

BECOMING-ARTWORK

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By

RYAN QUINN, B.A.&Sc.

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AUTHOR: Ryan Quinn, B.A.&Sc. (McMaster University)
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abstract

Drawing primarily from the thought of Deleuze and Guattari and employing a certain kind of musical improvisation as its case study, this thesis exposes the phenomenon of *an artist without works* in order to show the incentive behind conceiving of a *becoming-artwork*. Having established the connections and divergences necessary to extend Deleuze and Guattari's concept becoming-minoritarian, we proceed to employ terms and standards of *life and risk* in order to establish how becoming-artwork is best served and most contributes to an affirmation of life. At the same time, this thesis shows how the production of finished works of art can contribute to, rather than compromise or curtail, a becoming-artwork.

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“We have been helped, inspired, multiplied.”
Deleuze + Guattari. “Rhizome,” 1.

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“Let us take an example as simple as: x starts practicing piano again. Is it an Oedipal return to childhood? Is it a way of dying, in a kind of sonorous abolition? Is it a new borderline, an active line that will bring other becomings entirely different from becoming or rebecoming a pianist, that will induce a transformation of all of the preceding assemblages to which x was prisoner? Is it a way out? Is it a pact with the Devil?”

Gilles Deleuze + Félix Guattari

A Thousand Plateaus, 250-51.

introduction

A friend asks X whether he has noticed that she has stopped asking him when he is going to start writing. Music, she means. Songs. A question which had arisen often, which had never ceased pressing him for further explanations, reasons, excuses, none of which pointed anywhere but a future merely glimpsed at across an endlessly expanding horizon. But now, X's answer has changed. "I've written hundreds of songs, and trashed them all ..." Yet neither is this true, strictly speaking. It is all X can offer for now, however, to indicate a process which finds him every so often at the piano, the nineteenth-century upright of his family home, wrestling, caressing, consorting with the music that emerges. Attaining such an intensity that the bulb of the lamp perched atop the piano indeed surges more brightly, as perhaps no other sort of engagement with art could do. Until, at last, he stands up from the piano, takes leave of art, leaving nothing to subsist of an artwork.

We have found most accounts in art theory, in aesthetics or the philosophy of art, to take the work of art as given, as already there, in ways which allow us to consider the reception, the judgment of such works but not the processes giving rise to them in the first place. The thought of Gilles Deleuze, and especially his collaborations with Félix Guattari, present to us novel ways of thinking about the latter issue, despite seldom seeming to construe the relationship between artist and work of art as an ethical one in ways we shall see fit to do. It is these authors' premium on production, on productivity, which we have found most compelling, given that conventional schemas would leave X considered unproductive. At times, Deleuze makes it seem as though there is no need to yield finished products: "Writing is a question of becoming, always incomplete, always in the midst of being formed, and goes beyond the matter of any livable or lived experience."ⁱ More often, however, Deleuze and his collaborators make it seem as though there is no way *not* to yield products or works; for them, to desire is to produce, desire produces the real—both actually and virtually—and one even produces anti-production.ⁱⁱ Even when

Deleuze and Guattari offer up concepts which go a long way to account for X's practice, as we shall find, these are inextricably bound to contraries which run totally counter to such an engagement. If only owing to their quest of and for affirmation, Deleuze and Guattari render it nearly unintelligible to conceive of an artist who is unproductive, an artist without works, yet our concern in this thesis is precisely to invoke a process of production that yields no works as discrete entities of the sort Deleuze would term 'molar'. It is true that this thesis construes artist and work of art as "discrete entities (to be studied separately or in relation) ... as specific things that are completely different and that could act on one another," a conception against which J. Macgregor Wise warns in a commentary on the Deleuzian concept of assemblage and its implications for technology studies.ⁱⁱⁱ However, far from "get[ting] rather uneasy when [artworks] and human beings begin to merge," we shall move precisely toward construing them in such a merging, in the absence—perhaps even the defiance—of the sort of production that would allow works of art to emerge as discrete entities.

We should like in this thesis to take as our case study this X at the piano, to grant him a life beyond the questions Deleuze and Guattari pose of him in their tenth plateau, "Becoming-Intense, Becoming-Animal ...". In order to explain his processes, his breakthroughs, his resistances, his shortcomings, we shall not subject X to any impoverished semblance of psychoanalysis so much as show in our description of its effects that his is an engagement which is not one of production—in the sense of yielding products, finished works of art—still less of judgment, consumption, apprehension. Such an account will not prove alien to the thought of Deleuze and Guattari, though they have not provided it explicitly. In fact, although plenty of incentives for such an engagement lie latent in their thought, we shall find that a much stronger

account can be derived by seizing a concept that Deleuze and Guattari apply not at all to art, namely that of becoming-minoritarian, so as to develop the concept **becoming-artwork**.

It is fruitless to fault Deleuze and Guattari for not invoking a becoming-artwork, an extension that requires few breaks but amounts to a significant intervention in their thought. Deleuze himself seldom bothered answering to critical objections, maintaining that they “have never contributed anything”^{iv}—that they only incited him to move on, to act despite and not to react in spite. This is remarkable given that, for Deleuze and Guattari, philosophy consists in the creation of concepts, and so their writings are overrun by neologisms whose relations to one another and whose fields of application, moreover, are left “strategically ‘under-determined.’”^v It is thus extraordinarily difficult to enter into their thought without getting swept up in something of a hurricane of terminology, losing one’s ability to navigate by fixed and rigid distinctions, indeed one’s ability to realize where one stands in relation to their thought. Several of Deleuze’s commentators, however, propose a different manner of engaging with his thought, one that involves neither the reactive objections with which philosophy is most often concerned nor “reusing a recipe or a static definition in another field of thought.”^{vi} Instead, Deleuze and his collaborators invite us to engage their concepts in becomings of their own, at once “captur[ing], refut[ing], confirm[ing] and metamorphos[ing]” them.^{vii} It is on this condition that we might avoid deferring to Deleuze and Guattari in every instance, taking all aspects of their thought as given, no less than avoid making them into the fathers against whom to measure and level all of our protests. It is such that this thesis aims not merely to find where X’s practices—indeed, where a becoming-artwork—might fit neatly into the thought of Deleuze and Guattari, nor to dismiss or attack their whole project in favour of our own. We find rather that extending the concept of becoming-minoritarian to a becoming-artwork, with all the metamorphoses this

entails, is the best way to open up and extend their thought, to make it *live* in such a way as to account dynamically for the X with whom we are concerned.

This thesis shall not undertake an ontological account of art, at least any more than is necessary to arrive at an ethics of artistic creativity.^{viii} We cringe to think of art in terms of sensation, affects and percepts (Deleuze and Guattari) no less than in terms of Being and truth, world and earth (Heidegger); rather, as Deleuze and Guattari write of philosophy, there is simply too much desire to *do* art to wonder what it is.^{ix} While we should still like for our account to be able to be extended to other fine arts, indeed to broader conceptions of art entirely, we cannot risk losing sight of our purpose by falling into abstractions. Neither, however, shall we employ much in the way of musical terminology, recognizing as we do that not everyone speaks such language, indeed that X himself finds little need for it, and hoping as we do that other artists, prospective or otherwise, can take up what we write and wonder wherein lie the divergences of their own engagements.

Our first chapter shall lay the groundwork for this thesis, demonstrating the incentives behind conceiving of a becoming-artwork, by showing that X's engagement at the piano is that of **an artist without works**. It is in our second chapter that we shall 'deterritorialize' Deleuze and Guattari's concept becoming-minoritarian, establishing the connections and divergences necessary to elucidate a **becoming-artwork**, and showing as we proceed that such a concept opens up possibilities for art far beyond those of X's practices. We shall leave until our third chapter an appraisal, an evaluation of how becoming-artwork is best manifested, according to terms and standards of **life and risk** borrowed in part from the thought of Deleuze and his collaborators, but adapted more suitably to our ends. In all this we shall not argue that becoming-artwork, whether or not as X engages in it, is *better* than a production that would yield discrete,

‘molar’ works of art so much as argue for a place for it at the table. Rather, the question burning throughout this thesis is one of whether or why it should or should not be worthwhile to produce in such a way, and what such production might lend to—rather than compromise or curtail—a becoming-artwork we are committed to elucidating and affirming up to its very limits.

ⁱ Deleuze, Gilles. “Literature and Life.” Trans. Daniel W. Smith and Michael A. Greco. *Critical Inquiry* 23 (1997): 225.

ⁱⁱ See Eugene W. Holland’s “Desire” in *Gilles Deleuze: Key Concepts* (Ed. Charles J. Stivale. Chesham: Acumen, 2005): 53-62; Constantin V. Boundas’ “Virtual(ity)” in *The Deleuze Dictionary* (Ed. Adrian Parr. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2005): 296-298; and Todd G. May’s “The Politics of Life in the Thought of Gilles Deleuze” in *SubStance* #66 (1991): 24-35.

ⁱⁱⁱ Wise, J. Macgregor. “Assemblage.” *Gilles Deleuze: Key Concepts*: 81.

^{iv} Deleuze, Gilles, and Claire Parnet. “A Conversation: What is it? What is it for?” *Dialogues II* (Trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam. New York: Columbia University Press, 2002): 1.

^v “These concepts are strategically ‘under-determined’ so that their understanding and extension to other domains requires the invention of novel connections rather than the mere application of a pre-established rule.” Holland, Eugene W. “Deterritorializing ‘Deterritorialization’—From the *Anti-Oedipus* to *A Thousand Plateaus*.” *SubStance* #66 (1991): 56.

See also Ronald Bogue’s “Deleuze’s Style” in *Man and World* 29 (1996): 254, 263, where he explains how “[e]ach concept refers to other concepts, ‘not only in its history but in its becoming or present connections’” (quoting Deleuze and Guattari in *What is Philosophy?*), and how “[c]oncepts Deleuze develops in one book reappear in another, enter into new combinations, then dissolve and form further alliances and interconnections in a third. In each work, the concepts undergo a slight metamorphosis, as if each repetition of a concept were a mere approximation, an effort once again to give it a name, but also a discovery of something new in the concept that only emerges with its restatement in a different context.”

See also Columbat, André Pierre. “A Thousand Trails to Work with Deleuze.” *SubStance* #66 (1991): 11, where he writes that “[t]heir concepts must be both ‘rigorous and inexact’ so that they can produce their own movement and be used by others in different fields[.] ... Each reader-operator who wants to work with these concepts must redefine them within his or her own field of study, while they already present themselves as being in constant metamorphosis.”

^{vi} Columbat, André Pierre. “A Thousand Trails to Work with Deleuze.” *SubStance* #66 (1991): 16.

^{vii} *Ibid.*, 21.

^{viii} For such an ontological account, indeed a Deleuzian one, see Elizabeth Grosz’s *Chaos, Territory, Art* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008).

^{ix} Deleuze, Gilles, and Félix Guattari. *What is Philosophy?* (Trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Graham Burchell. New York: Columbia University Press, 1994): 1.

chapter one: an artist without works

Martin Heidegger begins his essay “The Origin of the Work of Art” by placing artist and artwork in an inseparable, circular relation to one another: “The artist is the origin of the work. The work is the origin of the artist. Neither is without the other. ... [N]either is the sole support of the other.”ⁱ It is, however, precisely the phenomenon of an artist without works which shall incite our development in this thesis of the concept of becoming-artwork. This chapter shall lay out the problematic from which we will depart. Having first of all defined artwork and artist for our purposes, we shall show how the thought of Deleuze and Guattari—in particular, their concepts rhizome, plane of consistency, and smooth space—already provides us with some impetus for conceiving of an art practice which is not one of production as normally construed, still less of judgment, apprehension, consumption. However, we will deign to show that Deleuze and Guattari tether these concepts to contraries which preclude a proper account of X’s engagement at the piano. Indeed, for all their praise of music as wielding a greater force of deterritorialization than do other arts, Deleuze and Guattari stop short of accounting for the type of improvisation in which X engages, and which the concept becoming-artwork shall help us elucidate. It is by explaining this sort of improvisation as it proceeds and in X’s withdrawal from it that we shall expose him as an artist without works, whose practise begs a more compelling account than can be achieved by restricting ourselves to such terms.

(i) a work of art

What is a work of art, that an artist could be with or without it? This question is better posed as an inquiry into the conditions of there being a work of art, if are to avoid those vain and tiresome attempts to classify and rank all that which might fall under such a category.ⁱⁱ We must

clarify at the outset, however, that we mean not to frame the term artwork as the body of work spanning the career of an artist—a conception Michel Foucault finds rules out such a notion as “curious unity,” given the dubiousness of what ought to be included in such a body.ⁱⁱⁱ Yet neither do we mean by work of art that “ongoing and ontologically open productive enterprise”^{iv} having little to do with whether—or how many—finished products seem to emerge from it; we shall find in fact that the artist of whom we wish to take account is precisely one who engages, as artist, solely in such a practice. What we mean by work of art, then, runs rather along the lines of Heidegger’s and Deleuze and Guattari’s conceptions thereof, as those more or less discrete “things” which can be counted, which can be several, and as that “order and succession of distinct forms” yielded from what the latter authors call striated space.^v It is true that Heidegger and Deleuze and Guattari insist on the independence and the self-sufficiency of the work of art, respectively—aspects that depend on these philosophers’ particular ways of construing the artwork’s preservation, conceptions which in turn depend on the very ontological accounts we are inclined to bypass in this thesis.^{vi} For us it is sufficient to note that such preservation is not to be identified with an artwork’s material subsistence, “which constitutes only the *de facto* condition,”^{vii} and is owed to none of those of whom the artwork is said in any case to be independent.

There is a sense in which to inquire into the conditions of there being a work of art is not so different from inquiring into the conditions of there being an artist, or any other ‘body’ for that matter. Indeed, since Immanuel Kant’s *Critique of the Power of Judgment* it has become routine to ruminate on the commonness between the organism and the work of art. For Deleuze and his collaborators, however, this commonness is rooted in something more abstract, namely their insistence, following Spinoza, on “the univocity of being, in which all things, regardless of

their type, have the same ontological status,”^{viii} to the extent that even the parts of what we would normally consider a whole share that same status. It is such that we might invoke the work of art, as Deleuze and Guattari never do, in what they would call its molar entity, “as defined by [its] form, endowed with organs and functions and assigned as a subject.”^{ix} Whereas such a molar entity always “pertains to and sustains the political economy of a majority”^x—the majority in this case being occupied by the artist—we shall develop in this thesis alternatives to such a conception which undercut such hierarchy.

Deleuze and Guattari begin *A Thousand Plateaus* by suggesting that a book, like “everything else,” constitutes an assemblage.^{xi} We are indeed interested in construing the work of art as an assemblage, in considering the sense in which Deleuze and Guattari characterize it as “a veritable invention,” as “every constellation of singularities and traits deduced from the flow—selected, organized, stratified—in such a way as to converge (consistency) artificially and naturally.”^{xii} We are not to understand by this that a work of art as assemblage is closed in on itself in an interiority which Deleuze and Guattari insist would only verify its “impotence”;^{xiii} rather, an assemblage includes not only those “lines of articulation or segmentation, strata, territorialities” that “undoubtedly make of it a kind of organism, either a signifying totality or a determination attributable to a subject,” but also those “lines of flight, movements of deterritorialization and destratification” that continually “break down the organism, causing a-signifying particles to pass and circulate freely, pure intensities, and causing the attribution to itself of subjects to which it allows no more than a name as a trace of an intensity.”^{xiv} As we shall see as we proceed in this first chapter, the engagement with art we mean to invoke is rather one of consorting with the flow rather than deducting from it, and what it is to withhold from selecting, organizing and stratifying in the ways Deleuze and Guattari indicate. In no sense is it

our aim to show that what is yielded from X's engagement is all the more potent or valuable for forgoing that which would fulfill the conditions of its being a work of art; we shall see, in fact, how much it deprives what is yielded from such an engagement of its independence. All we mean to show for now is the reality of such an engagement.

We must first, however, consider other concepts which Deleuze and Guattari employ in order to explain the work of art. For them, "The territory is the first assemblage, the first thing to constitute an assemblage; the assemblage is fundamentally territorial."^{xv} We shall soon see certain implications of the choice of the term 'territory,' yet we should note first that in *What is Philosophy?* Deleuze and Guattari extend this notion to characterize the work of art as a house. "Art begins," in fact, "with the house," as what secures the autonomy of the artwork, ensuring that its "flesh hold[s] fast," that its "body blossoms."^{xvi} It is in order to ward off chaos while capturing and composing what one can of it that, according to Deleuze and Guattari, one fashions a territory or a house as work of art.^{xvii} Yet what must be elucidated is another approach to chaos which consists not in capturing or composing but rather in opening up to it as a consortion.^{xviii} While Deleuze and Guattari maintain that one requires a house to produce art, in fact, they clarify repeatedly that this is "on condition that it all opens onto and launches itself on a mad vector as on a witch's broom, a line of the universe or of deterritorialization."^{xix} Indeed, that an assemblage amounts to a territory is significant for us because X's engagement at the piano yields no such product but rather a perpetual deterritorialization.

It is those lines of deterritorialization or lines of flight of a given territory, Deleuze and Guattari argue, that both hold it together and render it unattributable, or instead are disabled upon attributing a territory to one who would serve as "a beneficent God."^{xx} As we might surmise, however, from their exposition of the assemblage, Deleuze and Guattari claim that one need not

“leav[e] the territory or issu[e] from the assemblage” in order for deterritorialization to transpire; rather “the territory is constantly traversed by movements of deterritorialization that are relative and may even occur in place.”^{xxi} Indeed, elsewhere they write, “Not only does the open house communicate with the landscape, through a window or a mirror, but the most shut-up house opens onto a universe ... that supports the house.”^{xxii} What this might look like or whether this is even the case is not our concern so much as to make a case instead for a deterritorialization which does not proceed by way of territories, which does not require a territory in order to proceed—a conception Deleuze and Guattari rarely seem to acknowledge except by way of exception. Even in *Anti-Oedipus*, in which it is held that Deleuze and Guattari carry the concept of deterritorialization to its furthest reaches,^{xxiii} the authors insist nevertheless on the necessity of “induc[ing]” or “grasp[ing]” deterritorialization through the reterritorializations to which it is inextricably bound, which “always reconstitute shores of representation” and which “permit [deterritorialization] to subsist only as the state of a particular flow.”^{xxiv} It is these reterritorializations, moreover, which “keep the flows from escaping the system, and maintain labor in the axiomatic framework of property, and desire in the applied framework of the family,”^{xxv} while what we are trying to elucidate in making a case for X is precisely something which would not undergo these compromises. It is rare enough in Deleuze and Guattari’s thought that the pair invoke an absolute deterritorialization, yet even then, they make it pass by way of the relative deterritorializations which restrict us to thinking in terms of territories.^{xxvi} It will be our task, moreover, in what follows to show that such a deterritorialization is not at all destructive—that there is nothing to be destroyed in the first place, in fact—but rather that it constitutes a production without product of which we have yet to adequately take account.

It is in *Anti-Oedipus*, in any case, that Deleuze and Guattari make a case for the work of art which comes closest to that which would account for the output of X. One of the authors' operations in this book is to transpose Kant's distinction between handicraft and art, and that of Heidegger between equipment and art, to one between technical-machines and desiring-machines.^{xxvii} What conditions the latter distinction is the means of production giving rise to the one or the other. Whereas for technical-machines the means of production are separate from the product, ensuring that technical-machines "are not assembled in the same way they are used" and "obviously work only if they are not out of order," for desiring-machines production and product, assembly and use are indistinguishable, ensuring that they "continually break down as they run, and in fact run only when they are not functioning properly."^{xxviii} Now, Deleuze and Guattari idealize the work of art as a desiring-machine, but not without indicating that it must first be produced as a technical-machine before being "converted to the realm of desiring-machines."^{xxix} It is clear that no work of art as 'pure' desiring-machine could ever subsist as a product, independent and preserved, yet we are concerned here precisely with an artist without works whose engagement, as artist, with art yields solely desiring-machines that are not also technical-machines.

Indeed, we are looking to elucidate in this thesis a productive engagement with art which would not yield a territory, which would bypass the erection of a 'house' in favour of a continued deterritorialization for as long as it proceeds, and which need not on that account be construed in terms of a lack of a work of art. We should laud the thought of Deleuze and Guattari for the mobility lent to such notions as assemblage and territory, but we must push these closer to chaos than did Deleuze and Guattari—indeed nearly bowl them over—and call into question the organizing principles entailed in each, while wondering more concretely whether and why it is or

is not worthwhile to produce, to yield molar products. As we have seen in the thought of Deleuze and Guattari it is the desiring-machine as work of art, as indicated in *Anti-Oedipus*, which provides us with an account closest to that which we need in the case of X, yet before we proceed further in expounding on his situation we must first define for our purposes what we are taking to mean artist.

