within magic. It is important to distinguish very clearly Spare's form of sigilisation from any traditional notion of symbolism. There are a number of models that can be distinguished: a symbol can *stand for* something; it can *point to* something; it can *contain* something or it can *communicate* something. In each situation the symbol is essentially an adjunct of 'something', which we might describe as its' meaning. In essence the symbol is not the meaning but rather *has* a meaning and the basic structure is one of being a medium or container for this essential, non-symbolic reality. William Gray, for example, asks after the nature of a symbol and says, "*in effect it is the good old 'outward sign of inward grace', or a practical link between objective and subjective existence. It is a body containing a soul, matter holding a meaning, a focus of force, a condenser of consciousness or a 'thought-tank'*."[xlix] To a large extent, of course, these accounts of the symbol as tool are practical and true – we do, in fact, use symbols in exactly this way. This factual use of symbols does not, however, imply that this is in principle the only way symbols can be used. The fact that symbols are used as tools does not imply that either they are tools or that they must be tools.

Spare uses symbols in a way that is far closer to an artistic use of stroke or colour. The paint stroke does not stand for, contain, transmit or somehow make us able to see the real picture behind the strokes and colours but is in fact the picture itself. This process is a manifestation or creation. It is an act itself, not a means. This active symbolisation disturbs the very concept of symbols themselves, with a split in Spare's work between 'symbols' and 'sigils'. In The Book of Pleasure Spare focuses explicitly on the construction of both symbols and sigils. It is in one of the sections on sigils, subtitled 'the psychology of believing', that we find the following: "*We are*

not the object by the perception, but by becoming it"[l]. This shift from perception to becoming signals a connection with a Deleuzo-Guattarian philosophy.

It is worth, at this point, placing the techniques Spare motivates within The Book of Pleasure inside the more general 'metaphysical' schema with which he operates. This centres on the two names KIA and ZOS, hence the name of the 'Zos-Kia Cultus', the magical 'current' or ethos associated with Spare as well as with Kenneth Grant and later, via Peter Carroll's work, with the Illuminates of Thanateros, the central magical order in the 'chaos magic current'. Carroll suggests, in his work Liber Null, "*the twin functions of will and perception is called* ***Kia*** *by magicians. Sometimes it is called spirit, or soul, or life force, instead*"[li]. He goes on to say of Kia that it "*is the consciousness, it is the elusive 'I' which confers self-awareness but does not seem to consist of anything itself. Kia can sometimes be felt as ecstasy or inspiration, but it is deeply buried in the dualistic mind*"[lii]. Magic, therefore, is for Carroll, "*concerned with giving the Kia more freedom and flexibility and with providing means by which it can manifest its occult power*"[liii].

Now Carroll is writing a working *grimoire* or grammar of magic, focused on a practical orientation, and as such his metaphysics is simply there to assist in the establishment of such a practical end. These comments on Kia are little more than a pragmatic use of certain names that enable the magician to explain to the student the basics of their working activity. For example, the fact that Carroll says that 'magicians' use the name Kia is in many ways disingenuous if you were looking for an accurate historical reading, since Spare is the principle magician to intitiate the term. More importantly, though, Carroll's metaphysic converts Kia into a *force* which the magician then harnesses or expresses through their activity, enabling the new-comer to the field of magic to place their activity back within some sort of cause-effect paradigm, except this time one that relies upon the great life-force Kia, rather the laws of physical nature.

Spare, however, has a slightly more subtle and in many ways more interesting role for Kia within his work, particularly if the focus is maintained on The Book of Pleasure. Within this text Kia, whilst possibly a 'life force' is perhaps more adequately described as life itself. "*Anterior to Heaven and Earth, in its aspect that transcends these, but not intelligence, it may be regarded as the primordial sexual principle, the idea of pleasure in self-love*"[liv]. This Kia, then, has numerous 'aspects', of which one is creativity itself, creation as process rather than object or product – Kia *in this aspect* takes the place of any 'creator' and it is this removal of the role of the creator that is central. Kia is self-manifesting. It is, in this regard, akin to what Deleuze calls 'difference', which is not a difference from or between anything but which is immanence itself, not immanent *to* anything[lv]. This is a form of pantheism before theism, a self-moving universe, a *vitalism*[*lvi*].