(ii) *an artist*

It is worth devoting some space here to wondering who, or what, might count as an artist, yet only briefly, since this chapter undertakes to broaden such a conception. Again, by inquiring into the nature of an artist we shall not deign to classify or categorize what should count as art, and we mean neither to reduce art to what can be attributed to an artist, recognizing as do Deleuze and Guattari no less than Foucault, that doing so is rather a means of impeding or limiting art.^{xxx} We wish it could go without saying that we are trying to conceive of an art practice beyond the terms even Heidegger warned against so early on, “as the self-sovereign subject’s performance of genius.”^{xxxix} Yet Foucault seems hardly to provide simple ways for construing an artist beyond “the limited sense of a person to whom the production of a text, a book, or a work can be legitimately attributed,”^{xxxix} and Heidegger, for all his efforts to consider the work of art on its own terms, concedes the failure of ignoring the fact of the artwork’s having been “created”: “constrained by the facts, we must consent after all to go into the activity of the artist in order to arrive at the origin of the work of art.”^{xxxix} Even Foucault’s insistence, following Heidegger, that “the artist does not precede the work,” while motivated to move on from such a conception, still tethers artist and work together, even if as effects of a production and a process which are prior to them. Less impressive still, in *A Thousand Plateaus* Deleuze and Guattari identify the artist as “the first person to set out a boundary stone, or to make a mark. ...

Property is fundamentally artistic ...” while in *What is Philosophy?* they go even further to align art with the territory when they declare that “art begins with the animal, or at least the animal that carves out a territory and constructs a house.”^{xxxiv} It is in this respect that what seems like a gross misstep in *Anti-Oedipus*, when Deleuze and Guattari liken the artist to “a master of objects,”^{xxxv} no longer seems as startling, even given the commitments running through their thought that seem averse to construing the relationship between artist and work in such a light.

It is precisely an artist without works, however, who never emerges as such a master, and whose engagement with art never yields such works as assemblages, territories, or houses that can be owned or attributed. It is not at all to decry such attribution or ownership in favour of some more righteous alternative that we undertake such an inquiry so much as to derive a more satisfactory account of what it is that X does in his engagement at the piano, an engagement that finds him apparently going in circles but which we might find reason to affirm if only we consider it on different terms. It is our task, then, to conceive of a process which an artist undertakes—or is it undergoes?—and which yields all that distinguishes art from what Heidegger calls equipment, from a mere technical-machine, without, however, fulfilling the conditions for its constituting an artwork. In other words, it is our task to show wherein, or by dint of what, an artist without works *is* an artist; paradoxically, we shall see before long how and why we must pass beyond our conceptions of the relationship between artist and work if we are to properly elucidate such a process.

Anti-Oedipus finds Deleuze and Guattari expounding a theory of production and process, of what gives rise to these assemblages, the territories and the houses of their later thought. Predictably, not only owing to their accounts of the assemblage which we have seen but to the way we normally understand production, Deleuze and Guattari identify process and production

equally with the yielding of a product, even if as the deduction from a continuous flow rather than as the unilateral, conscious, intentional causality which we are accustomed to attributing to an artist: “Hence the product is something removed or detached from the process of producing: between the act of producing and its product, something becomes detached.”^{xxxvi} Even the editors of *Anti-Oedipus* note that the word *procès* which Deleuze and Guattari use refers severally to “a skimming or draining off,” “a removal of a certain quantity as a sample for purposes of testing,” “a setting apart of a portion or share of the whole.”^{xxxvii} What happens, however, when an artist’s engagement, as artist, with art yields no such product? Shall X be termed unproductive for yielding no works of art—as assemblages, territories, or houses—in his engagement with art? We will see as we ourselves proceed all that the particularities of X’s engagement at the piano preclude of a product emerging as “a simple ‘finding,’ a ‘finished design,’” yet which need not be construed necessarily as “making [the process] turn about in the void.”^{xxxviii} Rather, such an engagement could signal a process and a productive engagement which need not be deemed insufficient or in terms of its lack of an emergent product.

(iii) rhizome, plane of consistency, smooth space

It may seem curious why we should see fit to go beyond Deleuze and Guattari’s thought in order to account for a particular art practice, given how much of their thought is devoted to art. The truth is that the practice we mean to invoke runs as so many currents through their thought, yet that they stop short of positing anything along the lines of an artist without works, let alone a becoming-artwork. Numerous terms abound in their thought which exemplify alternatives of immanence to the transcendence that has defined history as we know it, and which shall help us explicate wherein an artist without works is an artist. The difficulty of invoking them, however, as we shall see, is that these terms are each one of a particular dualism, “exist[ing] only in

mixture” with its contrary yet remaining differentiated from it by the fact of the different manner each term has of communicating with the other.^{xxxix} Let us consider these concepts in turn, withholding until our explication of improvisation what they contribute to it and focusing instead for now on what prevents them from accounting for the activity of X.

The question of the rhizome is not far from that of the assemblage, given that the former serves as an instance of the latter. What is helpful for us in the concept of the rhizome is that it is a multiplicity which is not reducible to a unity, which cannot be assigned units or “caught up in a structure”^{xl} in such a way as would fulfill the conditions of there being a work of art as we outlined earlier. Moreover, the concept of the rhizome provides resources for conceiving of the sort of deterritorialization in which X engages, presented often in this introductory plateau with a fervent enthusiasm: “Always follow the rhizome by rupturing, lengthening, prolonging, taking up the line of flight, making it vary, until it produces the most abstract and tortuous line in n dimensions and scattered directions ... extend your own territory by deterritorialization.”^{xli} The only curious element for us in all this, of course, is why there should have had to be a territory in the first place to deterritorialize.

Indeed, being an assemblage, the rhizome retains those “lines of segmentation according to which it is stratified, territorialized, organized, stratified, attributed, etc.,” no less than the “lines of deterritorialization along which it endlessly flees.”^{xlii} What we have to reckon with is not, as is Deleuze and Guattari’s concern, that “the line of flight is part of the rhizome,”^{xliii} but rather that the lines of segmentation *are*. It is curious that they would include the latter lines in this concept given their concern with dismissing false approximations or imitations of the rhizome which serve to maintain or restore a unity. Yet Deleuze and Guattari round out this introductory plateau by arguing that the rhizome and the root, its arborescent contrary, exist in

one another in “very different arrangements—tracing-maps, root-rhizomes—with variable coefficients of deterritorialization.”^{xliii} It seems that Deleuze and Guattari think they must include the latter rather than invoke the rhizome in its purity because, they write, its lines of flight are bound, “owing to their eventual divergence, ... to reproduce the very formations that it was their function to dismantle or evade.”^{xliii} We cannot find any reason for supposing that lines of flight would conduce to such formations, at least insofar as X’s practices are concerned, and what we must do is push Deleuze and Guattari’s rhizome to such an extent that there remain of it no lines of segmentation, or rather that at most these are so fleeting as to render them inconsequential. What this will do for the line of flight will be telling. There will be many aspects of the rhizome that we shall carry into our discussion of X’s improvisation, though we shall have to sever them from the contraries which Deleuze and Guattari allow to infiltrate it. For now it is enough to show that while the concept of the rhizome is helpful for accounting for the practices of an artist without works, Deleuze and Guattari tether it to the root or the tree in ways which preclude the account we require. It is not in order to invoke the concept in its purity in such a way as would undermine the reasons why Deleuze and Guattari would include such contraries that we do so; rather we are primarily concerned, once again, with what it takes to elucidate the practices of an artist without works, with all the helpfulness and insufficiency Deleuze and Guattari’s concepts present for us to this end.

That Deleuze and Guattari develop the notion of writing on a plane of consistency goes a long way to explaining what we must of an artist without works. They oppose this plane to that of organization or development, a transcendent plane on which forms are organized and subjects are assigned. It is the plane of consistency, by contrast, on which forms are constantly dissolved, or else continually developed without however yielding anything fixed. What renders our use of

the plane of consistency difficult, however, is that in Deleuze and Guattari's thought it is inextricably bound to the plane of organization or development. For them:

“The plane of organization is constantly working away at the plane of consistency, always trying to unplug the lines of flight, stop or interrupt the movements of deterritorialization, weigh them down, re-stratify them, reconstitute forms and subjects in a dimension of depth. Conversely, the plane of consistency is constantly extricating itself from the plane of organization, causing particles to spin off the strata, scrambling forms by dint of speed and slowness, breaking down functions by means of assemblages and microassemblages.”^{xlvi}

Moreover, the transitions between the two planes occur “continually ... by unnoticeable degrees and without [one's] being aware of it, or one becomes aware of it only afterward.”^{xlvii} In fact, it seems that the only danger in their view is that of sinking the plane of consistency in favour of the plane of organization or development,^{xlviii} whereas Deleuze and Guattari never invoke the chance that one might bypass the latter altogether, obstructing its intervention, that the plane of consistency might be attained without the support of its contrary. That they are so concerned with a production that yields products—for what other could there be?—is likely why Deleuze and Guattari make the plane of organization or development the condition, if not merely the inextricable contrary, of the plane of consistency. Indeed, while Deleuze and Guattari make it nearly unintelligible to conceive of consigning one's writing wholly to the plane of consistency, without allowing for the intervention of its contrary, it is precisely such an engagement with art which we must elucidate in order to discover wherein an artist without works is an artist.

Already the relationships between Deleuzo-Guattarian concepts are evident when we consider the dualism between smooth and striated space. It is smooth space which is directional and conduces to multiplicities of the rhizomatic type and which involves the continuous variation or development of form akin to that of the plane of consistency, while the striated is that dimensional space in which “forms organize a matter.”^{xlix} Whereas in striated space “one closes

off a surface and ‘allocates’ it according to determinate intervals, assigned breaks,” the smooth is rather an “open space ... nondelimited, unpartitioned” in which “one ‘distributes’ oneself,” precluding the emergence of an “immobile outside observer.”^{li} Unsurprisingly by this point, the smooth wields as well a “greater power of deterritorialization than the striated,” much as do the rhizome and the plane of consistency relative to their own contraries.^{li} Deleuze and Guattari are concerned primarily with the passages between these two sorts of space, supplanting their contempt for those who recognize the smooth only as it becomes striated with conceptions and examples of the inverse operation, that of the striated becoming smooth. Yet our interest lies more in an engagement with art which does not allow for the emergence of striation, an engagement left unacknowledged, missing in Deleuze and Guattari’s account, even though more so than with the plane of consistency they aim to consider smooth space on its own terms.

(iv) *music*

If we are to move this discussion beyond abstraction, it is important to inquire more concretely into the incentive behind this thesis, which is X’s engagement at the piano. It is first important, however, to make clear certain implications of our having chosen music as the case study for taking account of an artist without works and, more generally, a productive engagement with art which nevertheless yields no products, no artworks. Our consideration of music as a sort of writing, first of all, allows us to skirt tiresome questions of *signifiance* or signification which tend to overbear the issues with which we are concerned and which would render our inquiries more difficult given the proximity of literature, for example, to philosophy.^{liii} Yet more important, as we shall see, music also serves to take us into the realm of those arts which are more distinguished than are, for instance, literature or painting, from what is recorded of them; it is more difficult, in other words, to dissociate the work of literature or of painting from the pages or

the canvas than it is to dissociate the work of music from the audio recording or the score. Finally, music, even more so than literature and contrary altogether to painting, obliges us to construe a beginning and an end to a given artwork in space and time. These latter two factors will prove especially relevant as we delve into the practices of X at the piano, since his engagement bypasses both of them in favour of something which does not yield a work of art.

There is a strange reverence for music running through the thought of Deleuze and Guattari. Passages abound, for instance, extolling the merits of the minor mode for the “decentered, runaway, fugitive character” it gives tonal music “due to the nature of its intervals and the lesser stability of its chords”^{liii}—passages quite bizarre, in any case, to one whose business proper is music. Yet while withholding from any categorization of art^{liv} Deleuze and Guattari very nearly idealize music as exemplifying the deterritorialization they aim to advocate in their thought: “Music has never ceased to set off these lines of flight, as so many ‘multiplicities of transformation,’ even by altering the codes that structure it or render it arborescent.”^{lv} It remains the case, however, as we can see, that they insist on maintaining something of the assemblage, the territory in music that would fulfill the conditions of there being a work of art, and that they seem even to maintain such conditions of “closure or shutting-off” as what secure “the possibility of opening onto an ever more limitless plane of composition.”^{lvi}

It is in Deleuze and Guattari’s eleventh plateau, “Of the Refrain,” that the authors open up the concepts of assemblage and territory, recognizing perhaps the challenges that certain music poses to them. The refrain itself is a territorial assemblage, one that is “sonorous or ‘dominated’ by sound,”^{lvii} but it exists now in three moments: the infra-assemblage which runs in directional components “from chaos to the threshold of a territorial assemblage,” the intra-

assemblage which “organizes the assemblage” in dimensional components, and the inter-assemblage whose “components of passage or even escape” depart from “the territorial assemblages for other assemblages, or for somewhere else entirely.”^{lviii} What unsettles us is that in spite of the fact that Deleuze and Guattari argue that the refrain, far from being “the origin of music, or that [with which] music begins,” is “rather a means of preventing music, of warding it off, or forgoing it,” they insist on making it the condition of music and the deterritorializing force it wields.^{lix} Once again, we are looking rather for a music beyond refrain, which would not depend on the refrain in order to cut such forces loose.

As we shall see, our concern to account for such an engagement which bypasses the territory altogether, and which Deleuze and Guattari might liken alternately to the inter-assemblage or the infra-assemblage, requires rather that we abandon, if not forget, these notions. This is because we are trying to construe X’s engagement at the piano in such a way that is neither *in advance of* nor *between* the artwork(s), that is not in terms of the lack of the artwork. It is true, in any case, that Deleuze and Guattari leave a place, though only in passing, for such an engagement that “leaves all assemblages behind, that ... exceeds the capacities of any possible assemblage, entering another plane” and in which “deterritorialization becomes absolute while losing nothing of its precision,”^{lx} yet it is into this activity that we must inquire more readily, even if by leaving behind such concepts so as to account for the activity of X and an artist without works.

We must be careful in employing Deleuze and Guattari’s thought in the sense that, while they call the plane of consistency equally the plane of composition, what they explain of these terms runs far more along the lines of what we shall call improvisation. Composition, rather, should be understood as the process which yields works of art as we have outlined them, given

the ways its close association with the “work-concept” and its distinction from improvisation arose with the development of the score over the past few centuries.^{lxi} Improvisation as we shall elucidate it in this chapter is rather far more akin to what Deleuze and Guattari write of the rhizome, the plane of consistency, and smooth space, no less than the desiring-machine. Yet for most, even the term improvisation is laden with connotations which we shall have to sever from our discussion. While many associate it most closely with jazz, the fact is that musical improvisation is not restricted to one genre or another; indeed, W. F. Bach writes of his father:

“... his organ compositions were indeed full of the expression of devotion, solemnity and dignity; but his unpremeditated organ playing, in which nothing was lost in the process of writing down but everything came directly to life out of his imagination, is said to have been still more devout, solemn, dignified and sublime.”^{lxii}

Still less are we concerned for now in this thesis with construing improvisation as the interpretation, the re-casting or rendering of an extant work; even such an engagement yields assemblages, territories of the sort we are trying to get beyond in order to account for X, even if they are written originally by others and even if X is capable of it. Yet this seems to be the status to which Deleuze and Guattari consign improvisation in what we can find as the only explicit mention of it in their thought, as the third moment of the refrain, the inter-assemblage, the departure from an assemblage, a territory:

“Finally, one opens the circle a crack, opens it all the way, lets someone in, calls someone, or else goes out oneself, launches forth. ... One launches forth, hazards an improvisation. But to improvise is to join with the World, or meld with it. One ventures from home on the thread of a tune.”^{lxiii}

Although joining or melding with the World begins to connote something of the process in which X engages, what we are trying to invoke is a practice which bypasses even the scaffolding or framework of such a home, or the drawing of a circle. What is to be explained, then, is how

X's engagement with art never yields such a house, territory, or assemblage, even as that from which one departs.

(v) *in process*

We must inquire more readily into the process of improvisation as X undergoes it, then, drawing what we can from Deleuze and Guattari's thought, though not without establishing enough distance from them to show that what improvisation yields never amounts to a work of art as assemblage, territory, or house. To be sure, it is not that X, as Deleuze and Guattari suggest in our epigraph, has begun "practicing" the piano again; for him there is nothing that would distinguish practice from any other sort of engagement. If he resorts to technical exercises at all it is out of tedium, to forestall improvisation or to ignore an incapacity or unwillingness to undergo it. It is true, as Andy Hamilton points out, drawing from the engagements of what he calls "free improvisers," that the only engagement with art on their part that could amount to "practice" is rather merely a continued or sustained engagement with improvisation, one that better "prepares them for the leap" which we shall elucidate, yet what we must wonder as we proceed is how X's engagement comes to be so sporadic as to nearly defy any such notion of practice.

Like the rhizome of Deleuze and Guattari's thought, there is, strictly speaking, no beginning or end to improvisation that would be conducive to its yielding a work of art. One is rather always in the middle, "through which it pushes and overflows."^{xiv} Of course, this is not to say that X's improvisation does not begin and end at certain points in space and time but rather that there is no constancy for such points such as would conduce to the formation of an artwork, that such points are never recovered as such from one engagement with improvisation to another.

Rather, just as Deleuze and Guattari see fit to construe this as “entering and leaving” by way of so many entrances and exits that can be made at any point,^{lxv} so too shall we see later on that X withdraws from and resumes improvisation rather than begins and ends it as one would with a work of art.

We can already see how improvisation as X undergoes it is best characterized as the art of the interval, as Deleuze and Guattari identify of “nomad art” and smooth space in general; “the interval takes all,” they write, “the interval is substance.”^{lxvi} Of course, works of art with molar status, wielding relative independence, have their own intervals, as Deleuze and Guattari indicate of striated space, but these are regulated, more or less fixed in place—“dimensional-striated, closed intervals” as opposed to “smooth-directional, open intervals.”^{lxvii} It is clear upon examining improvisation at many levels that it keeps such intervals indeterminate in such a way that the points are subordinated to the lines, the departure and the destination to the journey, such that it is possible to conceive of an improvisation without points at all, save those marked by one’s resumption and withdrawal from it, though this is not necessary.^{lxviii} Not only is the period for which improvisation is undertaken, undergone, left indeterminate, but so too is the length of a given melodic phrase, the length of a given rhythmic measure.^{lxix} Closer still, what X’s engagement leaves indeterminate is the melodic interval as spatial distance between two notes in sequence, the harmonic interval as spatial distance between two or more notes played at once, and the rhythmic interval as temporal distance between two notes. Deleuze and Guattari are right to cite Pierre Boulez in their final plateau to elucidate a rhythm without measure, though this would better be construed as a rhythm beyond measure. Indeed, as Boulez himself makes clear it is not a mere mixing of metres, a deliberate taking of one or two beats more or fewer in a given measure relative to others, much less establishing any sort of irregular series that one reaches

such a rhythm. Yet neither is it defying measure no matter what, precluding even the temporary establishment of repetition or series. It is rather a matter of leaving indeterminate the length of a given rhythmic measure, just as with the length of a melodic phrase, such that to attempt to assign or calculate metre would be in vain, since any given ‘member’ of a series can be cut short or extended, independent of any precedent it sets for ‘members’ to come.

Indeed, it is not as though there is no repetition in improvisation so much as that what is played defies efforts of repetition, reproduction, replication, recovery.^{lxx} What needs adapting of Deleuze and Guattari’s smooth space in this regard is that while they deem it an intensive space to be contrasted with the extensive space of the striated, music and the particular kind of improvisation with which we are concerned present the reality of an extensive space that nonetheless defies reproduction and replication. While there can be improvisation that amounts to an intensive “voyage in place,” it can equally be extensive yet of a sort whose quantity of movement still defies measurement and cannot be reduced to the distance between points.^{lxxi}

It may seem as though what we are describing runs along the lines of the chaotic work of art which Deleuze and Guattari warn against in *What is Philosophy?* and which they claim the marking of a territory, the erection of a house, are designed to avoid.^{lxxii} Yet as with Deleuze and Guattari’s plane of consistency, improvisation’s constant dissolution of form is simultaneous with a continuous development thereof, without however yielding a stable form at any time or upon withdrawal, as we shall see. It is not the absence of a house, in other words, so much as the continued making and dismantling of a house, such that the ‘form’ of improvisation is constantly fleeting, continually overrunning itself. It is indeed as though one were painting or writing only to have the lines, colours, paint, words, and ink continually fade from the canvas or the page. Yet just like the nomadic encampments or the schizo’s territorialities which Deleuze and Guattari

invoke in *A Thousand Plateaus* and *Anti-Oedipus* respectively, improvisation still entails ‘passages,’ though these should be taken in the strongest sense of the word, as even more fleeting than the notions of encampments or territorialities would suggest. There is indeed no recovering these passages once they are overrun; they leave scarcely a trace or an echo and have no strict borders even as they are traversed. There is no sense, then, of cramming the work full as one could a canvas or a set of pages—provided these could not sprawl out continuously without however being countable—since in improvisation what is made is constantly left behind, falling away no sooner than it has been played and charging ahead toward new passages still.