The basic worldview or ontology of Spare relies upon a vitalism that is shared with Deleuze. Of course, this vitalism is something Deleuze picks up from thinkers such as Bergson and so the similarities extend beyond Deleuze and Guattari. It is, however, the connection of the vitalism with the technique of a concrete embodiment of desire within the sigil that draws Spare and Deleuze and Guattari closer still. Spares' techniques are fundamentally techniques of *becoming*. The difference of emphasis that is found when drawing Sparean Sigilisation towards Deleuzo-

Guattarian becoming is fundamentally away from the problem of belief. To focus on techniques of becoming is to shift the emphasis away from simply 'removing' beliefs into a more positive activity. The removal or dissolution of beliefs is still a central theme in Spare but work on belief structures is nothing more than a pre-requisite for the techniques of becoming.

The 'primordial sexual principle', for example, is what Spare refers to as 'the new sexuality', which the technique of the 'death posture' is intended to access. This is a form of meditation, both physical and mantrical, using the formula of "*Neither-Neither*" to attain a state described as "*Does not matter – need not be*" which is formless[lvii]. Called 'the death posture' because it aims to create "*the dead body of all we believe*"[lviii] the intention behind this meditative practice is the removal of belief, both in content and form. Whilst the chaos magic current uses a technique called 'paradigm shifting'[lix] in order to break down ego structures, this is often posed in terms of a technique to break free from 'consensual reality'. This technique, whilst practical, rests upon an apparent paradox, in that it seems that the magician believes in their ability to not believe and as Julian Vayne suggests, "*the chaos magick system rests upon a paradox. Namely that the system claims that 'nothing is true' and yet itself emerges from the 19th century attempt to create a grand theory of magick*"[lx].

In this sense chaos magic rests upon an attempt to negate or suspend belief, an odd situation akin to philosophical scepticism. Philosophical scepticism, however, has a number of forms, one of which is Pyrrhonism, elucidated by writers such as Sextus Empiricus, where the aim of the sceptical process is a condition of bliss known as *ataraxia*, which follows the suspension of belief, known as *epoche*[lxi]. This *ataraxia* is a state of quietude. It allows a release from scepticism through pursuing it to its end, in such a way that the sceptical doubt that is so easily established with regard to knowledge claims no longer has its disorientating power to produce a nihilism of belief. Whilst Spare's work at times resembles a powerful form of scepticism it would be rather strange to suggest that the aim is a form of quietude. In fact it would be more accurate to say that the techniques Spare puts forward produce exactly the opposite of a quietude, what might be called a form or *orgiastic consciousness*, which is this strange thing he calls 'the new sexuality'. This is an expanded and increased creativity, not a settled and contemplative quietude.

Is this right, however, since Spare talks about the Kia as the 'Atmospheric I'? Kenneth Grant reads Spare as close to a Ch'an or Zen like contemplation, "*the adepts of which do not permit the mind to adhere to any of its thoughts*"[lxii]. Although this is a claim that would need considerably more substantiation, my own feeling is that Spare's magical philosophy may resemble a Taoist rather than a Buddhist, even a Zen Buddhist, approach, where the activity on belief is less a process of negation and deconstructing than a process of freeing up and allowing a full flow of life. This is a subtle difference but may be said to be a question of whether the focus is on removing the ego and dissolving the self or whether it is on the expression of a fuller *pre-individual* life, such that the question of the ego or self is, in some ways, secondary, to the reality of manifesting an orgiastic consciousness. "*So long as the notion remains that there is 'compulsory bondage' in this World or even in dreams there is such bondage*"[lxiii].