If there are points in improvisation they are best conceived as points of rupture, as breaks of consistency which leap without calculation or measurement from one ‘passage’ to another. Like Deleuze and Guattari’s rhizome, what characterizes improvisation very well is that it “can be cracked and broken at any point; it starts off again following one or another of its lines, or even other lines.”^{lxxiii} There is no sense in which such an interval need be bridged or stitched, resolved or regulated so as to “restore a link” between points.^{lxxiv} Sometimes what would otherwise be called error with respect to a work of art or the development thereof is what marks these ruptures, designating a change in a particular passage, either allowing the passage itself to change or else pulling the artist from one passage into yet another one entirely. The sort of improvisation we are invoking, in fact, is what allows error to be an affirmative, subversive force, or else affirms error as that force, or else still allows it to matter little at all, given that what it disrupts is so fleeting that even if the same passage is still traversed, error can be forgotten as a blemish spilling into the past.

It is not the case that the contraries of the rhizome, the plane of consistency, and smooth space return on the part of the artist while improvisation is underway. Indeed there is something

approaching a lack of distinction between artist and artwork that rises up during improvisation, precluding both that a work of art should emerge as a distinct, independent product and that the artist should operate as conscious, deliberate subject on the contrary plane, in striated space. It seems rather that artist and artwork attain in improvisation something of the producer-product identity which Deleuze and Guattari advocate in *Anti-Oedipus*, if not in the way they intended then as what yields desiring-machines which continually break down as they run and whose assembly cannot be distinguished from their use. Improvisation is rather a means for X of unravelling his subject, which in fact helps us better account for its transpiring on the plane of consistency. There is a sense in which, indeed, X could be likened to the schizo of Deleuze and Guattari's *Anti-Oedipus*, or else as undergoing a schizophrenizing process. It is the schizo, they suggest, who is "continually wandering about, migrating here, there, and everywhere as best he can, [who] plunges further and further into the realm of deterritorialization."^{lxxv} Moreover:

"It might be said that the schizophrenic passes from one code to the other, that he deliberately *scrambles all the codes*, by quickly shifting from one to another, according to the questions asked him, never giving the same explanation from one day to the next, never invoking the same genealogy, never recording the same event in the same way."^{lxxvi}

Finally, it is worth noting that Deleuze and Guattari argue that the schizo "fail[s] to complete the process, [he] never cease[s] failing to do so,"^{lxxvii} implying once more that for the process to be complete there would need to be a product which emerges and subsists. But need we invoke such an extreme case in order to account for X who, in any case, is not declared "sick," in order to prove his capacity to undergo such a version of the process, perhaps in order to affirm such a process as a production without product? And does this mean we need construe X's withdrawal from the process of improvisation as his collapse into neurosis, into repression, following the breakdown-breakthrough of improvisation?

As in Deleuze and Guattari's smooth space, X never delimits the space-time to be occupied by what there is of an artwork, never assigns boundaries to it, never distinguishes it from what lies outside of it. It seems rather more apt than even the rhizome as Deleuze and Guattari expound it to be "defined by means of the outside: by the abstract line, the line of flight or deterritorialization following which [it] change[s] nature by being connected with others [other 'passages'],"^{lxxviii} since it never acquires or develops the lines of segmentation or articulation that would secure its relative independence or its constitution as a work of art. It is as though, following Heidegger, "the work belongs, as work, uniquely within the realm that is opened up by itself,"^{lxxix} yet the 'work' in question—which is *not* one—never ceases to push along with X into new space still, letting spill into the past what has so far been made as it continually drives forward. Indeed, for X to assign parameters to what there is of a 'work' in improvisation would place limits on what it could do, what it could become, for better or for worse. There is rather a regulation on X's part of "a continuous variation of activity" following which all that cannot keep up is abandoned or left behind,^{lxxx} which both ensures and defies at once its repetition.

It should be noted that X's process, with all its withholding from calculation and measurement—even of the bare scaffolding of a house—obliges him to work alone. Not agreeing on or determining any constancy means that improvisation is constantly bursting out of what it has been, such that there is no sense in which X could traverse the same lines of flight or deterritorialization as would others. Even when X attempts to engage in collaborative efforts, these are short-lived because he cannot help but allow the 'work' in process to overrun itself in ways which he withholds from calculating or measuring; it is even the case that others think of X's rhythm beyond measure as being merely bad rhythm, no matter that he knows better. It is

engaging in improvisation of this sort with others, in fact, that would render the work of art chaotic in the sense we have described. Deleuze's contributions on this front are mixed, insisting as he does that "[w]hen you work, you are necessarily in absolute solitude"^{lxxxix} in spite of all his collaborative efforts in philosophy, though his discussion of the territory in connection with animals in *A Thousand Plateaus* makes clear the necessity of a territory in order for the sort of courtship which musical collaboration would approach to transpire.^{lxxxii}

For now, it is sufficient for us to realize that what we have exposed of improvisation insofar as it is underway constitutes those unattributable aspects of what Deleuze and Guattari identify of the work of art as assemblage—its lines of flight or deterritorialization—without however fulfilling the conditions that would, in other respects, render it attributable, limit what it could do and become, and make of it a work of art. It is precisely the fact that improvisation is “susceptible to constant modification,” as Deleuze and Guattari describe of the rhizome,^{lxxxiii} that renders X's taking leave of it all the more important. If insofar as it is underway it is continually dismantled, we shall see how nothing of it remains upon withdrawal from such a process.

(vi) withdrawal

Deleuze and Guattari indeed call for the sort of proximity to which X attains with the ‘work’ during improvisation. In their final plateau they insist that the artist produces with close-range vision or hearing, with short-term memory:

“One can back away from a thing, but it is a bad painter who backs away from the painting he or she is working on. ... Cézanne spoke of the need to no longer see the wheat field, to be too close to it, to lose oneself without landmarks in smooth space. Afterward, striation can emerge ...”^{lxxxiv}

Yet it is not simply a matter for X of waiting for the right moment to withdraw, that striation might emerge; it is rather the case that his engagement precludes such an emergence on the part

of the ‘work’. It is indeed as though what is there, or what could have been there, of an artwork, dies in fact upon such a withdrawal, without the constancy of structure which would allow it to subsist and be recovered. Less than in the case of writing or painting does one, in the case of music, remain an artist without works by destroying or abandoning what has been made; in the case of X in particular there is on the contrary a heightened hopelessness of recovering it. As much as Deleuze and Guattari call for “the sound [to] be held no less in its extinction than in its production and development,”^{lxxxv} the fact is that as X withdraws from the piano nothing subsists of the work—there is no canvas full of strokes of paint, no notepad on which so much writing is splayed out. For Deleuze and Guattari such a death comes only by forgoing “the translation of the strange data of a smooth multiplicity” into striated space:

“an operation that undoubtedly consists in subjugating, overcoding, metricizing smooth space, in neutralizing it, but also in giving it a milieu of propagation, extension, refraction, renewal and impulse without which it would perhaps die of its own accord: like a mask without which it could neither breathe, nor find a general form of expression.”^{lxxxvi}

But when what is yielded from X’s engagement defies such a translation, we must decide whether such a death is worth mourning, indeed why X thinks little of it as he stands up from his bench and takes leave of the piano.

It is easy to object that for music to subsist as an artwork, as we have indicated, it is merely a matter of recording as one does writing or painting. Could not improvisation, even the sort in which X engages, then, serve as a sort of artwork, a sort of “instant composition”?^{lxxxvii} Indeed, in *Anti-Oedipus* Deleuze and Guattari prescribe that part of the energy devoted to production go toward the recording thereof, and there are indeed those artists whose ‘artworks’ consist of recorded performances of free improvisation. We, however, are seeking to elucidate those aspects of X’s engagement with art which would be lost or overlooked if we were merely

to resort to such techniques as would secure the status of its output as works of art. What Deleuze and Guattari praise of music is that it serves as an Anti-Memory: “The musician is in the best position to say: ‘I hate the faculty of memory. I hate memories.’”^{lxxxviii} Yet if it is by forgetting or at most by short-term memory that X goes further in improvisation, continuing to deterritorialize, to carry the line of flight further still, and if what music is yielded from his engagement defies simple reproduction and replication, then X is hard pressed to recover what has been played as a recording inscribed in memory.^{lxxxix} Still less is there the possibility of capturing what has been played by means of the writing of a score, which not only presupposes the appropriate theoretical training necessary to do so but requires so many interruptions and withdrawals from a process which would best be underway, and which in any case is hopeless for capturing all that has been played:

“improvisation ... is not like composition ... [in which an] idea [is conceived] at one instant, only to be funneled at a later time through a standard system of notation onto paper as merely a related idea, and finally interpreted and performed ... as an idea removed at least three times from the original.”^{xc}

There remains, it seems to us, only one alternative, which is that of audio recording as on a tape. It is such a recording which wields the same status as a painting or a work of writing in that they will nonetheless not count as works of art if they are not taken up in some way and preserved; the important difference is, though, again that the recording of music is optional, evitable, and not as tethered as in writing or painting to the act or the performance itself. In any case, not only would such preservation require more time to decipher what had been played than it took to play it, but the question in such a case would become one of where to deduct from the flow, where to sever the work of art from what lies outside it, and what would need to happen to its flows and lines so that it could become a work of relative dimension, independence, constancy. Even Deleuze and Guattari, in *Anti-Oedipus*, recognize the difficulty of such an

undertaking, which in any case removes X from the singular process which we are concerned here with affirming, and by which we are trying to establish him as artist: “What flow to break? Where to interrupt it? How and by what means?”^{xci} Moreover, the problem is that to record improvisation so as to lend it to the possibility of consumption or consummation, if not judgment and apprehension, would fix its intervals, if only as a standard from which there could be only so much deviation in subsequent performances with the artwork remaining the ‘same.’ If improvisation as we have expounded it, this ‘art of the interval,’ is not to be subordinated, and if X is not to be expelled from artistry for failing to subordinate it, we must suspend this question of recording so as to consider more fairly the process of which we are more concerned to take account. We must return to the question of wherein X is an artist given his productive engagement with art that yields no products, that yields no works of art—and here, in particular, inquire into the sporadic character of this engagement, with all the withdrawal or taking leave which it entails.

There is indeed a withdrawal, or a taking leave of art, for which we must account of X. Even though no work of art would emerge in any case if X were to remain indefinitely in process, the fact is that his improvisation comes in bursts and rarely lasts for long. There is a difficulty of sustaining such an engagement, and not only because “there has to be a need” for it in the first place.^{xcii} It is true, there are times when X approaches the piano, only to play part of a scale, a few chords, before standing up to walk away or else surrendering to the complacency of others’ refrains. Moreover, the withdrawal from improvisation is marked just as much as its ongoing process by the indeterminate interval, transpiring over no fixed amount of time; at times, in fact, weeks pass during which it does not even occur to X to play piano. All this is important, yet we are concerned more with what happens when X withdraws from the piano following genuine

improvisation, a process which attains the plane of consistency, which is rhizomatic and in smooth space, and which constitutes wherein he is an artist.

The difficulty becomes for us one of accounting for a withdrawal from the rhizome, the plane of consistency, smooth space, without however having yielded an assemblage, a developed form of the work of art. Indeed, if there is a return of the contraries of these terms it is in X's withdrawal from improvisation, but we must not suppose that the piano is his only engagement of this sort, no matter that he seems hard pressed to identify others. We need not surmise, in other words, that X's engagement with art serves solely as an alleviation—indeed as his sole alleviation—an assuaging or unburdening of desire as Deleuze and Guattari would define it, that it serves as a restoring of equilibrium, nothing having come from his engagement with art other than a contentedness to return to what he left in undertaking, undergoing it. While the possibility is there, X's engagement does not hold the character of a discharge, does not yield the pleasure that would bring such production to a halt. We would like to leave open the chance, rather—as Deleuze and Guattari hint in our epigraph—that such an engagement could serve not merely to relieve but to open X up and out, to carry new possibilities beyond itself for the life he leads. We have yet to determine, however, just what would distinguish X's engagement from that of the schizophrenic as “the one who escapes” as opposed to that of the revolutionary as “the one who knows how to make what he is escaping escape,”^{xciii} and what would constitute the investment Deleuze and Guattari deem necessary to make such an escape effect real change. It is impossible to exhaust the outside of art, much as it has been difficult to capture such an evasive process in words, yet the sporadic and unsustainable character of X's engagement places predictable limits on its power to extend elsewhere in his life. (A whisper: we think it no accident that in these spans of withdrawal X finds himself engaging in the very masochism and drug use which

Deleuze and Guattari develop as alternative means to attain the plane of consistency, if only unsustainably as well.)

What brings about the resumption of improvisation, of X's engagement at the piano? This is the same as to ask what brings improvisation about in the first place and the incentives behind its beginning, although we hope to have made clear the sense in which there is no such beginning. All that we can remark is that there emerges in X from time to time a certain restlessness, a tight but wavering anxiety upon which he realizes that only the piano will *do*, that the process in which he engages is his only recourse. What we are able to indicate is what such resumption entails, which is once more that entering back into or onto the rhizome, the plane of consistency, and smooth space, without the intervention of their contraries. Once more, too, there is no recovery of what has been played, whether owing to lack of attempt or to the hopelessness of such recovery, such that nothing assures that X does not cover the same ground time and again, other than that he strives for the unfamiliar, for what is not inscribed in memory, let alone in any other recording. A strange paradox, that of the impossibility yet the inevitability of repetition.

It is not our place here to decide whether X remains an artist in taking leave of art, in his spans of withdrawal from improvisation, although the question is legitimate. We shall wonder as we proceed, instead, whether X is an artist by dint of a capacity or rather of its actualization, which involves wondering too at the bearing such actualization has on that very capacity. What is important to us for now in this first chapter is having established that the withdrawal from—no less than the particularities of—the process which X undergoes wrests him as artist from any such inseparable relation to the work of art as Heidegger elucidated, that there is indeed an artist without works whose engagement begs an even stronger account than the thought of Deleuze and Guattari can serve to provide.

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This first chapter has shown the import of accounting for an artist without works. That such an artist goes unrecognized, unremunerated for his engagement with art is less our concern than to affirm such an engagement on its own terms, as sufficient in its own right. Yet if the thought of Deleuze and Guattari has proven helpful for conceiving of wherein X remains an artist, the concepts of the rhizome, the plane of consistency, and smooth space remain tethered to contraries geared ultimately toward a productivity which at least is not that of X. We must press further in order to better understand how what is yielded from X's engagement is not a work of art, in its molar sense, or in other words to understand how one can deterritorialize what is not a territory. Yet other difficult questions abound. How can we conceive of this engagement without calling by the name of 'artwork' what is *not* one, and without conceiving it in terms of the lack of such an artwork? How can we conceptualize this relation of proximity between an artist and an artwork which is not one, an engagement which forecloses attribution, giving rise to what distinguishes art without fulfilling the conditions for yielding a work of art? And how can we lift the artist from the restriction of being defined by the works to which he gives rise?

Still more difficult, and requiring a delay until our third chapter, it is not yet clear whether everything we have outlined of X's engagement is worth taking stock of as constituting artistry, or as something to be affirmed. X's withdrawal from or taking leave of art, in particular, raises a whole host of questions as to whether everything he undertakes, undergoes, in art is affirmative as it is—and of what?—or whether it could be made something more sustainable. Moreover, the fact that X's engagement with art forecloses any of the collaborative engagements which Deleuze, Guattari, and Parnet have exemplified is reason for wondering whether what X does might be rendered more stable, more enduring. Perhaps most of all, however, we must

wonder whether there is an important difference between not letting a molar product emerge or subsist from any given undertaking of the process, and *never* doing so.

It is in turning toward our second chapter that we shall find resources in Deleuze and Guattari's notion of becoming-minoritarian to help us account for X's engagement with art, to conceive in any case of a production without product. If those concepts of theirs which we have already exposed go a long way to develop such an account, it is the concept of a becoming-artwork which shall push our conception of this engagement to its limits, dispensing altogether with any notion of its amounting to the lack of a product, in favour of deeming this process itself "always and already complete as it proceeds, and as long as it proceeds."^{xciiv} As we shall find, what this requires is a movement beyond the terms artwork and artist as we have defined and employed them so far, so that such an artist is not maintained as the master who *would be* if only a molar artwork emerged from the process which he undergoes. Of course, it is not in order to preclude conceiving any longer of this engagement in these terms that we must go beyond them; it is rather the complexities of their relationship which require a concept that lifts X's practices beyond such distinctions, all the while showing what it brings to bear on them, and continuing to construe their relationship as one with ethical bearing.

ⁱ Heidegger, Martin. "The Origin of the Work of Art." *Poetry, Language, Thought* (Trans. Albert Hofstadter. New York: HarperCollins Publishers Inc., 2001): 17.

ⁱⁱ *Ibid.*, 70-71. See also Kant, Immanuel. *Critique of the Power of Judgment* (Ed. Paul Guyer. Trans. Paul Guyer and Eric Matthews. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000): 203-207.

ⁱⁱⁱ Foucault, Michael. "What is an Author?" *The Foucault Reader* (Ed. Paul Rabinow. Trans. Josue V. Harari. New York: Pantheon Books, 1984): 103.

^{iv} Peters, Gary. "Means Without End: Production, Reception, and Teaching in Kant's Aesthetics." *Journal of Aesthetic Education* 38.1 (2004): 35.

^v Deleuze, Gilles, and Félix Guattari. *A Thousand Plateaus* (Trans. Brian Massumi. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987): 478.

^{vi} Heidegger, Martin. "On the Origin of the Work of Art." *Poetry, Language, Thought*: 64-66. Deleuze, Gilles, and Félix Guattari. *What is Philosophy?* (Trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Graham Burchell. New York: Columbia University Press, 1994): 163-166.

^{vii} *Ibid.*, 166.

- viii Grosz, Elizabeth. "A Thousand Tiny Sexes: Feminism and Rhizomatics." *Topoi* 12 (1993): 174.
- ix Deleuze, Gilles, and Félix Guattari. *A Thousand Plateaus*: 275.
- x Braidotti, Rosi. "Woman." *The Deleuze Dictionary* (Ed. Adrian Parr. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2005): 302.
- xi Deleuze, Gilles, and Félix Guattari. "Rhizome" *On the Line* (Trans. John Johnston. New York: Semiotext(e), 1983): 2.
- xii Deleuze, Gilles, and Félix Guattari. *A Thousand Plateaus*: 406.
- xiii Deleuze, Gilles, and Félix Guattari. "Rhizome" *On the Line*: 13.
- xiv *Ibid.*, 2-3.
- xv Deleuze, Gilles, and Félix Guattari. *A Thousand Plateaus*: 323.
- xvi Deleuze, Gilles, and Félix Guattari. *What is Philosophy?*: 179, 186.
- xvii Cf. "Centuries will perhaps have been needed for man to interpret the meaning of his work(s): the endless construction of a number of substitutes for his prenatal home. ... Again and again, taking from the feminine the tissue or texture of spatiality. In exchange—but it isn't a real one—he buys her a house, even shuts her up in it, places limits on her that are the opposite of the unlimited site in which he unwittingly situated her. He contains or envelops her with walls while enveloping himself and his things with her flesh." Irigaray, Luce. *An Ethics of Sexual Difference* (Trans. Carolyn Burke and Gillian C. Gill. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993): 11.
- xviii "Chaos is defined not so much by its disorder as by the infinite speed with which every form taking shape in it vanishes. It is a void that is not a nothingness but a virtual containing all possible particles and drawing out all possible forms, which spring up only to disappear immediately without consistency or reference, without consequence." Deleuze, Gilles, and Félix Guattari. *What is Philosophy?*: 118.
- xix *Ibid.*, 184-85.
- xx Deleuze, Gilles, and Félix Guattari. "Rhizome" *On the Line*: 2; and Deleuze, Gilles, and Félix Guattari. *A Thousand Plateaus*: 336.
- xxi *Ibid.*, 326.
- xxii Deleuze, Gilles, and Félix Guattari. *What is Philosophy?*: 180.
- xxiii "[W]e'll never go too far with the deterritorialization, the decoding of flows." Deleuze, Gilles, and Félix Guattari. *Anti-Oedipus* (Trans. Robert Hurley, Mark Seem, and Helen R. Lane. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983): 382.
- xxiv *Ibid.*, 314, 316, 318, 320.
- xxv *Ibid.*, 320.
- xxvi Deleuze, Gilles, and Félix Guattari. *A Thousand Plateaus*: 510.
- xxvii Heidegger, Martin. "On the Origin of the Work of Art." *Poetry, Language, Thought*: 28, 32, 34, 44. Kant, Immanuel. *Critique of the Power of Judgment*: 183.
- xxviii Deleuze, Gilles, and Félix Guattari. *Anti-Oedipus*: 31-32, 288.
- xxix *Ibid.*, 32.
- xxx Foucault, Michael. "What is an Author?" *The Foucault Reader*: 119.
- xxxi Heidegger, Martin. "On the Origin of the Work of Art." *Poetry, Language, Thought*: 73.
- xxxii Foucault, Michael. "What is an Author?" *The Foucault Reader*: 113.
- xxxiii Heidegger, Martin. "On the Origin of the Work of Art." *Poetry, Language, Thought*: 56.
- xxxiv Deleuze, Gilles, and Félix Guattari. *A Thousand Plateaus*: 316, and *What is Philosophy?*: 183.
- xxxv Deleuze, Gilles, and Félix Guattari. *Anti-Oedipus*: 32.
- xxxvi *Ibid.*, 26.
- xxxvii *Ibid.*, 36.
- xxxviii *Ibid.*, 322, 382.
- xxxix Deleuze, Gilles, and Félix Guattari. *A Thousand Plateaus*: 474-75.
- xl Deleuze, Gilles, and Félix Guattari. "Rhizome" *On the Line*: 7.
- xli *Ibid.*, 23.
- xlii *Ibid.*, 18.
- xliiii *Ibid.*, 18.
- xliv *Ibid.*, 32.

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- xliv Ibid., 28.
- xlvi Deleuze, Gilles, and Félix Guattari. *A Thousand Plateaus*: 270.
- xlvii Ibid., 269.
- xlviii Ibid., 269.
- xliv Ibid., 479, 486.
- I Ibid., 481.
- II Ibid., 480.
- lii Bogue, Ronald. "Deleuze's Style." *Man and World* 29 (1996): 265.
- liii Deleuze, Gilles, and Félix Guattari. *A Thousand Plateaus*: 95; see also *What is Philosophy?*: 165.
- liv Deleuze, Gilles, and Félix Guattari. *A Thousand Plateaus*: 348.
- lv Deleuze, Gilles, and Félix Guattari. "Rhizome" *On the Line*: 24.
- lvi Deleuze, Gilles, and Félix Guattari. *What is Philosophy?*: 191.
- lvii Deleuze, Gilles, and Félix Guattari. *A Thousand Plateaus*: 312, 323.
- lviii Ibid., 312.
- lix Ibid., 300.
- lx Ibid., 326.
- lxi Hamilton, Andy. "The Art of Improvisation and the Aesthetics of Imperfection." *British Journal of Aesthetics* 40.1 (2000): 169.
- lxii Qtd. in *ibid.*, 173.
- lxiii Deleuze, Gilles, and Félix Guattari. *A Thousand Plateaus*: 311.
- lxiv Deleuze, Gilles, and Félix Guattari. "Rhizome" *On the Line*: 47.
- lxv Ibid., 26, 58.
- lxvi Deleuze, Gilles, and Félix Guattari. *A Thousand Plateaus*: 478.
- lxvii Ibid., 480.
- lxviii Cf. "Desire occupies or designates the place of the *interval*. Giving it a permanent definition would amount to suppressing it as desire. Desire demands a sense of attraction: a change in the interval, the displacement of the subject or of the object in their relations of nearness or distance." Irigaray, Luce. *An Ethics of Sexual Difference*: 8.
- lxix Cf. "Time is not measured in the same way for her as for man. A sentence without a period? A musical phrase that would never end? An expanse extending on and on forever. A horizon forever open, closed up only with difficulty, as a result of that other punctuation or rhythm. As she travels, she has trouble marking the different stages!" *Ibid.*, 65.
- lxx Elizabeth Grosz clarifies that qualities and properties need their "own forms of repetition," among other conditions, in order to conduce to the formation of a territory. See *Chaos, Territory, Art* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008): 20.
- lxxi Deleuze, Gilles, and Félix Guattari. *A Thousand Plateaus*: 482.
- lxxii Deleuze, Gilles, and Félix Guattari. *What is Philosophy?*: 204.
- lxxiii Deleuze, Gilles, and Félix Guattari. "Rhizome" *On the Line*: 17.
- lxxiv "We should again call to mind the practical rule laid down by Leclair ... the rule of the right to non-sense as well as to the absence of a link: you will not have reached the ultimate and irreducible terms of the unconscious so long as you find or restore a link between two elements." Deleuze, Gilles, and Félix Guattari. *Anti-Oedipus*: 314.
- lxxv Ibid., 35.
- lxxvi Ibid., 15.
- lxxvii Ibid., 133.
- lxxviii Deleuze, Gilles, and Félix Guattari. "Rhizome" *On the Line*: 16.
- lxxix Heidegger, Martin. "On the Origin of the Work of Art." *Poetry, Language, Thought*: 40.
- lxxx Deleuze, Gilles, and Félix Guattari. *A Thousand Plateaus*: 491.
- lxxxi Deleuze, Gilles, and Claire Parnet. "A Conversation: What is it? What is it for?" *Dialogues II* (Trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam. New York: Columbia University Press, 2002): 6.
- lxxxii Deleuze, Gilles, and Félix Guattari. *A Thousand Plateaus*: 323-25.
- lxxxiii Ibid., 26.

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- lxxxiv Deleuze, Gilles, and Félix Guattari. *A Thousand Plateaus*: 493.
- lxxxv Deleuze, Gilles, and Félix Guattari. *What is Philosophy?*: 165.
- lxxxvi Deleuze, Gilles, and Félix Guattari. *A Thousand Plateaus*: 486.
- lxxxvii Andy Hamilton challenges this view in "The Art of Improvisation and the Aesthetics of Imperfection." *British Journal of Aesthetics* 40.1 (2000): 179.
- lxxxviii Deleuze, Gilles, and Félix Guattari. *A Thousand Plateaus*: 296.
- lxxxix Cf. "The memory of touching? The most insistent and the most difficult to enter into memory. The one that entails returning to a commitment whose beginning and end cannot be recovered." Irigaray, Luce. *An Ethics of Sexual Difference*: 215.
- xc Leo Smith, qtd. in Andy Hamilton's "The Art of Improvisation and the Aesthetics of Imperfection." *British Journal of Aesthetics* 40.1 (2000): 173.
- xci Deleuze, Gilles, and Félix Guattari. *Anti-Oedipus*: 38.
- xcii Deleuze, Gilles, and Claire Parnet. "A Conversation: What is it? What is it for?" *Dialogues II*: 4.
- xciii Deleuze, Gilles, and Félix Guattari. *Anti-Oedipus*: 341.
- xciv *Ibid.*, 382.

chapter two: becoming-artwork

We saw in our first chapter how, although Deleuze and Guattari's concepts of the rhizome, the plane of consistency, and smooth space went a long way to accounting for X's engagement at the piano, the authors tethered them nonetheless to inextricable contraries which precluded our conceiving of such a process except in terms of the lack of an emergent product, a work of art. We propose in this chapter that it is in seizing the concept of becoming-minoritarian, which Deleuze and Guattari never apply to art, that we can run our conception of this process up to its limits, in hopes of affirming it rather than deeming it insufficient. We shall set out by exposing how becoming, and specifically becoming-minoritarian, function in Deleuze and Guattari's thought, clarifying both what it is not and what it is, before showing how a becoming-artwork accounts for X's engagement at the piano. Most of all we mean to understand how what is made in improvisation is a multiplicity which, in spite of its 'passages,' defies any of the lines of articulation or segmentation of the rhizome—let alone of the assemblage, the territory, the house—no less than it defies the intervention of the plane of organization or development and the emergence of striated space. What our exposition of becoming-artwork will reveal, however, are the very tensions which so complicated our first chapter—namely, how to identify, select, and affirm those aspects of X's engagement which constitute artistry. We will find becoming-artwork to open up possibilities for engagements with art that run far beyond that of X, and it will remain for our third chapter to determine the criteria by which we can establish wherein becoming-artwork is best served.

(i) *a becoming-artwork?*

The concept of becoming is pivotal to Deleuze's project, both with and without the engagements of his collaborators, serving as one of the key "antidotes to what he considers to be the western tradition's predominant and unjustifiable focus upon being and identity."ⁱ Yet the notion of a becoming-minoritarian surfaces most directly in their tenth plateau, "Becoming-Intense, Becoming-Animal ...". It is here that Deleuze and Guattari present the processes most commonly manifested as becoming-woman, becoming-child, and becoming-animal, though these run all the way to becoming-cellular, -molecular, and -imperceptible. We shall postpone until our extension of this concept to a becoming-artwork just what these processes entail; for now it is our concern to wonder whether there might lie already in Deleuze and Guattari's thought as developed in this plateau the incentives for conceiving of a becoming-artwork. It is true, after all, that they insist that "[e]xclusive importance should not be attached to becomings-animal;"ⁱⁱ indeed, later in Deleuze's thought he claims that one can engage in such a becoming "with anything, on the condition that one creates the literary means for doing so."ⁱⁱⁱ For our part, we shall wonder what it takes to undertake, undergo such a becoming not only with literature itself, but with art more broadly construed.

Indeed, that Deleuze and Guattari align the processes of becoming-woman, -animal, -child, etc., with both the production and the reception of art make it all the more curious why they never invoke the possibility of a becoming-artwork.^{iv} It may very well be, it seems to us, that the way they have allowed these alignments to inform their considerations of art nearly precludes or at least complicates the potential extension of such a concept to a becoming-artwork. Let us consider some of these alignments. Deleuze and Guattari indeed insist at several points that artists themselves undergo such becomings, though these are always of the minoritarian sort: "in writing, one becomes-woman, becomes-animal or -vegetable, becomes-molecule, to the point

of becoming-imperceptible.”^v D. H. Lawrence and Henry Miller, for instance, are said to become-woman in their writings, in spite of all their “phallogra[cy].”^{vi} Even the characters in a novel engage in such becomings, as Deleuze and Guattari identify of Captain Ahab in his becoming-whale, Penthesilea in her becoming-dog, and Achilles in his becoming-woman.^{vii} What we shall have to explain, however, is why even in the thought of Deleuze and Guattari there is no becoming-artist either on the part of the artist herself, nor on the part of the artwork in such cases as there is one: “writing is a becoming, writing is traversed by strange becomings that are not becomings-writer, but becomings-rat, becomings-insect, becomings-wolf, etc.”^{viii}

Once more, Deleuze and Guattari seem to accord a strange privilege to music as concerns its potential to induce or conduct becomings-minoritarian:

“Singing or composing, painting, writing have no other aim: to unleash these becomings. Especially music; music is traversed by a becoming-woman, becoming-child, and not only at the level of themes and motifs: the little refrain, children’s games and dances, childhood scenes. Instrumentation and orchestration are permeated by becomings-animal, above all becomings-bird, but many others besides.”^{ix}

It is not at all our aim to show that music, whether as X undergoes it or otherwise, is more conducive than other arts to what we shall call a becoming-artwork, still less whether engagements with art of one kind or another indeed entail the becomings-woman, -animal, and -child that Deleuze and Guattari insist they do. We wish only to demonstrate briefly that the way Deleuze and Guattari construe the alignment between art and the becomings-minoritarian for which they *do* allow inhibits the development in their thought of what it is to become-music, become-literature, become-painting.

As suggested in our introduction, it is not worthwhile to reproach Deleuze and Guattari for not having developed the notion of a becoming-artwork; it is rather up to us to make clear the need for such a concept, that for which it accounts, and to open up possibilities for it that we

hardly foresee, which can be taken up by others still. It is only our aim in this first section to show that there is little in Deleuze and Guattari's thought that really forecloses the possibility of a becoming-artwork, even if the ways they let becoming-minoritarian inform their considerations of art makes it difficult to fit such a conception into their thought. It is clear, given that becoming-minoritarian runs all the way 'down' to a becoming-cellular, -molecular, and -imperceptible, no less than the peculiar case of becoming-animal, that Deleuze and Guattari did not intend that this concept be restricted to social or conventionally political applications. If the only other possibility seems to be that becoming-minoritarian is meant rather to apply strictly to the organic, we need not only invoke the subtle twists on the concept which pepper the rest of their thought—becomings-intense, affects as nonhuman becomings—but also consider Deleuze and Guattari's criticism of the organism, organization and organic life, a criticism which we shall find greater urgency to develop in our final chapter. Quite apart from any alignments running through the history of philosophy between the organism and the work of art—alignments of which Deleuze and Guattari are well aware, given how they construe the assemblage, the territory, the rhizome^x—it is moreover the case that becoming-minoritarian promotes 'going beyond' the organism. It is even the case that one undertakes becoming-minoritarian, on Deleuze and Guattari's account, for how one as organism "suffers from being organized in this way, from not having some other sort of organization, or no organization at all."^{xi} Let us dispense in any case with the rationale that becomings-minoritarian should be reserved for the organic; no matter Deleuze and Guattari's intentions for this concept, we shall find as we proceed the resources it holds for conceiving of an engagement with art along the lines of that of X at the piano. To lift from Deleuze's conversation with Claire Parnet in *Dialogues II*, we are looking to elucidate an

artwork-becoming which is not the same as artworks, and which “happens through those whom the history of [art] does not manage to classify.”^{xii}

(ii) what becoming-artwork is not

Part of why we find becoming-minoritarian so appealing as a concept we can use to account for X’s engagement at the piano, for a productive engagement with art that nevertheless yields no molar products, is because, unlike the rhizome, the plane of consistency, and smooth space, becoming-minoritarian has no contrary to which it is inextricably bound. It may be objected that it runs counter to Deleuze and Guattari’s project to clarify what a becoming-artwork would *not* be; we beg to point out, however, how much of their tenth plateau Deleuze and Guattari spend on these very clarifications, and we wish only to carry these into our development of the concept of a becoming-artwork. Indeed, it is precisely because such a becoming is not what it sounds like at first that we find cause to make such clarifications.

It is worth clarifying that a becoming-artwork does not entail the ‘real’ becoming of a molar work of art on the part of an artist: “it is clear that the human being does not ‘really’ become an animal any more than the animal ‘really’ becomes something else.”^{xiii} Such a transformation would be restricted to the molarity which becoming-minoritarian defies in favour of a molecularity which we shall explicate as we proceed. Neither would artist and work of art “exchange places” by means of a becoming-artwork, nor is it the case that each term “contains the other and must develop the opposite pole in itself.”^{xiv} What Deleuze and Guattari do spend much of their tenth plateau explaining, however, is that becoming-minoritarian entails no resemblance, imitation, identification, analogy, or sympathy between the two terms involved—in short, anything which would keep both terms rooted in their molarity and keep our

considerations of art in the realm of what can be represented.^{xv} It is upon undertaking such processes, rather, that becoming-minoritarian is blocked or obstructed, that an end is brought to such becoming.^{xvi} If we should be hard pressed to understand why we should have to guard against such conceptions, given how difficult it is to conceive that X might resemble or imitate a work of art in the same way that one could resemble or imitate a woman, indeed given that in X's case we are arguing for a becoming-artwork in the absence of a molar work of art—of anything that should serve as something to be imitated, resembled, etc.—we should note that such concerns as sympathy or analogy with the work of art are perfectly in line with the engagement of an artist whose aim it is to render the work of art independent, to determine what will enable it to stand up on its own and what must be done on the part of the artist on that account.

Yet if it seems fruitless to point out that becoming-artwork could not involve the imitation of an artwork, we might construe this instead as guarding against the imitation of extant artworks in one's becoming-artwork as we shall elucidate it. In other words, it is obviously not the imitation of a work of art or a style on the part of the artist against which we must guard so much as such imitation on the part of becoming-artwork as a process we shall find to be prior to both terms artist and artwork, a process our conceiving of which allows us to lift beyond such terms. In no sense can the becoming-artwork in which X partakes be an imitation of the extant works of others, an approximation of established molar forms, and neither does become-artwork proceed by virtue of imitating the 'style' of other artists still. It is not to promote an ethic of originality and uniqueness, which carries so often dangerous connotations of individuality, that we guard against imitation in invoking a becoming-artwork, so much as to clarify the failures of imitation, against which Kant warned no less than do Deleuze and Guattari.^{xvii} The warning by

the latter will carry more weight for us once we expose what becoming-artwork is and how it works, though we shall notice for now what lingers of conceptions that seem to obstruct the development of the concept of a becoming-artwork in Deleuze and Guattari's thought:

“... no art can be imitative or figurative. Suppose a painter ‘represents’ a bird; this is in fact a becoming-bird that can occur only to the extent that the bird itself is in the process of becoming something else ... Thus imitation self-destructs, since the imitator unknowingly enters into a becoming that conjugates with the unknowing becoming of that which he or she imitates. One imitates only *if one fails, when one fails* ...”^{xviii}

It is also to avoid the pitfalls of imitation that Deleuze and Guattari insist in *What is Philosophy?* that “the page or canvas is [not blank but rather] already so covered with preexisting, preestablished clichés that it is first necessary to erase, to clean, to flatten, even to shred, so as to let in a breath of air from the chaos that brings us the vision.”^{xix} It is not by virtue of falling back on familiar refrains or other such assemblages and territories that one might accede to a becoming-artwork, but rather by forbidding the elements of these which conduce to such imitation as forestalls the potential of becoming-artwork to proceed.

There is, however, another process against which Deleuze and Guattari guard staunchly against associating with becoming-minoritarian, and which pertains more so to our immediate considerations in this thesis. Indeed, although while there lies some ambiguity in Deleuze and Guattari's thought as concerns the respective relation of becoming and production to desire,^{xx} they insist explicitly in “Becoming-Intense, Becoming-Animal ...” that becoming-minoritarian does not entail production, either of oneself as the thing become or of some distinct body as the thing become.^{xxi} One does not *produce* a woman, an animal, or a child by dint of *becoming* any of these, and so we can begin to see why a becoming-artwork would be helpful for our purposes in trying to account for a productive engagement with art that yields no products. As Deleuze and Guattari make clear, “Becoming produces nothing other than itself.”^{xxii} It may even be that

becoming-artwork allows us to forego any notion of such an engagement being productive at all, given the connotations that the term carries, and so we come yet closer still to affirming such an engagement on its own terms rather than in terms of the lack of the artwork produced. The important difference, as we shall see, between what would be a becoming-artwork and what Deleuze and Guattari describe of at least a becoming-woman or -animal, is that the latter, as molar entities, cannot be produced by one who undergoes becoming-woman or -animal in the same way that works of art might be produced by one who undergoes becoming-artwork. We shall suspend this complication for now, focusing instead on the possibility of an engagement with art that would solely entail a becoming-artwork. We shall find as we proceed, moreover, what all these processes which becoming-artwork does *not* entail can help us explain of X's withdrawal from a becoming-artwork.

(iii) how becoming-artwork works

Deleuze and Guattari's 'how-to' of becoming-minoritarian is notoriously cryptic, requiring more extensive background in their thought than is necessary to develop for our purposes here.^{xxiii} Let us begin our own explanation from elsewhere, then, by clarifying that our extension of becoming-minoritarian to a becoming-artwork depends on construing the artist as occupying a majority and the work of art, a minority. Deleuze and Guattari explain to this end that a majority is not to be understood by virtue of "a greater relative quantity" but rather of "the determination of a state or standard in relation to which larger quantities, as well as the smallest, can be said to be minoritarian: white-man, adult-male, etc. Majority implies a state of domination, not the reverse."^{xxiv} While there are surely more works, artistic or otherwise, than there are those to whom they are attributed, it is such attribution from which we are hard pressed to escape in conceiving of artist and artwork as molar entities which configures them in a relationship

approaching that of master and slave, creator and creation, with which we should like so much to dispense. It is not by virtue of extending some auspice of rights, of bestowing on works of art some semblance of agency, that we shall yield the sort of ethical potential which becoming-minoritarian harbours; rather, it is by virtue of an artist's being "withdrawn from the majority,"^{xxv} of stripping him or her of what is "human all too human" that we shall find this potential which becoming-artwork serves to pose as a challenge to traditional models of artistic creativity.