The therapeutic approach that may be found within the Pyrrhonian sceptic and which I would also suggest lies at the heart of 'ego-negating' strategies perceives, in the first instance, a problem to be overcome, a problem of the ego, the self. Removing or destroying belief results in a form of nihilistic scepticism, provoking spiritual crises that once more call forth therapies of quietude and acceptance. One of the key themes within Deleuzian thought is a struggle against such strategies of negation. The emphasis on strategies and models of becoming presupposes a fluid structure to belief but doesn't believe this to be anything other than a forerunner to a creative process. The struggle against belief is only necessary, after all, if belief restricts something and to forget what it is that is restricted, the impulse behind the struggle against belief, is to end in the nihilism against which Nietzsche warned.

For example, despite all the techniques that seem to deny belief in Spare's work, contained within a formula of 'Neither Neither', this is not a negation. It is a subtle shifting away from any 'belief' but it does not allow any duality to exist, no 'not X'. It prevents negation with suspension, hence the suggestion that it is in fact close to the *epoche* of the sceptics, a technique which also lies at the heart of Edmund Husserl's 'phenomenology' in which the *epoche* is used to suspend the 'natural attitude'. Spare's attitude to belief is in fact an attempt to free it up, as it were, from restrictions placed upon it by the consciousness, not an attempt to simply remove or deny it[lxiv]. It is, in essence, a technique of allowing the becoming of belief. "*Belief, to be true, must be organic and sub-conscious*"[lxv].

It is to achieve this organic belief that the technique of sigilisation is introduced. In effect the sigils are not symbols containing anything, but rather they are expressions in which we consciously carry out specific operations in such a way as to allow an intuitive *sub-conscious* or *pre-conscious* desire to manifest. It re-orientates the sorcerer away from an ego centred strategy since the magician is never, in principle, capable of really knowing their desire except on this sub-conscious level. This sub-conscious level is pre-individual. It is not beneath or below or created through the ego or super-egoic structures but prior to and more fundamental than these. This is strongly akin to Deleuze's account of consciousness as a 'transcendental field' that "*can be distinguished from experience in that it doesn't refer to an object or belong to a subject*"[lxvi]. In itself this transcendental field is nothing more than a "*pure plane of immanence*"[lxvii] that is constituted as a transcendental field by the production of the transcendent entity that is 'consciousness'. The pure plane of immanence – the great ocean of becoming – cares nothing for consciousness and only becomes a 'transcendental field' when it produces consciousness as an effect. Beneath all the currents of thought is the ocean from which they arise and into which they fall back, an ocean of becoming that has no concern with anything other than its own becoming. Consciousness in effect becomes a sort of self-defeating capacity when it is used to fulfil life; it is a detour, which we must *consciously* step back from. We, of course, have in principle no ability to know beforehand quite where or how this might be carried out – hence the need to employ an experimental approach. Sigilisation marries a true experimentalism of *automatic drawing* with the conscious thought that 'this X is our desire', a desire no longer possessed by us but by which we are possessed. Spare is Deleuzian in the sense that he no longer wants a focus on the 'magician' as controller, perceiver or creator. Sparean sorcery is a technique not of ego dissolution but of practical experimentation with a pre-individual plane of immanence, the ocean of becoming.

"*The Sigil being a vehicle, serves the purpose of protecting consciousness from the direct manifestation of the (consciously unacknowledged) obsession, conflict is avoided with any incompatible ideas and neither gains separate personality*"[lxviii] Spare says and it is this subtle fictionalisation process that is the true heart of the sigilisation process. What is anomalous in Spare's sigilisation process is that it is a paradoxically conscious practice aimed at releasing the sub-conscious: it is, in effect, a deliberate attempt to consciously do something that can't be done consciously. It is an attempt to plug into the orgiastic consciousness, the Sparean sub-conscious, in an experimental, structured and repeatable operation.