It is such that in Deleuze and Guattari's thought there is no becoming-man, just as for our purposes there should be no becoming-artist either on the part of the artist or of the work of art, however actualized. Rather, becomings are always minoritarian and molecular, seeing as "only a minority is capable of serving as the active medium of becoming, but under such conditions that it ceases to be a definable aggregate in relation to the majority."^{xxvi} In other words, it is the work of art as minority which serves to conduce to a becoming-artwork, yet only insofar as it ceases to be identifiable as a molar minority as such. As Deleuze writes later in "Literature and Life," "one does not become-Man, insofar as man presents himself as a dominant form of expression that claims to impose itself on all matter, whereas woman, animal, or molecule always has a component of flight that escapes its own formalization."^{xxvii} We have seen in our first chapter how X's engagement with art yields precisely this sort of artwork which is not one, which defies formalization and expression on the part of X in favour of a perpetual flight or deterritorialization that carries improvisation along, precluding that it should yield a work of art or any number thereof.

It is becoming-minoritarian as we extend it to a becoming-artwork that allows us to conceive of a deterritorialization beyond the territories we elucidated in our first chapter:

“deterritorialization is always double, because it implies the coexistence of a major variable and a minor variable in simultaneous becoming (... they are ... drawn into an asymmetrical block in which both change to the same extent, and which constitutes their zone of proximity).”^{xxviii}

Deleuze and Guattari indicate that it is the majoritarian term in a becoming-minoritarian which is to be assigned the deterritorializing force, while the minoritarian terms serves as the deterritorialized force, “even if the same force switches from one value to the other depending on the ‘moment’ or aspect considered.”^{xxix} It is in this way that we are to understand that X continually deterritorializes the artwork which is not one, which is perpetually deterritorialized without however having departed from or ever constituted a territory. Insofar as X becomes-artwork, so the artwork becomes-other, precluding that what is made should be assigned a subject, developed a form: “Becoming is always double; that which one becomes becomes no less than the one that becomes.”^{xxx} Gone are the notions of molar assemblages of the sort artist and artwork, in favour of an assemblage of the becoming-artwork of the artist.^{xxxi} Yet if there is one pressing complication in this conceptualization of deterritorialization, it is Deleuze and Guattari’s insistence that “the least deterritorialized reterritorializes on the most deterritorialized,”^{xxxii} in other words and in our case that the artist *re*territorializes on the artwork, a notion which seems to rule out the possibility that such an artwork, which we have been trying to maintain as *not* being one, can evade the molar constitution we have been trying to evade for it. On what could X reterritorialize if what improvisation yields evades constantly the territoriality which would seem to be the condition of becoming-minoritarian on Deleuze and Guattari’s account? Indeed, in their discussion of music, they argue:

“The fact that there is no deterritorialization without a special reterritorialization should prompt us to rethink the abiding correlation between the molar and the molecular: no flow, no becoming-molecular escapes from a molar formation without molar components

accompanying it, forming passages or perceptible landmarks for the imperceptible processes.”^{xxxiii}

We have no reason to fear this inevitable accompaniment of molarity to the molecular artwork which we need invoke in order to make becoming-artwork operate as a concept; it renders perhaps the process all the more real, provided we note that what is molar of the molecular artwork yielded is forever fleeting in the case of the sort of musical improvisation which we cited in our first chapter.

It is a becoming-minoritarian which more explicitly than do the concepts of the rhizome, the plane of consistency, and smooth space as developed in Deleuze and Guattari’s thought makes manifest the proximity which X attains with what is being made, and which rules out the yielding of a molar product. Deleuze and Guattari develop as a current running throughout their thought the notion of a ‘block’ of becoming in which the two terms involved attain a zone of proximity, indiscernibility, nondifferentiation. Becoming-artwork, we can surmise by extension, is something which would pass neither from artist to artwork nor the converse, but is rather a line which passes perpendicularly between the two, the very line of flight or of deterritorialization that carries both artist and artwork off into a becoming-artwork. The proximity which they attain, then, is one in which artist and artwork cannot be distinguished the one from the other, that they enter into an assemblage all their own—one of becoming-artwork—such that what there is of a work of art cannot be dissociated, parsed apart from the artist as the major term in such a becoming.^{xxxiv} It is such that Deleuze writes in “Literature and Life” that becoming-minoritarian entails “find[ing] the zone of proximity, indiscernibility, or undifferentiation where one can no longer be distinguished from *a* woman, *an* animal, or *a* molecule.”^{xxxv}

We can begin already to see how becoming-artwork might account beyond the terms of artist and work of art for the process which X undergoes so that we can continue to get beyond

construing this engagement in terms of the lack of a work of art yielded. It should be clear by now that becoming-artwork, as it attains the rhizomatic, the plane of consistency, and smooth space, is not something simply undertaken by an artist by dint of his intention, his deliberation, and to suggest instead that it is merely something *he* undergoes is to ignore Deleuze and Guattari's stipulation that the minority in question must also become-minoritarian in ways we have already elucidated. It is, in fact, on the condition that an artwork continually becomes-other, on Deleuze and Guattari's model, that the artist can become-artwork,^{xxxvi} and we shall wonder as we proceed what this brings to bear on the matter of whether becoming-artwork might transpire more sustainably in the presence of a more stable work of art, one whose molar elements would not be so fleeting. In any case, Deleuze and Guattari signal that the minority in question, in our case the work of art, is better understood as an event rather than as a subject. We may forego the notions of work of art and artist in conceiving of a becoming-artwork, can cease dwelling on the peculiar phenomenon of an artist without works such as X, by recognizing that the assemblage they comprise in acceding to a becoming-artwork might be better framed as an *artworking* which would include both the respective major and minor terms of such becoming.^{xxxvii} Deleuze further develops this notion indirectly in "Literature and Life" when he indicates, "Becoming is always 'between' or 'among': a woman between women, or an animal among others. But the power of the indefinite article is effected only if the term in becoming is stripped of the formal characteristics that make it say *the* ..." ^{xxxviii} We can surmise, then, yet another manner in which becoming-artwork, just as the particular case of musical improvisation we developed in our first chapter, is the art of the interval, being so "between" or "in the middle" that we skirt any notion of *the* artwork as a molar entity which is produced. It is only by relinquishing such a notion as

those of *the* work of art or *the* artist in favour of the notion of an artworking, that we can fully understand and suss out the implications of the concept of becoming-artwork.

So much hinges for us in our efforts to account for an artist without works, for a productive engagement with art that yields no products, on the condition Deleuze and Guattari stipulate that becoming-minoritarian can proceed even in the absence of a term that would be the thing become.^{xxxix} Of course, what they mean by this is that there need not be a woman, an animal, a child who is molarly present in order that becoming-woman, -animal, -child might proceed, yet the ramifications of such a condition for art practices is clearly more pressing. It is rather the case, on Deleuze and Guattari's account, that becomings-minoritarian require a "something else" that "can be quite varied, and be more or less directly related to the animal"—or woman, or child, or artwork—"in question."^{xl} It is in the remainder of this thesis that we shall consider whether becoming-artwork might be able to proceed with a "something else" seeming to have little to do with music, or with any other sort of art, at all, and whether the fact that the artwork, too, must become-artwork, means that becoming-artwork might proceed better, or more sustainably, with more abiding molar components that would lend to its material subsistence, its preservation, its independence and self-sufficiency. For now it is sufficient for us to have established that X is an artist by dint of becoming-artwork, of undergoing a process which requires that what is made be continually becoming-other and evade the conditions that would make of it (solely) a work of art, a product in the molar sense of the term.

(iv) multiplicity + the anomalous

In case there linger any doubts regarding whether becoming-minoritarian might be suitably adapted to accommodate a becoming-artwork, let us consider a particular aspect of becoming-animal which Deleuze and Guattari develop in their tenth plateau, and which accounts

alarmingly well for the particular sort of musical improvisation we elucidated in our first chapter. What we have still to understand and carry over from our first chapter is how becoming-artwork can help us account for the work of art which is not one, which as multiplicity can be neither counted nor assigned units, much less attributed, in ways which press the Deleuzo-Guattarian conception further still.

Deleuze and Guattari clarify that becoming-animal cannot proceed with “individuated animals, family pets, sentimental, Oedipal animals, each with its own petty history, ‘my’ cat, ‘my’ dog. These animals invite us to regress, draw us into a narcissistic contemplation ... anyone who likes cats or dogs is a fool.”^{xlii} We must inquire into what might constitute an Oedipal artwork, our presumed possession of and identification with which serves rather to obstruct than conduce to a becoming-artwork. *Anti-Oedipus* presents a helpful starting point in this regard, when Deleuze and Guattari caution against “the Oedipal *form* to which one attempts to enslave the work itself,” forcing the work of art to:

“inscribe itself ... between the two poles of Oedipus, problem and solution, neurosis and sublimation, desire and truth—the one regressive, where the work hashes out and redistributes the nonresolved conflicts of childhood, and the other prospective, by which the work invents the paths leading toward a new solution concerning the future of man.”^{xliii}

We should understand by this that becoming-artwork rules out any notion of production according to which one might burden the work with all—of one’s subject, for instance—that one wishes to get beyond, that the work of art might usher the artist, perhaps others too, into an age in which there would be no further need for art.^{xliii} Yet if it seems that becoming-artwork precludes any dotting love of the work of art on the part of the artist, we would do well to note that Deleuze is committed rather to “extract[ing] from love all possession, all identification [in order] to become capable of loving.”^{xliiv} We can already begin to see the links between such

possession, identification, and subjectification against which Deleuze and Guattari guard and the attribution which they insist that multiplicity defies. It is such attribution, as Foucault writes, that lessens the harm the work of art can do, the impact it can have, how it can act on and affect those who engage with it.^{xlv} It is, then, only a love which would block the becoming of artist and artwork against which Deleuze and Guattari warn, and not an anoedipal ‘loving’ which would be perfectly conducive to the transpiring of becoming. If one becomes-artwork, moreover, there is no sense in which she can claim that what is yielded from such an engagement amounts to *her* artwork.

Yet we have still to wonder what might serve as an alternative to such an Oedipal animal or artwork, and the sort of ‘minority’ which might trigger or facilitate a becoming-artwork. Following Deleuze and Guattari’s dismissal of the family pet, no less than of those “animals with characteristics or attributes; genus, classification, or State animals”—in other words, any animal to which a subject can be developed and assigned—they indicate that instead one becomes-animal with “more demonic animals, pack or affect animals that form a multiplicity.”^{xlvi} We must expound on the import of this characterization if we are to understand how the demonic artwork as pack or multiplicity is neither the chaotic work against which Deleuze and Guattari warn in *What is Philosophy?* nor something attributable along the lines of the Oedipal work of art, and how such “packs, or multiplicities, continually transform themselves into each other, cross over into each other.”^{xlvii} While such becomings-artwork as multiplicities might defy the independence and self-sufficiency that Deleuze and Guattari and Heidegger call for on the part of the work of art, it becomes clear quickly how their force of deterritorialization renders them all the more active, vitally dangerous.

It is not that one becomes all ‘members’ or parts of the multiplicity at once, not least because even the pack or band itself is not a discrete set of members which can be counted, which can be termed a unity. That one can become-animal or -artwork, Deleuze and Guattari clarify, is rather on the condition that there be the figure of the Anomalous which occupies a continually shifting borderline of the multiplicity, “a leader of the pack, a master of the pack, or else the old deposed head of the pack” which serves as “the unequal, the coarse, the rough, the cutting edge of deterritorialization,” and in relation to which the others comprising the multiplicity serve only as “imaginary ‘dummies.’”^{xlvi} The borderline occupied by the Anomalous should not be understood as delimiting any of the lines of segmentation or articulation which Deleuze and Guattari insist characterize the assemblage, the territory, and even the rhizome, but rather is defined by the very line of deterritorialization which allows the multiplicity itself to become-other, allowing it to be “defined by means of the outside.”^{xlix} It is in conceiving of such a fluid, permeable borderline for the multiplicity in question and in considering, for instance, the musical improvisation which we described in our first chapter that we can understand that such an artworking, with all its defiance of attribution, possession, and belonging, allows for elements of what we would otherwise call the works ‘of others’ to figure into X’s engagement.

Not only does the Anomalous serve to “determine the temporary or local stability” of the pack, ensuring only the most fleeting, contingent order in it, but the Anomalous itself “carries the transformations of becoming or crossings of multiplicities always further down the line of flight.”^l It is immanent to the role of this figure, then, that it bring about its proper overcoming, allowing for new figures still to occupy the borderline, such that the multiplicity “continually transform[s] itself into a string of other multiplicities, according to its thresholds and doors.”^{li}

Perhaps it is here, in any case, that we can locate the potential for such an engagement as becoming-artwork to conduce to parallel engagements beyond art, that might serve to sustain becoming-artwork by allowing its force to carry into other becomings upon taking leave of art, upon withdrawing from it.

What this helps us understand is how X, when engaged in an improvisation which defies altogether the yielding of an artwork as product, nonetheless traverses ‘passages’ which are more fleeting than Deleuze and Guattari seem to connote of nomadic encampments or schizo territorialities, yet which nonetheless serve as the condition of the sort of improvisatory engagement we are trying to account for, preventing it from being chaotic. As one becomes-artwork, there is no telling—say, on the part of X—whether the passage he follows is one which could ‘belong’ to the rest of the potential artwork or group thereof as multiplicity, or rather to another one altogether, such that any notion of such belonging seems less and less appropriate to invoke:

“Sometimes each and every animal reaches this line or occupies this dynamic position, as in a swarm of mosquitoes. Sometimes it is a specific animal that draws and occupies the borderline, as leader of the pack. Sometimes the borderline is defined or doubled by a being of another nature that no longer belongs to the pack, or never belonged to it, and that represents a power of another order, potentially acting as a threat as well as a trainer, outsider, etc.”^{lii}

There are rather far too many connections of the rhizomatic sort to be established with the ‘dummies’ of the pack, a pack that in any case is all too fleeting, that it proves impossible in the sort of improvisation in which X engages to establish certain relations as meriting subsistence and preservation. Moreover, the Anomalous itself of any given artwork is continually fleeting, is itself the very condition of its own passing to another figure still, or to several, which shall occupy the continually shifting borderline, which makes it impossible to determine whether they have come from within or outside the multiplicity being engaged with. It is this passing of one

figure of the Anomalous to the next, the transformation of one to another, if at times only by imperceptible degrees, that accounts for the curious role we might otherwise assign to error—as those cleavages of consistency which are nonetheless part of it, along which the artwork as multiplicity transforms itself.

Yet we should not on this account suppose that an artist who undergoes becoming-artwork is best construed as a molar entity, as a subject quite independent of the process which he undergoes. Rather, in becoming-artwork an artist is also a multiplicity of this sort:

“If we imagined the position of a fascinated Self, it was because the multiplicity toward which it leans, stretching to the breaking point, is the continuation of another multiplicity that works it and strains it from the inside. In fact, the self is only a threshold, a door, a becoming between two multiplicities.”^{liii}

It is such a threshold that constitutes the zone of proximity of an artworking, “preced[ing]” as it does “the bifurcations and distinctions that separate one multiplicity from another.”^{liv} Of course we must recall that the extent to which and the manner in which X undergoes a becoming-artwork precludes the emergence of a molar artwork such that in his withdrawal from improvisation, such a threshold as he attains with the molecular work of art cannot be said to precede such an emergence.

What Deleuze and Guattari warn against is the collapse of such a becoming as multiplicity into the Oedipal individuation to which it serves as an alternative: “Even becoming-animal is not safe from an Oedipal reduction of the type ‘my cat, my dog.’”^{lv} We should note, however, that they still allow for the potential of the Oedipal animal to serve as the animal as pack or multiplicity, if only “to varying degrees.”^{lvi} Yet if becoming-artwork proceeds all the more freely, demonically, effectively, with the artwork which is not one, which as multiplicity proves unattributable, uncountable, unidentifiable, with only the most fleeting of forms and subjects, then why should Deleuze and Guattari, other than in seeking to avoid rigidity, allow for

this potential crossover, and what could such a crossover look like? We have still in what follows to determine why Deleuze and Guattari would allow the Oedipal animal or artwork to take up this role, and how it bears on our negotiations between becoming-artwork and production.

(v) *becoming of becoming-artwork*

Perhaps we have been going too far in assessing the suitability of becoming-minoritarian to accommodate a becoming-artwork, and not going far enough in allowing for the deterritorialization and the proper becoming of this concept, given the warnings in our introduction that Deleuzo-Guattarian concepts are not merely to be re-used and applied as one would a recipe. We shall retain this assessment not only because it satisfies the priests of philosophy but for what it shows of how a becoming-artwork would operate, and how elements of becoming-minoritarian can seep into what we have already exposed of X's engagement. We should note that we invoke a becoming-artwork not merely because it does not contradict what we have exposed in our first chapter, nor because it serves as a solution to seal shut the problems expounded earlier. Rather, a becoming-artwork is useful for our purposes for how it extends these problems, developing and compounding them, perhaps complicating them further still.

We must begin to wrest becoming-artwork from being a mere application or extension of becoming-minoritarian first of all by showing how it captures elements of the terms we employed in our first chapter. Like the rhizome, with all its defiance of beginning and ending, of teleology, which as we explained in our first chapter accounts so well for the improvisation in which X engages, Deleuze and Guattari write that "a line of becoming has neither beginning nor end, departure nor arrival, origin nor destination; ... only a middle."^{lvii} Elsewhere, Deleuze and Guattari make clear at several points that becoming, that the two terms thereof, *are* a rhizome, even in ways we have yet to consider and which will surface later in this chapter.^{lviii} Moreover, it

is becomings which compose the plane of consistency.^{lix} Yet it is perhaps in Deleuze and Guattari's exposition of smooth space that we find the most resonance with their concept of becoming. Not only is smooth space itself said to be "a difficult, uncertain becoming,"^{lx} but as per the zone of indiscernibility between the terms of a becoming-minoritarian, in smooth space both space and what occupies it cannot be distinguished.^{lxi} Most tellingly, however, in Deleuze and Guattari's final plateau they suggest that "all progress is made by and in striated space, but all becoming occurs in smooth space."^{lxii} We can already surmise what would constitute such progress—the yielding of products according to reproductive models—yet why this should be identified with progress and why it should be deemed valuable are still left unclear, no less than whether such a production without product as transpires in smooth space should be deemed a lack of progress.

Deleuze and Guattari write little about the withdrawal, the breaking of a becoming-minoritarian, other than as concerns its inevitability, its necessity. They invoke in one respect the intervention of the plane of organization or development as what "returns full force, breaking the becoming-animal, folding the animal back onto the animal and the person onto the person, recognizing only resemblances between elements and analogies between relations."^{lxiii} Indeed, as we indicated in our first chapter if there is a return of the contraries to the rhizome, the plane of consistency, and smooth space on the part of X and his engagement at the piano, it is in withdrawing from or taking leave of the piano, without however ensuring that what has been made in improvisation fulfills the conditions for yielding a product, a work of art in its molar sense. Inasmuch as X, in withdrawing from a becoming-artwork, might be "folded" back onto his molar, majoritarian status as artist, there is yet nothing which should ensure that the molecular artwork, in being "folded" back in its turn, could yield a molar artwork. Rather, it dies,

as we indicated of the bodies of smooth space which fail to be striated. Yet all the more is this aligned with Deleuze and Guattari's insistence that one becomes-minoritarian all the more when the minor term in question dies.^{lxiv} Even in Deleuze and Guattari's explicit discussion of music, they claim that the becomings-woman, -animal, and -child which traverse it always entail the deaths of the minor terms in question—deaths, nonetheless, which are not to be mourned: "Music is never tragic, music is joy. But there are times it necessarily gives us a taste for death; not so much happiness as dying happily, being extinguished."^{lxv}

We might understand this death of the artwork as the minor term become in terms of the incompleteness or incompetence which Deleuze describes in "Literature and Life" and which we began to witness in our introduction on the part of those who as major terms undergo such becomings: "When Le Cliézio becomes-Indian, it is always as an incomplete Indian who does not know 'how to cultivate corn, or carve a dugout canoe;' rather than acquiring formal characteristics, he enters a zone of proximity. It is the same, in Kafka, with the swimming champion who does not know how to swim."^{lxvi} Similarly, in Deleuze's conversation with Claire Parnet he indicates that the fact that Guattari was not a philosopher made him a becoming-philosopher all the more, that not knowing anything about tortoises "changes everything" for animal-becomings.^{lxvii} What this helps us understand is that what is yielded from a becoming-artwork could not be construed as a molar artwork if only because it remains perpetually incomplete, incompetent to stand on its own, and to fulfill the conditions that would secure its molar status as work of art. In no sense could the artwork one becomes subsist as a molar entity which could persist and endure; there must, in other words, always be some death which it undergoes, that becoming-artwork might be brought to fulfilment. Let us consider the sorts of engagements or processes which could bring on this death, which bring an end to becoming-

artwork as we have elucidated it, that we might better understand X's coming and going from the piano, however much identified with his resumption of and withdrawal from a becoming-artwork.

We shall deal more directly with this theme in our third chapter, yet all the more should we note for now that a withdrawal from a becoming-artwork might be triggered by the emergence of the very processes which Deleuze and Guattari insist that becoming-minoritarian is *not*. In other words, no sooner does the becoming-artwork of X fall back on imitation of extant works, of familiar styles, no sooner does he begin to identify with, analogize or sympathize with the work of art as molar, wondering in what might consist the components which would ensure that it could subsist as organism, and which lines of articulation and segmentation are necessary for this, than does the artwork as minor term die, obliging X's withdrawal from a becoming-artwork. Furthermore, drawing from our explication of multiplicity and the anomalous, becoming-artwork comes also to an end when an artist carries out such a "judgment of God" as would determine where the purported anomalous passage fits into the molar work of art more broadly construed—how a given part belongs to a greater whole, or how the given work of art which such a purported anomalous might be said to constitute belongs to a greater series of works of art. Becoming-artwork comes to an end, we might surmise, when the artworking in question ceases to be a multiplicity by virtue of being attributed, becoming Oedipal, that family pet or storage space from which the artist sets himself at a distance.

Yet it is not only such emergence as on the part of the plane of organization or development, no matter how inevitable Deleuze and Guattari make it seem, that conduces to the collapse, to the end of a becoming-artwork, to one's withdrawal from or taking leave of it. For Deleuze and Guattari themselves grant that the failures of the plane of consistency, just as we should understand the failures of becoming-artwork, are immanent to it:

“As Cage says, it is of the nature of the plan(e) that it fail. Precisely because it is not a plan(e) of organization, development of formation, but of nonvoluntary transmutation. ... So the plan(e)—life plan(e), writing plan(e), music plan(e)—must necessarily fail for it is impossible to be faithful to it; but the failures are a part of the plan(e) for the plan(e) expands or shrinks along with the dimension of that which it deploys in each instance ...”^{lxviii}

This presents the possibility that becoming-artwork continually breaks itself, allowing for lapses of consistency which throw X outside of art as he engages in it. It accounts also, however, for X’s occasional difficulty in resuming improvisation, a difficulty which we are hard pressed to construe in terms of an incapacity or an unwillingness, but which instead invokes a particular *need*, whether or not on his part, in order that becoming-artwork might take off, that his subject might be freely and continually fractured into a free play rather than blocked, sedimented in lifeless self-preservation. As Deleuze and Guattari write of multiplicity in a way which we can now understand both in terms of artist and artwork:

“No one, not even God, can say in advance whether two borderlines will string together or form a fiber, whether a given multiplicity will or will not cross over into another given multiplicity, or even if given heterogeneous terms will enter symbiosis, will form a consistent, or cofunctioning, multiplicity susceptible to transformation. No one can say where the line of flight will pass: Will it let itself get bogged down and fall back into the Oedipal family animal, a mere poodle? Or will it succumb to another danger, for example, turning into a line of abolition, annihilation, self-destruction ... ?”^{lxix}

As far as our consideration of withdrawal is concerned, however, we can remark now that one need not wait for the intervention of the plane of organization or development, for processes of imitation, sympathy, analogy, to present themselves in order to withdraw from a becoming-artwork, whether or not X takes leave of the piano at the same time. Rather, the withdrawal can be contemporary with the very process itself, and it is only when one who undergoes becoming-artwork can best navigate or negotiate the failures immanent to becoming-artwork, or else skirt them as best she can, that she engages continually and more or less sustainably in becoming-artwork. In other words, we must separate the breaking of a becoming-artwork and the

withdrawal from or taking leave of the piano, both of which we have identified so closely until now. Inasmuch as one could very well be improvising while distracted or driven by some intention quite alien to the realization of a becoming-artwork, we must clarify that although such improvisation presents strong possibilities for realizing becoming-artwork, not all improvisation entails a becoming-artwork, and not all becoming-artwork entails improvisation as we have described it. Moreover, we intend still to leave open the possibility that, given that the anomalous passage of the artwork as multiplicity which the artist becomes conditions its very transformation into other multiplicities still, X's taking leave of the piano, or even one's withdrawal from a becoming-artwork altogether could spill over into becomings of entirely different varieties.

We need to keep wresting, wrenching becoming-artwork away from such fixed, sedentary, faithful conceptions as we have been developing, in order to restore to it the mobility which would allow us to open up further possibilities for X at the piano, without however deeming his current process insufficient or unproductive. What we need to make clear is no longer merely that X, in his improvisatory engagement, is an artist—albeit without works—by dint of becoming-artwork, but that his productive engagement, as artist, with art is one of *solely* becoming-artwork. Indeed, for all our efforts so far to establish becoming-artwork as sufficient in its own right, as meriting acknowledgment on its own terms and not by dint of its lacking some other elements, we have neglected to consider what possibilities the sort of mixture of concepts and processes which Deleuze and Guattari are so committed to advocating can do for us. In other words, we need to explore and consider, perhaps establish, that it is not only an artist without works who becomes-artwork but that an artist without works, as artist, engages with art *only* as a becoming-artwork, which leaves open a whole host of other, subtler engagements to consider.

(vi) orchid + wasp

What is striking in Deleuze and Guattari's thought as concerns their notion of becoming-minoritarian is that it is considered quite alongside a model of becoming-other which bears striking differences from becoming-minoritarian as we have expounded it—differences that Deleuze and Guattari never find reason to account for, and which they freely allow to inform their concept of becoming-minoritarian. This other model Deleuze and Guattari frame in terms of the becoming-wasp of the orchid and the becoming-orchid of the wasp. Retained in this conception are “the deterritorialization of one of the terms and the reterritorialization of the other, the two becomings intertwining and relaying each other in a circulation of intensities that always pushes the deterritorialization further along,”^{lxx} no less than the “shared proximity in which the discernibility of points disappears”^{lxxi} and all the warnings against construing this relationship in terms of imitation.^{lxxii} But what the differences in this model seem to signal for us is the potential for a becoming which would not be along majoritarian-minoritarian lines, which calls for neither the becoming-wasp of the wasp nor the becoming-orchid of the orchid, despite the heterogeneity which Deleuze and Guattari maintain as operating still between orchid and wasp. Yet further we are to understand that in such a becoming as this both orchid and wasp are present as discrete molar entities, the becoming transpiring between them being not only solely molecular but having little bearing on their molar constitution. What the becoming-wasp of the orchid and the becoming-orchid of the wasp entail, rather, is “a shared deterritorialization: of the wasp, in that it becomes a liberated piece of the orchid's reproductive system, but also of the orchid, in that it becomes the object of an orgasm in the wasp, also liberated from its own reproduction.”^{lxxiii} It is such that this model of becoming skirts the filiative, genealogical models of descent and evolution in favour of “unnatural nuptials” which liberate the productive energies of either party

involved from anything reducible to reproduction of the striated, organizational, developmental, root variety.

Yet we have still to reckon with what such a model of becoming brings to bear on a relationship which is nevertheless between two terms, the one which is so normally understood as the producer of the other. Indeed, the application of such a model at least accounts, once more, for an engagement that is not one of production in the sense of the yielding of a molar product, and which certainly goes beyond the remove at which an apprehensive engagement with art would place us, but how are we to reconcile becoming-artwork, on either model, except as one's engagement of deterritorialization with an artwork which *is* or which is *not*? How are we to understand becoming-artwork in its necessary relations with production, in the absence of which there should be no artworks with which to become on the model of orchid or wasp? Clearly we mean not to conclude that there *should* be no further production even if production necessarily entails all that which we are supplementing as engagements with art which are far from having been recognized, acknowledged. Could it be that becoming-artwork transpires just as strongly with an artwork with a relatively stable molar constitution, and is this what would ensure the deterritorialization not only of the artwork on the part of the artist, as of the minor term by the major term, but of the artist on the part of the work of art? We might understand, then, by this other model of becoming a process from which one could not merely withdraw as though nothing at all had transpired but something whose effect on the one who undertakes, undergoes it is more unsettling, more enduring. We have still to consider how this complication might rebound on our ideas regarding just who is able to engage in a becoming-artwork, seeming as it does in a becoming-artwork on the orchid-wasp model that both artist and what we tend to understand as viewer, listener, reader, might be on the same level, might both be able to engage

in such a becoming in the same manner. Might this signal that anyone at all could engage in becomings-artwork?

It is not by deferring to the thought of Deleuze and Guattari that we shall find answers to our queries regarding whether becoming-artwork might best proceed in the absence or in the presence of a relatively stable molar work of art, but rather by evaluating in our third chapter the potential of various manifestations to fulfill what we have identified as the special potentials of this concept. In no way will we accept a conciliation or a compromise of the sort that would reduce the impact which deterritorialization can wield, that would restrain any of its force; our concern is rather to identify, if only abstractly, the manifestations that render this force most powerful, that enable it to do what it is able to do. In other words, it will not be by dint of distinguishing between “the micro-freedom of interpreters” and “the macro-freedom of improvisers”^{lxxiv} that we shall opt for the former, maintaining as it does some stable molar entity which can nonetheless be deterritorialized to varying but limited extents from performance to performance, merely because it renders the process more stable. It is rather by considering improvisation as we have elucidated it, no less than interpretation of extant molar works and other engagements with art still—including receptive and ‘compositional’ engagements—that we shall evaluate in our third chapter the potential for our consideration of X to open out beyond his sporadic resumption of and withdrawal from an engagement with the piano that never yields works of art.

* * * * *

We have developed the concept of becoming-artwork in this chapter, departing at first from an extension of becoming-minoritarian toward something with a becoming all its own,

which can attest that X as an artist without works is an artist by virtue of undertaking, undergoing this process—one that yields no products, no works of art as assemblages, territories, houses. We have contented ourselves so far with establishing that there *is* a becoming-artwork, indeed that it can proceed with a propulsion all its own and which need not be in perpetual oscillation with an inextricable contrary geared to the yielding of a molar product. Yet the complexities of becoming-artwork are manifold, and we still do not know the conditions under which it is best construed or manifested. Shall we understand becoming-artwork in terms of a becoming-minoritarian, according to which there would be no becoming-artist on the part of the artwork and no necessary subsistence or preservation of a molar work of art? Or is becoming-artwork to be understood rather in terms of the relationship between orchid and wasp, as a merely ‘molecular’ exchange between two beings with stable molar status, one that liberates the ‘sexuality’ of each from its consignment to reproduction? Is it the case that only an artist without works can properly become-artwork in spite of his sporadic ejection from art, and is becoming-artwork always ‘over’ upon production, or are there other manifestations and mixtures of becoming-artwork with other processes that could better serve it and render it more sustainable?

What we have to go on, following Deleuze and Guattari themselves, is the condition they stipulate and that we need extend in terms of art—namely that the becoming-artwork of the artist depends on the becoming-artwork of the work of art. What remains for us to determine is the extent to which such a work of art should be present and stable as a molar entity, that becoming-artwork might proceed all the better, all the more forcefully. We shall consider such questions in our third chapter, if not derive answers which foreclose the possibilities and potential presented to us by such a novel concept. What we shall have to do in order to proceed is to determine the

criteria by which we shall evaluate these various manifestations and the degree to which they serve a becoming-artwork.

ⁱ Stagnoll, Cliff. "Becoming." *The Deleuze Dictionary* (Ed. Adrian Parr. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2005): 21. See also Patty Sotirin's article "Becoming-Woman" in *Gilles Deleuze: Key Concepts*: 99, for the following insights: "Becoming moves beyond our need to know (the truth, what is real, what makes us human); beyond our determination to control (life, nature, the universe); and beyond our desire to consume or possess (pleasure, beauty, goodness, innocence). So becoming offers a radical conception of what a life does. For Deleuze, becomings are about passages, propagations and expansions."

ⁱⁱ Deleuze, Gilles, and Félix Guattari. *A Thousand Plateaus*: 248.

ⁱⁱⁱ Deleuze, Gilles. "Literature and Life." Trans. Daniel W. Smith and Michael A. Greco. *Critical Inquiry* 23 (1997): 226.

^{iv} "Art engenders becomings, not imaginative becomings—the elaboration of images and narratives in which a subject might recognize itself, not self-representations, narratives, confessions, testimonies of what is and has been—but material becomings, in which these imponderable universal forces touch and become enveloped in life, in which life folds over itself to embrace its contact with materiality, in which each exchanges some elements or particles with the other to become more and other." Grosz, Elizabeth. *Chaos, Territory, Art*: 23.

^v Deleuze, Gilles. "Literature and Life." Trans. Daniel W. Smith and Michael A. Greco. *Critical Inquiry* 23 (1997): 225.

^{vi} Deleuze, Gilles, and Félix Guattari. *A Thousand Plateaus*: 276.

^{vii} *Ibid.*, 244, 279.

^{viii} *Ibid.*, 240.

^{ix} *Ibid.*, 272. See also Marcel Swiboda's article "Becoming and Music" in *The Deleuze Dictionary*: 23-24, where he explains that "a becoming is capable of proceeding through music, for example through the musical operation known as 'counterpoint,' or the interweaving of several different melodic lines horizontally where the harmony is produced through linear combinations rather than using a vertical chordal structure or setting."

^x See also their citation of Worringer: "Formal processes occur within the work of art which correspond to the natural organic tendencies of man [sic]." *Ibid.*, 499.

^{xi} Deleuze, Gilles, and Félix Guattari. *Anti-Oedipus*: 8.

^{xii} Deleuze, Gilles, and Claire Parnet. "A Conversation: What is it? What is it for?" *Dialogues II*: 2.

^{xiii} Deleuze, Gilles, and Félix Guattari. *A Thousand Plateaus*: 237.

^{xiv} "It is as deplorable to miniaturize, internalize the binary machine as it is to exacerbate it; it does not extricate ourselves from it." *Ibid.*, 276, 306.

^{xv} *Ibid.*, 237, 258. See also Patty Sotirin's clarification of becoming-woman as "non-representational" in "Becoming-Woman" in *Gilles Deleuze: Key Concepts*: 102.

^{xvi} Deleuze, Gilles, and Félix Guattari. *A Thousand Plateaus*: 233.

^{xvii} Kant, Immanuel. *Critique of the Power of Judgment*: 186, 187, 195-96.

^{xviii} Deleuze, Gilles, and Félix Guattari. *A Thousand Plateaus*: 304-05.

^{xix} Deleuze, Gilles, and Félix Guattari. *What is Philosophy?*: 204.

^{xx} "The order of desire is the order of production ..." Deleuze, Gilles, and Félix Guattari. *Anti-Oedipus*: 296. "... becoming is the process of desire." Deleuze, Gilles, and Félix Guattari. *A Thousand Plateaus*: 272.

^{xxi} *Ibid.*, 239, 242, 273.

^{xxii} *Ibid.*, 238.

^{xxiii} *Ibid.*, 258, 272, 274.

^{xxiv} *Ibid.*, 291.

^{xxv} *Ibid.*, 291.

^{xxvi} *Ibid.*, 291.

^{xxvii} Deleuze, Gilles. "Literature and Life." Trans. Daniel W. Smith and Michael A. Greco. *Critical Inquiry* 23 (1997): 225.

- xxviii Deleuze, Gilles, and Félix Guattari. *A Thousand Plateaus*: 306.
- xxix Ibid., 307.
- xxx Ibid., 305. See also Deleuze, Gilles, and Claire Parnet. "A Conversation: What is it? What is it for?" *Dialogues II*: 2.
- xxxi "Is there an as yet unknown assemblage that would be neither Hans's, nor the horse's, but that of the becoming-horse of Hans?" Deleuze, Gilles, and Félix Guattari. *A Thousand Plateaus*: 258.
- xxxii Ibid., 174.
- xxxiii Ibid., 303.
- xxxiv Cf. "A touch without tool or object ... From within, and from her potential passage from inside to outside, from outside to inside, and all this without the involvement of anything that moves from one place to another, but only a place of passage, and its movement." Irigaray points out how psychoanalysis tends to pathologize this touch, leaving it "in the shadow of the *pre-object*, and in the suffering and abandonment of the fusional state which fails to emerge as a subject." Irigaray, Luce. *An Ethics of Sexual Difference*, 70.
- xxxv Deleuze, Gilles. "Literature and Life." Trans. Daniel W. Smith and Michael A. Greco. *Critical Inquiry* 23 (1997): 225-26.
- xxxvi Deleuze, Gilles, and Félix Guattari. *A Thousand Plateaus*: 275-76.
- xxxvii Ibid., 239, 262.
- xxxviii Deleuze, Gilles. "Literature and Life." Trans. Daniel W. Smith and Michael A. Greco. *Critical Inquiry* 23 (1997): 226.
- xxxix Deleuze, Gilles, and Félix Guattari. *A Thousand Plateaus*: 237.
- xl Ibid., 274.
- xli Ibid., 240.
- xlii Deleuze, Gilles, and Félix Guattari. *Anti-Oedipus*: 133-34.
- xliii Cf. "Lost, nostalgic, man entrusts to woman his memory; he makes woman the keeper of his house, his sex (organ), his history. But he is unable to establish any long-lasting love of self. And this puts the maternal-feminine in the position of keeping that love without its loving itself." Irigaray, Luce. *An Ethics of Sexual Difference*: 71.
- xliv Qtd. in Bogue, Ronald. "Deleuze's Style." *Man and World* 29 (1996): 252.
- xlv Foucault, Michel. "What is an Author?" *The Foucault Reader*: 118. See also Deleuze, Gilles, and Félix Guattari. *Anti-Oedipus*: 133.
- xlvi Deleuze, Gilles, and Félix Guattari. *A Thousand Plateaus*: 241.
- xlvii Ibid., 249.
- xlviii Ibid., 243-45.
- xlix Deleuze, Gilles, and Félix Guattari. "Rhizome." *On the Line*: 16.
- l Deleuze, Gilles, and Félix Guattari. *A Thousand Plateaus*: 249.
- li Ibid., 249.
- lii Ibid., 245.
- liii Ibid., 249.
- liv Sotirin, Patty. "Becoming-Woman." *Gilles Deleuze: Key Concepts*: 100.
- lv Deleuze, Gilles. "Literature and Life." Trans. Daniel W. Smith and Michael A. Greco. *Critical Inquiry* 23 (1997): 227.
- lvi Deleuze, Gilles, and Félix Guattari. *A Thousand Plateaus*: 241.
- lvii Ibid., 293.
- lviii Ibid., 239, for instance.
- lix Ibid., 270.
- lx Ibid., 482.
- lxi Ibid., 488.
- lxii Ibid., 486.
- lxiii Ibid., 259.
- lxiv Deleuze, Gilles. "Literature and Life." Trans. Daniel W. Smith and Michael A. Greco. *Critical Inquiry* 23 (1997): 226.

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- lxv Deleuze, Gilles, and Félix Guattari. *A Thousand Plateaus*: 299.
- lxvi Deleuze, Gilles. "Literature and Life." Trans. Daniel W. Smith and Michael A. Greco. *Critical Inquiry* 23 (1997): 226.
- lxvii Deleuze, Gilles, and Claire Parnet. "A Conversation: What is it? What is it for?" *Dialogues II*: 10, 16.
- lxviii Deleuze, Gilles, and Félix Guattari. *A Thousand Plateaus*: 269.
- lxix *Ibid.*, 250.
- lxx Deleuze, Gilles, and Félix Guattari. "Rhizome." *On the Line*: 19-20.
- lxxi Deleuze, Gilles, and Félix Guattari. *A Thousand Plateaus*: 294.
- lxxii Deleuze, Gilles, and Félix Guattari. "Rhizome." *On the Line*: 19.
- lxxiii Deleuze, Gilles, and Félix Guattari. *A Thousand Plateaus*: 293. To understand how a work of art might be understood as having its own reproductive system, see *Anti-Oedipus*: 285, where Deleuze and Guattari quote Samuel Butler: "We are misled by considering any complicated machine as a single thing; in truth it is a city or a society, each member of which was bred truly after its kind. We see a machine as a whole, we call it by a name and individualize it; we look at our limbs, and know that the combination forms an individual which springs from a single centre of reproductive action; we therefore assume that there can be no reproductive action which does not arise from a single centre; but this assumption is unscientific, and the bare fact that no vapor-engine was ever made entirely by another, or two others, of its kind, is not sufficient to warrant us in saying that vapor-engines have no reproductive system."
- lxxiv Hamilton, Andy. "The Art of Improvisation and the Aesthetics of Imperfection." *British Journal of Aesthetics* 40.1 (2000): 183.

chapter three: life + risk

Up until now we have developed the concept of a becoming-artwork in order to account for an engagement with art on the part of an artist without works, hinting in the latter half of our second chapter the potential such a process holds for other engagements still. We have withheld thus far, however, from an appraisal of its manifestation in the activity of X, no less than from wondering what becoming-artwork might be good for, lacking the grounds for such an evaluation. It is in this chapter that we shall identify the concept of 'life' as it runs through the thought of Deleuze and Guattari as providing the basis for appraising a becoming-artwork, in that the latter can be evaluated according to the degree to which a given manifestation of it affirms what we shall elucidate of this concept. What we shall discover, drawing only in part from Deleuze and Guattari's thought, is that there is a certain risk of life entailed in the affirmation thereof, and which any manifestation of becoming-artwork must entail in order that it affirm life to the utmost, find itself as becoming-artwork best served.