Molecularity and becoming

At this point I want to try and draw the threads of this essay together, through the notion of becoming as an experimentation. Deleuze and Guattari provide a model through which we might approach becoming on its own terms. This accomplishes, in a different manner, a similar goal to that put forward in Spare with regard to belief. This is a process of stepping outside the problem of belief. Once this is done another positive problem can be posed, the problem of creation and becoming. Deleuze and Spare share two fundamental aspects in their positive thought and practice. Firstly, they both work with a model of a universe of becoming and secondly they share the attitude that the appropriate technique in such a world is experimentation.

In The Book of Pleasure we find a sort of 'definition' statement by Spare: "*Magic, the reduction of properties to simplicity, making them transmutable to utilise them afresh by direction, without capitalisation, bearing fruit many times*"[lxix]. This is the process I have called 'plugging into an orgiastic consciousness', which *makes fluid* the concepts of matter, thought and being, in such a way that limitations are little more than temporary boundaries of actuality, not possibility. It is both a practical *and* a theoretical process, one which Spare calls 'magic' and which, in a Deleuzian vein we might call 'making the difference'. Spare supposes the 'properties of simplicity' that Deleuze and Guattari call the 'molecularity' of becoming. Magic in this reading would therefore be a difference making activity within a world of becoming characterised by the flux of fundamental simplicity or molecularity at the heart of the universe.

The Deleuzo-Guattarian model of becoming gives us a structure through which we might see this process of 'plugging into' the orgiastic consciousness as the principle technique of the sorcerer. The multiplicity of multiplicities, all ever shifting, form the plane of activity but the border crossings are never, in principle, predictable even if some may be more familiar than others – the role of drugs for example provides an unpredictable if familiar route to crossing borders of consciousness. Drugs in fact provide a crucial example of the way in which the practical thought of Deleuze and Guattari could be used and is intended by them to be used. The famous maxim of Deleuze and Guattari, which they take from Henry Miller, is that we should attempt "*to succeed in getting drunk, but on pure water*"[lxx]. The success of such a process rests upon the structures of becoming that are similar to those underlying Spare's attempts at creating organic beliefs through sigilisation but both of these processes are techniques of experimentation.

Deleuze and Guattari's thought enable the sorceries of Spare to be retrieved from the linear arrangements made by someone like Kenneth Grant who wants to assimilate him to a particular magical current[lxxi] whilst allowing such suggestions to provoke an interesting series of connections. They also offer a model of matter that no longer needs concepts such as 'aether' to allow non-causal connections. It brings the role of the writer and the artist to the fore rather than the model of the mystic and prompts experimentation and open structures rather than ideas of verification and inexpressible experientiality contained within assimilations of magic to science combined with the role of the secret. Magic is another form of knowledge, often relying upon the secret of the inexpressible experience, but such an approach is in danger of forgetting the other side of activity, that in which 'knowledge' is an embodied, active process of experimental learning. Any emphasis on an over simple concept of knowledge will fall prey to the permanent danger of a debilitating scepticism. I have only been able to give some very broad suggestions in this essay, but the purpose is to put forward a notion of another current within magical practice, one that runs alongside all human activity; the activity of the experimental and anomalous becoming which may be found at the heart of any notion of freedom. As such magic – like philosophy - has less importance for knowledge than for an ethical practice of relations with the living.

Friday, 20 December 2002

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[i] Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari worked together on a number of books from the seventies until the early nineties. Deleuze, already a well known philosopher, combined with Guattari, who was a psychiatrist/psycho-analyst, to produce a series of *practical* works which grow out of his philosophy but which owe to Guattari a very different style, form and tone. The works produced together are most often viewed as a single voice, with two authors, since a merging takes place in which each is recognisable but neither is at any point easily distinguishable.