In no way are we interested in any conciliation that would compromise becoming-artwork as by placing it in a dialectic with production, and we should find it dull to place them even in the sort of dualism in which Deleuze and Guattari situate so many of their concepts. However, we shall come to wonder in this chapter, following the development of our notions of life and risk, just why it should be worthwhile to yield products from one's engagements as artist with art—indeed, why it might be worthwhile for X to yield works of art over and above, or as part of, the musical improvisation in which he engages—when even Deleuze and Guattari concede that the deterritorialization which we have found X to carry to the tilt is the most vital engagement there can be. The questions pressing us as we proceed, then, are once more whether becoming-artwork might proceed just as strongly in the presence as in the absence of a molarly

stable work of art, and whether—and what sort of—production might serve becoming-artwork, rather than compromise or curtail it.

(i) life

The thought of Deleuze and Guattari shows that it would be remiss of us to cast judgment on X, not merely for engaging in a process that yields no molar products, but for perhaps failing to maximize what we have identified of a becoming-artwork. Upon their discussion of the masochist's use of suffering in order to accede to the plane of consistency in his own way, Deleuze and Guattari remark: "That there are better ways, other procedures than masochism, and certainly better ones, is beside the point; it is enough that some find this procedure suitable for them."ⁱ It is not by virtue of imposing an imperative as an edict to be obeyed or heeded that X's process of desire, or that of anyone else, shall align itself to the most propitious ends. Rather, as Deleuze makes clear in his work on Spinoza, it is in understanding something as wisdom that one can best find the alternatives that open one up to livelier possibilities.ⁱⁱ In other words, it is unhelpful for X to be subjected, or to subject himself, to a 'law' according to which he would yield molar products; in such a case, if he obeyed, the art yielded would not be vital, and if he did not, his activity would continue to be construed in terms of lack, of transgression. Indeed, we deem it insufficient reasoning that the fact that becoming-artwork as undergone by X does not conduce to "progress," will not yield the products that will grant him recognition and remuneration as an artist, should be cause enough to push beyond his engagement. It is not even that becoming-artwork, in the case of X, finds itself manifested in such sporadic spurts, seemingly unable to sustain itself, that we should inquire into what might render such an engagement more enduring. It is rather the case that we wonder to which processes ought becoming-artwork as engaged in by X should open out, that he might discover an engagement as

artist with art beyond that of an exclusive becoming-artwork. If we are to evaluate becoming-artwork, it must be in terms of the possibilities it opens up, how best it can operate to do so, and what it does—and under what circumstances and conditions—to affirm life.

Yet what is life, in the Deleuzo-Guattarian sense, that it should serve as something to be affirmed in the first place? Let us recall now the alignments between the work of art and the organism which run not only through the history of philosophy since Kant, but indeed through the thought of Deleuze and Guattari insofar as the lines of segmentation and articulation which serve as necessary conditions of an assemblage, a territory, and even the rhizome make the thing considered, artwork or otherwise, “a kind of organism.”ⁱⁱⁱ What is held to be so novel about the ways Deleuze and Guattari construe works of art—or anything else, for that matter—are the very lines of deterritorialization or flight which open up a given assemblage or territory, carrying it off in its proper becoming. There is in fact running through the thought of Deleuze and Guattari an extensive criticism levelled at what they call the organism, the organized body, organic life, likening these as they do to “the judgment of God, the theological system,” and even “the diversion of life.”^{iv} In other words, the organism and the organization of organs are understood to confine or restrict a life which is rather “inorganic ... and all the more alive for being inorganic.”^v It is not by invoking the inorganic constitution of most molar works of art that we shall invoke the power of art to unleash such a mobility; it is rather the fact that works of art as assemblages or territories presuppose some degree of segmentation or articulation that prevents us from wresting them from their status as organisms of sorts, for our purposes.

If there is life in the work of art no less than in the organism, according to Deleuze and Guattari, it is not by virtue that it is taken as “an isolated system, naturally closed” but rather:

“insofar as it opens itself up to the opening of the world; if it is a whole, this is true to the extent that the whole, of the world as of the living being, is always in the process of becoming, developing, coming into being or advancing, and inscribing itself within a temporal dimension that is irreducible and unclosed.”^{vi}

It is in fact the organization of the organism, taken in its broadest sense, that partly incites the development in Deleuze and Guattari’s thought of the concept of the Body Without Organs, a concept we have resisted incorporating explicitly into our discussion for simplicity’s sake. In any case, we need only remark Deleuze and Guattari’s assertion in *What is Philosophy?* that “[n]ot every organism has a brain, and not all life is organic, but everywhere there are forces that constitute microbrains, or an inorganic life of things” to understand that both works of art and organisms as normally construed ought to be understood in their molar status as containing a life which can realize its full mobility only outside such structures.^{vii} If Deleuze and Guattari insist that “the individuation of a life” on the plane of consistency, in the “indefinite time of the event,” depends strictly on “the individuation of the subject that leads it or serves as its support” on the contrary plane, in “the time of measure that situates things and persons, develops a form and determines a subject,” it is rather our wish to identify the life in a becoming-artwork that would be unsupported, unled by such a form or subject.^{viii}

In “Becoming-Intense, Becoming Animal ...” Deleuze and Guattari argue that:

“girls and children draw their strength neither from the molar status that subdues them nor from the organism and subjectivity they receive; they draw their strength from the becoming-molecular they cause to pass between sexes and ages, the becoming-child of the adult as well as of the child, the becoming-woman of the man as well as of the woman.”^{ix}

It is for this reason in part that we have withheld from proposing any sort of molar politics for works of art, that some subjectivity of theirs which has until now eluded us merits the recognition that would grant them the extension of any semblance of rights, any auspice of

agency. That Deleuze and Guattari insist that it is “indispensable for women to conduct a molar politics,” for all its insufficiency—given the danger of “confin[ing] oneself to such a subject, which does not function without drying up a spring or stopping a flow”^x—does not necessarily merit extension to artworks given that their molar existence is not a given, and those whose responsiveness would be begged from such an extension are in fact the very producers of those to whom it would be extended, while in no similar sense could we suggest that men are the producers of women. What we must clarify as we proceed is whether and why it should or should not be worthwhile to grant artworks such a molar status in the first place, given all that the very lines of segmentation and articulation which secure this status contain, confine, and limit of their “fugitive mobility,” the inorganic life art might otherwise hold.^{xi} Moreover, we must remark and consider as we go along that this same molar status subdues also the major term in any becoming-minoritarian—the man, the human, the adult, and in our case the artist—perhaps even all the more, so we shall wonder at the extent to which becoming-artwork as we have elucidated it in the practices of X no less than in other manifestations allows an artist to overcome such a status, wonder indeed whether and why it is or is not necessary for him to retain such a status, to remain alive in this sense.

In his work on Deleuze, Todd May identifies the concept of life as Deleuze’s “constant preoccupation,” dividing it into three aspects: positivity, productivity, incorporeality.^{xii} That all the deterritorialization and lines of flight entailed in becoming-artwork, even as X undergoes it, are positive, we have little doubt. We have shown already by getting beyond construing this process in terms of the lack of a product yielded that such a process is not nihilistic, does not turn against life or destroy, in spite of the impossibility of retaining, recovering, preserving what is continually made. The real tension, for our purposes, in the three qualities that May identifies lies

rather between the productive and the incorporeal: if life is incorporeal, then what sense is there in engaging in a production of a sort that yields molar works of art? This problem is compounded by May's clarification that life is not to be identified with extension, that it is better understood temporally than spatially—in precisely the ways that X's improvisation runs, scarcely erecting any structure which is not utterly fleeting—and in fact that “what is often most ‘vital’ about life is its capacity for disorganizing what is organizing and repressive.”^{xiii} It is surely not a matter of crafting such suitable lines of segmentation or articulation as would conduce to a complacent work of art, assuredly “incapable of causing anyone harm,” but rather of unleashing forces of organic life which defy containment by such lines in favour of lines of flight or of deterritorialization.

Drawing from Deleuze's book *The Logic of Sense*, May identifies the Stoic distinction between states of things, which are “corporeal, and of the present moment,” and events, which are “incorporeal, and occur as becomings in time.”^{xiv} The very threat which states of things pose to the transformations which Deleuze deems essential is precisely “that they will persist, and finally that they will block positive, productive transformations from occurring.”^{xv} We can understand already, considering the engagement of X at the piano, that the “states of things” in his becoming-artwork are only too fleeting, are all but pure transformation, protected from total chaos only by its anomalous passages which serve as the “physical conditions” May clarifies of events.^{xvi} Indeed, if the problem is one of avoiding that “the fluidity of life becomes burdened by the constancy of forms through which it passes,”^{xvii} then we are hard pressed to see why and how X's engagement at the piano, or any manifestation of becoming-artwork, can best serve life by yielding products of a molar status.

By this point, it is predictable that the thought of Deleuze and Guattari accords a tremendous privilege to art for its capacity to unleash this inorganic life:

“the power of nonorganic life ... can be found in a line that’s drawn, a line of writing, a line of music. It’s organisms that die, not life. Any work of art points a way through for life, finds a way through the cracks.”^{xviii}

In *What is Philosophy?*, they draw from Bergson to liken musical beings to living beings, though this is by dint of “compensation for their individuating closure;”^{xix} it is clear, however, that if Deleuze and Guattari would make such closure the condition of life, life itself would be the compensation—the very deterritorialization and lines of flight which would lead the artwork to overrun itself, to become-artwork itself. It is indeed such lines that serve to “free life from what imprisons it,” that “create new forms of life ... producing something new, different, and most important, alive.”^{xx} Yet Deleuze, his collaborators, and commentators all seem to ignore the possibility that a particular engagement such as becoming-artwork, whether or not as manifested in the activity of X, might preclude that such lines of flight could yield such forms, such distinct, discrete products as would conduce to the independence and self-sufficiency required for one or any number of works of art. Indeed, what seems to go unconsidered by Deleuze and Guattari no less than by their commentators is just why there should be the necessity to imprison life in the first place, to furnish lines of segmentation or articulation for works of art which serve only to contain the life for which art allows, that lines of deterritorialization or of flight might serve to break them down all the more to yield the desiring-machines elucidated in *Anti-Oedipus*.

The only indication we have found to this end is in the work of Ronald Bogue, who reveals Deleuze’s insistence that “without a set of impossibilities, you won’t have the line of flight, the exit that is creation,” such that he construed it as a problem of “fashioning a leaking egg, one that continues to flee even as it closes in on itself.”^{xxi} It is precisely the fact of this

closure against which we are contending with all our might, since we have shown in our first chapter that, strictly speaking, lines of flight do not require the impossibility for which Deleuze seems to call, those lines of segmentation or articulation which he makes serve as conditions of the line of flight.

Yet we have seen in our consideration of X that the very lines of flight, the very deterritorialization which constitute his becoming-artwork, his improvisation at its utmost, suffer a death upon X's withdrawal from improvisation, whether by dint of an incapacity to be sustained or under the pressure of the emergence of striation or of the plane of organization or development, or for other possibilities entirely. What must be distinguished is this death, which is one of molarity—precluding that the lines of flight could conduce to the formation of an assemblage or territory—and the molecular deaths entailed in the very transformations undergone by the artworking.^{xxii} Todd May accounts for this latter death when he explains that “no life, no singular event, is eternal. Each one has a form of death that comes to it when it undergoes an incorporeal transformation to becoming something else.”^{xxiii} It is such that Deleuze and Guattari claim in *Anti-Oedipus* that “every becoming itself becomes a becoming-death!”^{xxiv}

It is not this latter death with which we are more concerned in this thesis. We freely grant that both artist and artwork as major and minor terms in becoming-artwork experience that continual death which in fact “occurs in life and for life, in every passage or becoming,”^{xxv} on the part of X by dint of the unravelling of his subject, his organism, and surely the same on the part of the artwork which is not one. Yet in the musical improvisation we have elucidated there is that former death of which we must take account, that molar death of the work of art, a death in spite of its never having taken up a stable molar constitution. For as sure as we are that many artists and artworks recognized as such have hardly the life that do many that are not, we shall have to

reckon in our next section with the notion of a certain risk which we shall hold as indispensable to the affirmation of life—a risk of molar life which must be neither solely on the part of the artwork nor solely on the part of the artist, but both. It is in doing so that we shall continue to inquire into whether becoming-artwork, especially on the part of the artwork itself, might proceed just as readily, provided a stable molar status of its entity.

(ii) risk

There is a fascination in the thought of Deleuze and Guattari with the fragile health, even the suicides, of those thinkers and artists whom they deem as having realized becoming-minoritarian to its utmost, no less than having succeeded in affirming life. In “Literature and Life,” Deleuze writes of the artist’s

“irresistible and delicate health that stems from what he has seen and heard of things too big for him, too strong for him, suffocating things whose passage exhausts him while nonetheless giving him the becomings that dominant and substantial health would render impossible. The writer returns from what he has seen and heard with red eyes and pierced eardrums.”^{xxvi}

Yet such fragile health is owed not solely to the becomings one is said to undergo, but also to the fact that productivity as construed by Deleuze and Guattari leaves those who partake in it with no sense of need or lack, which are rather “a measure of the withdrawal of a subject that has lost its desire at the same time as it loses the passive syntheses of these conditions ... desire then becomes this abject fear of lacking something.”^{xxvii} Those who are productive, Deleuze and Guattari continue, are moreover often poor or dispossessed, given that

“such people know that they are close to grass, almost akin to it, and that desire ‘needs’ very few things ... and that what is missing is nothing a subject feels the lack of somewhere deep inside of himself, but rather the objectivity of man, the objective being of man, for whom to desire is to produce, to produce within the realm of the real.”^{xxviii}

It is such that the authors draw from Henry Miller to suggest that “the men who were most in life, who were moulding life, who were life itself, ate little, slept little, owned little or nothing. They had no illusions about duty, or the perpetuation of their kith and kin, or the preservation of the State.”^{xxix} We can begin to see, then, how a life of productivity can eliminate need, remove any sense of lack, from a subject, if only by unravelling or fracturing such a subject in the first place, in such a way and to such a degree that the molar constitution of the individual considered is at risk of death, while allowing them at once the agility and the energy to do so much more than can those convinced they need or lack some real object which would serve as the condition of their productivity. (X, for his part, often grasped at certain circumstances, lying always in the future, that he was convinced would favour the production of artworks.) So too do the “unnatural nuptials” which Deleuze and Guattari describe as characterizing becomings-minoritarian explain for them the suicides of so many thinkers, writers, artists—suicides we might come to understand as quite alien from deliberation or intention, in favour of construing those who suffered them as having gone too far in the following of flows, in deterritorializing and opening out onto so many lines of flight in an affirmation, not a negation, of life.

We hold, too, that there is a certain sort of risk of molar life involved in affirming life and in undertaking a worthwhile engagement with art—that to live is to risk life—though we need to clarify what sort of risk this is, and what it entails.^{xxx} What is curious is that Deleuze and Guattari make it seem as though it is only by virtue of one’s becomings, of making oneself a Body Without Organs, that one courts risk. It is the very lines of flight or of deterritorialization by which one “dismantle[s] the organism,”^{xxxi} they explain, which can end in a line of abolition or death, the molar death of the one who undergoes the becoming. It is even for this reason that Deleuze and Guattari call time and again in *A Thousand Plateaus* for an extensive caution on the

part of those who undergo such becomings, that they might maintain themselves as molar entities which can continue to undergo such risk, continue to produce despite such risk:

“You have to keep enough of the organism for it to reform each dawn and you have to keep small supplies of signifiacance and subjectification, if only to turn them against their own system when the circumstances demand it, when things, persons, even situations, force you to; and you have to keep small rations of subjectivity in sufficient quantity to enable you to respond to the dominant reality.”^{xxxii}

Such caution is so rampant in the thought of Deleuze and Guattari that they concede that “[s]taying stratified—organized, signified, subjected—is not the worst that can happen; the worst that can happen is if you throw the strata into demented or suicidal collapse, which brings them back down on us heavier than ever.”^{xxxiii} Why this is curious is because, as we shall confirm, X, for all his exclusive engagement as artist with art as a becoming-artwork, does not seem to court such risk as we could affirm, and indeed needs no warning to retain such things so as to heed Deleuze and Guattari’s caution. We shall have to make precise, then, wherein this risk lies, given our conviction that becomings indeed play a role not only in vital engagements with art but in an affirmation of life that entails the risk thereof, and given that we still do not know whether or why it should or should not prove worthwhile to provide a work of art with such conditions as would ensure its molar status as organism in its own right, no matter that an artist must retain them himself to whatever degree.

We must be clear that it is not at all to invoke risking life as a cause or a condition of becoming-artwork, of affirming life, that we insist on its necessity. Indeed, we can think of little more regrettable than those artists, at least so self-professed, who never cease bringing upon themselves hardships of destitution, addiction, isolation, that these might serve as the condition of a richly productive life. The truth is that this is a dangerous, if not only pitiful, imitation of writers whose manifestation of such hardships is not at all sought or strived for; it is by

deliberately weakening or endangering oneself in such a way, in fact, that one reduces her capacity to be affected rather than allows herself to open out onto lines of flight or of deterritorialization. Of course, we want to allow for such engagements on the part of vital artists as would amount to flirtations with excess as through madness or the influence of drugs and alcohol, but Deleuze and Guattari clarify that these are best carried out in the spirit of experimentation—exploring what the body can do rather than clinging to the ‘loss of reality’ incurred by them as a supposed condition of productivity, that they might in the latter case become a limiting factor rather than another means for opening out onto so many lines of flight. There is even a push toward a certain asceticism in thought of Deleuze, yet it is an asceticism that “serve[s] ... extraordinary ends that are not very ascetic at all, in fact;”^{xxxiv} rather, he and his collaborators are concerned much more with

“extract[ing] from madness the life which it contains, while hating the lunatics who constantly kill life, turn it against itself ... [and] extracting from alcohol the life which it contains, without drinking ... Becoming is doing without alcohol, drugs and madness, becoming-sober for a life which is richer and richer.”^{xxxv}

As Deleuze makes clear in his work on Spinoza, we should understand the ascetic virtues as the effects rather than the causes or conditions of “an especially rich and superabundant life ... a life no longer lived on the basis of need, in terms of means and ends, but according to a production, a productivity, a potency.”^{xxxvi} It is by engaging in a richly productive life, then, on Deleuze’s account, that such risk emerges as the effect of processes which rather are all the more proud, rich and sensual, which unleash the forces of inorganic life as one anchored by indulgence or who would make such seeming depravity serve as the condition of such productivity could never do.

It is not in order to restore a hierarchy between artist and work of art that we call for this sort of risk on the part of the former. Rather, we contend that becoming-artwork as we have elucidated it calls for such risk on the part of both artist and artwork, and it is our task in what follows to determine the conditions or circumstances under which this risk is most manifest, which is also to determine how becoming-artwork is best served and how it best affirms life. If we are hard pressed to understand wherein the work of art could court such risk in its molar sense, we might do well to draw from Deleuze and Guattari's suggestion in *What is Philosophy?* that those works of art that indeed succeed in standing up on their own so often exemplify such "sublime errors" as are incurred from "great geometrical improbability, physical imperfection, and organic abnormality," if only "from the viewpoint of lived perceptions and affections."^{xxxvii} In short, the risk of molar life which we mean to invoke for the work of art no less than for the artist entails that both, as molar entities, should perpetually be on the brink of bursting apart.^{xxxviii} What we have yet to consider, as concerns the engagement of X at the piano, is whether and why this risk is or is not incurred on the part of either artist or artwork, just as we have yet to consider the potential for other manifestations of becoming-artwork to entail this risk which we maintain as crucial to the affirmation of life. It has seemed to us all along, in X's case, that the artwork which is not one runs this risk to its limits, perpetually bursting out of what it has been, while X's continual deterritorialization thereof seems to override any "necessary [retention of] a minimum of strata, a minimum of forms and functions, a minimal subject from which to extract materials, affects and assemblages"^{xxxix}—whether on his part, since he seems never to reduce himself to such a minimum, or on the part of the artwork, which never seems to acquire that minimum.