[ii] Cf; Kate Soper, Humanism and anti-humanism, London, Hutchinson, 1986. Whilst Deleuze is notably absent from Sopers' account, this text does give a general background to the debates from the perspective of a humanist Marxism. It thus provides a useful critical account of the 'theoretical anti humanists' and 'post structuralists', written by an opponent of their thought.

[iii] Cf; Keith Ansell Pearson, Germinal Life: the difference and repetition of Deleuze, London, Routledge, 1999; Henri Bergson, Creative Evolution, University Press of America, 1983.

[iv] John Marks, Gilles Deleuze: vitalism and multiplicity, London, Pluto Press, 1998, p.31

[v] Desire as a translation of the French *desir* is often connected with the French word *delire*, a word that is translated to the English 'delirious'. For an excellent account of the intricacies of desire, delire, language and thought see Jean-Jacques Lecercle, Philosophy through the Looking Glass, London, Hutchinson, 1985. As Lecercle says, *delire* may be understood as an experience of *possession*, a process that "*reverses the relation of mastery*" (p.9) and it is this element of mastery that is troubled and questioned within Deleuze's use of desire.

[vi] Brian Massumi, A users guide to capitalism and schizophrenia: deviations form Deleuze and Guattari, Cambridge, Mass., MIT, 1996, p.94.

[vii] There is an important qualification to be made at this point since the concept of desire is motivated in Deleuze and Guattari, Anti-Oedipus, London, Athlone, 1996 (AO) through the aggregate concept of 'desiring-machine'. The machine and desire both undergo a conceptual reconfiguration at this point. The machine is not, however, a metaphor but a reality of desire. As John Marks says of AO, "*Everything is a machine and everywhere there is production. For Deleuze and Guattari the machine is not a metaphor; reality is literally 'machinic'*" – Marks, p.98

[viii] Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, A Thousand Plateaus, London, Athlone, 1996; pp.239 –252

[ix] Deleuze and Guattari, ibid p.234

[x] Deleuze and Guattari, use Jung Symbols of Transformations, Harper 1962, as the basis for this claim.

[xi] Deleuze and Guattari, op.cit, p.237

[xii] For an account of 'conceptual personae' see Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari; What is Philosophy?, London, Verso, 1995, Chapter 3, *passim*.

[xiii] Deleuze and Guattari, A Thousand Plateaus, p.237

[xiv] Brian Bates, The wisdom of the wyrd, London, Rider, 1996, pp.54 – 61
[xv] ibid; p.63
[xvi] ibid; p.66
[xvii] ibid; p.67
[xviii] ibid; p.69
[xix] Graham Harvey (ed.), Shamanism – a reader, London, Routledge, 2003; p.143
[xx] Ludwig Wittgenstein, On Certainty, Oxford, Blackwell, 1969; p.18e
[xxi] Deleuze and Guattari, A Thousand Plateaus, p.305
[xxii] ibid; p.238
[xxiii] ibid. See also "*There is a reality of becoming-animal, even though one does not in reality become animal*", ibid; p.273
[xxiv] ibid.
[xxv] ibid; p.239
[xxvi] ibid; p.238
[xxvii] ibid; p.239, p.244, p.250
[xxviii] ibid; p.241
[xxix] ibid; p.239
[xxx] ibid.
[xxxi] H.P.Lovecraft, At the mountains of madness and other novels of terror, London, Panther Books, 1970; p.281
[xxxii] ibid; p.280
[xxxiii] Deleuze and Guattari, A Thousand Plateaus; p.240
[xxxiv] ibid.
[xxxv] ibid.
[xxxvi] ibid.
[xxxvii] ibid; p.244
[xxxviii] ibid; p.245
[xxxix] ibid.
[xl] ibid; p.246
[xli] ibid.
[xlii] ibid; p.249
[xliii] Marks, op.cit, p 100.
[xliv] Gilles Deleuze, Negotiations, trans. M.Joughin, New York, Columbia University Press, 1995; p.32
[xlv] Gilles Deleuze, Nietzsche and Philosophy, trans. H.Tomlinson, London, Athlone, 1996; p.198
[xlvi] This distinction between the theoretical and the practical is nothing more than a working concept, since at least part of the point of both the theoretical and practical work would be a dissolution of the distinction itself.
[xlvii] Phil Baker, Fortean Times, 144, p.36
[xlviii] Austin Osman Spare, The Book of Pleasure (self-love) – the psychology of ecstasy, London, 1913 – republished in a new format and with a new introduction, London, 93 PUBLISHING, 1975; p.2
[xlix] William Gray, Magical Ritual Methods, Maine, Samuel Weiser, 1990; p.35
[l] Austin Osman Spare, op.cit.; p.43
[li] Peter Carroll, Liber Null and Psychonaut, Maine, Samuel Weiser,1987; p.28
[lii] ibid.
[liii] ibid.
[liv] Austin Osman Spare, op.cit.; p.7
[lv] Gilles Deleuze, Pure Immanence, trans. Anne Boyman, New York, Zone Books, 2001; p.26
[lvi] What is vital to this conception is the transition from a transcendental to an immanent conception of matter, a reconceptualisation that is slowly permeating general scientific thinking, arising for example, in terms of the biological idea of autopoesis found within thinkers such as Francisco Varela and Humberto Maturana. The break that 'chaos' theory is supposedly making within scientific thinking does have its echo within 'magical' theory and although nowhere near as clear as commonly supposed, it focuses on this notion of immanent formation; that is, that there is no prior content which is then given particular form but that form itself arises spontaneously and is not separable from the content. Manuel De Landa has written extensively on this aspect of chaos theory although there is another fundamental strain of such theory which focuses more specifically on the implications of the theories of thermodynamics and the fact that such theories posit a directional temporality that is not easily dealt with in the theories of physics, be they classical or relativistic. For thermodynamics, see Ilya Prigogine and Isabelle Stengers, Order out of chaos: man's new dialogue with nature,London, Bantam, 1990. For

autopoesis see, Humberto Maturana and Francisco Varela, Autopoiesis and Cognition: The Realization of the Living, Reidel, 1980; The Tree of Knowledge: The Biological Roots of Understanding, New Science Library, 1987. Manuel De Landa, like Isabelle Stengers, is more a philosopher than a scientist but see De Landa, Immanence and transcendence in the genesis of form, in Ian Buchanan (ed), *A Deleuzian Century?*: South Atlantic Quarterly, 96:3, Summer 1997, Durham: Duke University Press, pp499-514 for an account that focuses on the work of Deleuze and Guattari.

[lvii] Austin Osman Spare, op.cit.; p.17

[lviii] ibid.

[lix] Phil Hine, Prime Chaos, London, Chaos International, 1993; pp.16 – 18

[lx] JulianVayne, in Razor Smile #1, Brighton, Recidivist Press, 2002; p.6

[lxi] For a useful and informative piece on Pyrrhonian scepticism see John Heaton in Journal for the British Society of Phenomenology, Vol.28 # 1, January 1997; pp 80 – 96. The most useful primary text is probably Sextus Empiricus, Outlines of Pyrrhonism, New York, Prometheus Books, 1990.

[lxii] Kenneth Grant, Images and oracles of Austin Osman Spare, London, Muller, 1975; p.40

[lxiii] Austin Osman Spare, op.cit; p.26

[lxiv] ibid; pp.44 – 45

[lxv] ibid.

[lxvi] Gilles Deleuze, Pure Immanence; p.25

[lxvii] ibid; p.26

[lxviii] Austin Osman Spare, op.cit.; p.51

[lxix] ibid; p.37

[lxx] Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, A Thousand Plateaus; p.286

[lxxi] Kenneth Grant, Cults of the shadows, London, Skoob, 1994; pp.195 – 208