We have in the remainder of this thesis to consider various negotiations between production and becoming-artwork, both taken abstractly and, as much as is possible given our limited scope, by inquiring into concrete practices beyond that of the musical improvisation in which X engages. For the most part, we have so far only indicated in its effects such risk as we have insisted as being crucial to the affirmation of life, but we have still in what follows, as we examine concrete practices in relation to their respective configurations of production and becoming-artwork, to explain what ensures this risk and in what it consists.

(iii) production without becoming-artwork

Let us entertain what we would identify as a production without becoming-artwork, yet only briefly, seeing as this thesis has taken for granted all the pitfalls of such a production and has instead been concerned with pushing the limits of becoming-artwork, exploring its potential sufficiency as an engagement with art. It is here where we shall consider those artists and works of art whose molar life, whose constitution as organisms, belies their lack of molecularity, a failure to become-artwork on their part. It is such that we can understand how the mere material subsistence of a given artist or work of art—that which conditions their organic life—is not sufficient, can indeed block the forces of inorganic life, with all the little deaths it entails: “many works that claim to be art do not stand up for an instant. Standing up alone does not mean having a top and a bottom or being upright (for even houses are drunk and askew) ...”^{x1}

We shall hold that production without becoming-artwork yields nothing but technical-machines, whose means of production are separate from the product and whose functioning depends on their not breaking down. In accounting for these ‘works of art’ we need not invoke any sort of resumption and withdrawal, since they are already composed—in our sense—in

striated space, from that very point of withdrawal, imposing a form on matter by calculation and measurement, eschewing any of the proximity between artist and work that we described of improvisation. It is such 'art' as technical-machines whose intervals are fixed in place, the error we found so fruitful in improvisation now perceived to threaten the work's functioning, and making of excess that which need be severed from the work of art—either casting it off as waste or saving it for further appropriation, exploitation. A production without becoming-artwork proceeds according to reproductive models that maintain such production as Oedipal, as begging attribution to an artist who would function as God, making works of art in his own image, whether by employing them as a sort of storage space or as some other extension of his subject, so that they can pose harm to no one, closed in on themselves in an impotence capable of affecting very little just as they themselves have little capacity to be affected.^{xli} In such cases, an artist necessarily writes himself into a corner, sediments his own organization and oedipalization, exhausts so quickly that about which can be written—whence comes the notion that everyone has *one* good book in them.

It is such 'art,' too, that should be likened rather to what Heidegger describes of equipment—that is most genuinely what it is when it is in use, when it is not thought about or looked at, when we are not aware of it, and whose matter “disappears into usefulness”^{xlii}—or to what Kant describes of agreeable art, even mechanical art or handicraft.^{xliii} We should think here of a painting we scarcely need notice on the living room wall, of background music, neither of which arrests us and draws us into becomings by dint of their demonic force. A production without becoming-artwork yields the sort of 'art' that is most conducive to commodification, that lures its receptors into that Oedipal identification, that narcissistic regression against which Deleuze and Guattari warn, drawing us into a childhood memory rather than into a becoming-

child. While it might very well be the case that perhaps no one remarkable engages in such a practice, that no worthwhile art emerges from it, what we must account for is the fact that this is, for the most part, the only art we have come to know.

It is true enough that those artists who produce solely by such a model, yielding only technical-machines as their works, seldom acquire legitimate recognition and remuneration on the basis of such 'art'. It is peculiar to some that all the technical proficiency one could develop might still not yield vital art, art that as we have seen might require a certain *incompetence* by virtue of its emergence from a becoming-artwork. What we need to attend to, however, is when an artist deemed vital begins to slip into such a model, or more pointedly that once an artist is declared vital, it likely a sign that her vitality is ebbing. We should be wary, even saddened, when we hear an artist announce with relief that, over the years, her process, her writing, have become much easier. If it has not happened by this point, it is only a matter of time before the art to which she gives rise entails none of the becoming-artwork which we argue is crucial to the yielding of vital art, and is thus hardly worthwhile at all. It marks indeed an increased incapacity—or unwillingness?—to engage in becoming-artwork and the risks it entails, a growing exasperation with the fragile health it incurs, in favour of the increased stability, and surely the remuneration and the recognition, that come with such renunciation, taking up at last a subject, a form, an organism with which she can content herself, against which she can find less and less cause to struggle. It is so often, we surmise, when artists have become convinced of their role as all-determining cause of, as responsible for, 'their' works of art that they become unable to engage in the process of becoming-artwork, a process which runs totally counter to such a 'performance of genius.'^{xliv}

It is not in order to argue that productive engagements with art should be laboured and difficult that we invoke this necessity of risk. In fact, a production which has had some relation to a becoming-artwork can still come extremely rapidly, in bursts, though the effects of such risk as is courted by such an entanglement are much more manifest in the latter case. What we need to clarify is the dangerous ease with which one can mistake the relief of complacent resignation for a joy which, as Deleuze and Guattari describe of the schizo, is not without its challenges:

“They know incredible sufferings, vertigos, and sicknesses. They have their specters. They must reinvent each gesture. But such a man produces himself as a free man, irresponsible, solitary, and joyous, finally able to say and do something simple in his own name, without asking permission; a desire lacking nothing, a flux that overcomes barriers and codes, a name that no longer designates any ego whatsoever. He has simply ceased being afraid of becoming mad. He experiences and lives himself as the sublime sickness that will no longer affect him.”^{xlv}

What is vital, then, in such an artist’s contribution comes rather from the becoming-artwork in which she can engage, in which she engages or once engaged, which is so often why we find cause, upon discovering an artist, to excavate her back catalogue, her early work, in order to find that which defied recognition and remuneration, that which barely held together, and those years in which she herself found herself courting such risk, mustering only precariously the means to persist as molar entity. We so wish that more artists could know or recognize when their capacity or willingness to become-artwork has dwindled to such a point that they would be better off not producing, instead withdrawing to a complacent resignation. Of course, we allow that the lack of molecular life, of inorganic life, on the part of such artists, is one that is never certain, never announced, that they might find their way back to a becoming-artwork, to allow themselves to forsake the recognition, risk losing the remuneration they have so far garnered. It is true that such resurgences of vitality occur, but we find them too often overshadowed by that all too familiar trajectory of “tentativity, climax, repose”^{xlvi} that leads so many into a sad decline.

We have clarified in this section that there is no risk of the sort we are seeking to affirm in a production without becoming-artwork, on the part of the artist any more than on that of the work of art, except insofar as the artwork in question is at the artist's whim, the slave at the foot of the master. Yet if what is vital in art—what affirms life by courting the risk that threatens its conditions—is, as we hold, what is yielded from one's becoming-artwork and not from what secures its status as molar entity, as organism, should it not prove to be the case that one who, as artist, only becomes-artwork should affirm life all the more, courting such risk to its utmost?

(iv) becoming-artwork without production

It has seemed to us so far throughout this thesis that an exclusive devotion to becoming-artwork on the part of an artist insofar as she engages with art has held the greatest promise for harbouring, unleashing the deterritorialization and lines of flight which the thought of Deleuze and Guattari advocates so much. That the process of X leads to no emergence of one or any number of works of art has seemed to us to present the possibility of an engagement which is not compromised by the contraries to which Deleuze and Guattari tether so many of their concepts in an inextricable dualism. We have suspended until now, however, a proper appraisal of whether and why this process, any more than any other, should be affirmed, having lacked the grounds for such an evaluation. This chapter has led us so far to pose such an appraisal in terms of the risk incurred by X no less than by the minor term in his artworking, that molecular work of art with all but the most fleeting molar status. We cannot fail to remark the lack of risk incurred on the part of X, though it has been difficult to determine why this is, and still more difficult to understand how a work of art which is not one, which perpetually bursts out of what it has been, unleashing so many lines of flight without begging the confinement of such impossibilities as would secure its molar constitution, does not incur such risk to its utmost.

We recall now that an exclusive devotion to becoming-artwork insofar as one, as artist, engages with art entails a withdrawal and a resumption. What we found ourselves unable to answer in our first chapter is how such a withdrawal falls back on X, what it makes of him, and even why it is so necessary, that he could not instead proceed in an endless engagement of becoming-artwork or else carry such an engagement more readily into other becomings still, beyond art. Elizabeth Grosz points out in her study of Deleuze, in particular regarding those becomings on the part of the masochist and the drug user, that there is the chance that the lines of flight enacted by such becomings will not sustain themselves, indeed “end[ing] in [their] own annihilation”: “The empty BwO does not deny a becoming; rather, it establishes a line of flight that is unable to free the circulation of intensities, making other, further connections with other BwOs possible.”^{xlvii} This not only explains in part X’s engagements beyond art—that his masochism and drug use are not incidental—but that something of his artistic process is not sustainable given the lack of a product, of a work of art, emerging from it.

We need not deny the force of the deterritorialization and lines of flight so characteristic of the artworking in which X engages to note that they might be better sustained should he allow them to conduce to the formation of works of art, that these might be *preserved*, even if this means submitting them to the very forms of representation they seem ‘designed’ to evade. As it happens, it would seem that that “minimum of strata, [that] minimum of forms and functions, [that] minimal subject from which to extract materials, affects and assemblages” should be called for in the case of X’s engagement not on his part—the fact of his withdrawal likely keeps him too stratified, that his becoming-artwork and the death of its minor term upon withdrawal effect no real change, entail no real investment on his part—but rather on the part of the artwork, which should no longer be *not* one. It is as though restricting the minor term as molecular artwork to the

plane of consistency serves only to consign X himself to the plane of organization or development, if only upon withdrawal, precluding that he might attain that minimum of strata, form, functions, and subject that would incur the risk we are maintaining as crucial to the affirmation of life.

We are not at all proposing that such withdrawal as we have construed it should be done away with altogether. Indeed, such lulls can be affirmative to some extent in their own right, helping to restore to X, for example, that incompetence which is crucial to a becoming-artwork. By a continued and sustained engagement, especially one geared to the yielding of products, such proficiency and competence as would be incurred by such continuity makes it more and more difficult to attain the incompetence that is necessary so that becoming-artwork might be continually achieved in spite of production. It will indeed prove the case, in approaching some configuration of becoming-artwork and production, that the challenge should become one of pushing harder and harder to attain that limit of proficiency, indeed to burst through it toward an incompetence which would restore becoming-artwork, and that it shall prove sometimes necessary to shift one's efforts ever so slightly—playing different instruments, taking on different approaches—in order that such a struggle might be facilitated. It is not in order to promote an ethic of mediocrity that we affirm as much as do Deleuze and Guattari the incompetence they champion in their thought, but rather to invoke that teetering balance—teetering always in favour of bursting, of the breakdown, of an error we can affirm—that we insist on its necessity, that technical prowess might not obstruct these breakdowns, these deterritorializations and lines of flight we have sought necessary to affirm all along in this thesis.

It is also true, however, that such withdrawals can diminish one's capacity to become-artwork, that the one who would undergo it, having become so stratified in taking leave of art,

should be hard pressed to recover his capacity to become-artwork, waiting until there should be such a 'need' to resume it anew, that it should serve as that "response to real problems."^{xlvi}

Although X always finds it to be the case that a becoming-artwork can be resumed, no matter how long it takes to reach that point at which he attains genuinely once more the plane of consistency, the rhizome, and smooth space, it seems also to be the case that, at least as X undergoes becoming-artwork, there *is* a need for some degree of proficiency, of competence, of technique—something we have been taking for granted too much, perhaps, in this thesis—that would allow for becoming-artwork and not mere 'improvisation' such as could be performed as easily by a cat, an infant at the piano. What needs accounting for is that becoming-artwork seems all the stronger for its resumption from a long lull, a long withdrawal, yet there is nothing to gauge its success relative to past engagements, lacking any recordings which are preserved and against which one could measure the real force of deterritorialization, of the lines of flight carried out. It is here where we can address the problem of X covering the same ground again and again in improvisation, a factor that scarcely seems important in the absence of a memory, or of any other sort of recording, that would ensure that the unfamiliarity to which he accedes in becoming-artwork is not merely a repetition that has been forgotten, lost. Once more, we mean not to promote such an oedipalization as would ensure that what emerges from X's process should yield works of art with no overlap between them, indeed with no overlap with 'the works of others,' that what he should 'create' should be strictly 'his,' defined by its interiority rather than by its outside. It is rather the case that we are finding that becoming-artwork is best actualized, best served, by taking stock of what has been done, by preserving it such that one can ensure that his process does not "turn about in the void" in the manner against which Deleuze and Guattari warn.^{xlix}

For what we have found necessary to maintain is that real risk of the sort conducive to the affirmation of life as we have expounded it entails undertaking the irreversible, or at least not reversing the reversible. While such a withdrawal as on the part of X leaves nothing of the work of art to subsist—scarcely even an echo or a trace—as though such a withdrawal makes it seem as though nothing at all had transpired, a genuine risk such as would be conducive to affirming life would entail that something enduring, subsisting, that something *preserved* or *preserving*, should emerge from such a process. What could this mean, that the process of X should beg some aspect of irreversibility which it does not already wield? Deleuze's conversation with Claire Parinet proves instructive once more when he insists that “a delicacy of health, a frailty of constitution” such as are incurred by an affirmation of life are the result of

“a throw of the dice which necessarily wins, since it affirms chance sufficiently instead of detaching or mutilating chance or reducing it to probabilities. Thus through each fragile combination a power of life is affirmed with a strength, an obstinacy, an unequal persistence in the being.”¹

What should it mean, however, to affirm chance in such a way, and would it not seem that by dint of leaving intervals of all sorts indeterminate in the manner in which X does that such chance is rightly affirmed? Deleuze's study of Nietzsche, from whose thought this talk of the dicethrow is drawn, is instructive here, in that he explains that allowing for such indeterminacy is but one aspect of the game:

“The dice which are thrown once are the affirmation of *chance*, the combination which they form on falling is the affirmation of *necessity*. ... What Nietzsche calls *necessity* (destiny) is thus never the abolition but rather the combination of chance itself. Necessity is affirmed of chance in as much as chance itself affirmed. ... There are many numbers with increasing or decreasing probabilities, but only one number of chance as such, one fatal number which reunites all the fragments of chance, like midday gathers together the scattered parts of midnight. This is why it is sufficient for the player to affirm chance once in order to produce the number that brings back the dicethrow. ... The dicethrow fails [when] chance has not been affirmed enough in one throw. It has not been affirmed

enough in order to produce the fatal number which necessarily reunites all the fragments and brings back the dicethrow.”^{li}

If X is a bad player, it is not because, as Deleuze’s Nietzsche suggests, that he insists on rolling the dice repeatedly as though in wait for the most favourable combination to take up finally and happily ever after, “as an end to be obtained, hidden behind causality;”^{liii} it is rather because of his refusal to accept any such end that he continues to roll, ignorant that the necessity he considers so oppressive and stifling might be a condition of affirming chance itself.

What would be necessary, then, following this model of chance, is not solely that improvisation as engaged in by X should serve to allow for that free play of the interval, its indeterminacy, but to affirm it to such a degree that he takes up the combination rolled, preserves it so as to allow it to subsist, rendering the throw irreversible rather than continuing to cast the dice. It is even the case that affirming the necessity of such a throw is what allows the process to be continually renewed, to ‘return,’ such that there would need be no withdrawal which removes X from productivity, exiling him from the becoming-artwork which until now is his sole engagement as artist with art. What need to be remarked are the ways in which improvisation as X engages in it is different from the dicethrow, in that it is a process with no clear or obvious result that can be selected in such a way. We must return, then, to Deleuze and Guattari’s assertion, as we showed in our first chapter, that there must be a “deduction from the flow,” from those lines of deterritorialization or of flight which so characterize improvisation, that something of them might be selected so as to persist. That this might prove the most difficult operation for one whose engagement as artist with art is solely one of becoming-artwork is quite clear, yet this is what must be done in order that chance might be affirmed, that the sort of risk which constitutes an affirmation of life might be incurred, that both X and the works of art emerging

from such a process should find themselves perpetually teetering, bursting, forever breaking down even while they maintain enough of themselves to continue to do so.

It would seem, then, that the molecular artwork in the artworking in which X engages does not incur the risk we have been invoking; for it to do so would require that there is something real and molar to be lost—a real molar constitution that would be perpetually under threat, that it should not be forever possible to simply take up the line of flight anew, from somewhere else, following an indeterminate interval from where it last broke. Moreover, actualizing such a work of art, providing it to some extent with lines of segmentation and articulation, would allow it all the more so to exemplify an aspect of the rhizome which we have until now mostly ignored, and which requires that such lines not be so fleeting. This is the case of the aspect of ‘connection’ of the rhizome, that “any point on a rhizome can be connected with any other, and must be.”^{liii} It is clear that an artwork which is not one, whose lines of segmentation and articulation, if present at all, are perpetually fleeting, cannot actualize this very possibility, that the rhizome indeed finds itself compromised in the case of a becoming-artwork without production.

What the process in which X engages does *not* do is attain what Deleuze and Guattari outline already and so early in *Anti-Oedipus*, namely the production of production, which requires “incorporating recording and consumption within production itself, thus making them the productions of one and the same process.”^{liv} What this signals is the sort of producer-product identity which is not, as we proposed considering in our first two chapters, that zone of proximity between artist and work of art such that no artwork emerges from the process, but rather that that artwork become a producer in its own right, that producing might be

“always something ‘grafted’ onto the product. ... There is no need to distinguish here between producing and its product. We need merely note that the pure ‘thisness’ of the object produced is carried over into a new act of producing. The table continues to ‘go about its business.’ ... The nontermination of the table is a necessary consequence of its mode of production.”^{lv}

As Deleuze and Guattari make clear later, in *A Thousand Plateaus*, the point is not solely to produce the Body without Organs—as one would by engaging in chance, in becoming-artwork, in multiplicity, in the very sort of improvisation in which X engages—but also to produce something *on* it.^{lvi}

We are finding not that becoming-artwork must be compromised in order that there might be yielded a product so that some end might be fulfilled—that the artist to whom it would be attributed should garner recognition, remuneration as a result; that its fruits need be appropriated, exploited by a reproductive model which would serve to temper it. Rather, we are finding that becoming-artwork is best served and most actualized by being put into connection with production, understood here as the yielding of a molar product. It is indeed so that X’s engagement might run past that “escape without investment” on the part of the schizo, “the one who escapes,” in order to become revolutionary that we insist on such a configuration, that lines of flight might not merely be unleashed into chaos to fade into oblivion but rather contribute to ‘bringing to life’ in another way.

(v) *becoming-artwork with production*

It is true that we have presented processes which tend to abide in the sort of mixture Deleuze and Guattari have been advocating all along in too much of a dichotomy, that it might seem as though we propose resolution as in a dialectic or a collapse into relativism. It is rather merely that we wish to make clear, in ways Deleuze and Guattari never make explicit, that it is not solely by dint of one’s becomings that one most readily affirms life and courts the sort of risk

necessary to do so. What Deleuze and Guattari take for granted on the part of those artists and thinkers whose fragile health and suicides they cite is the sort of productivity, the sort of production, whose necessity we have been concerned in this thesis to call into question—that an engagement with art that yields no products, whether or not we should deem it productive in any case, might stand on its own, might serve as a process complete and sufficient in its own right. Now, it is sure that we maintain still that there is no lack incurred by stripping Deleuze and Guattari’s notion of process of a discrete, molar product emerging from it. Yet, as we have found in running the notion of a becoming-artwork without production to its very limits, such a process does not teeter, does not court the risk necessary to unleash the inorganic life which we no less than Deleuze and Guattari are committed to affirming.

We hold that becoming-artwork is a capacity, to be likened to the “capacity to be affected” which Deleuze carries so often from the thought of Spinoza into that of his own and of his collaborators. We freely grant, as do Deleuze and Guattari, that it is “possible—only possible” for what they term minorities to partake more readily of these becomings—that a becoming-artwork might be better undergone by a child, a woman, a non-white, a worker, than by their majoritarian counterparts, and that when adult white men of a certain class succeed in them, this is by dint of their becoming-child, -woman, -animal, but also because their majoritarian status predisposes them to a production according to reproductive models of striated space, of the plane of organization or development, of the tree or root, more readily than does the minoritarian status of their counterparts. In any case, what we mean to emphasize more so is that for those for whom becoming-artwork, all becomings, are such a given, the hardest thing would be to produce in such a way as would let emerge distinct, discrete, molar products, since the molar status of these given minorities is precisely, as we have seen, what subdues them relative

to their majoritarian counterparts, and more so than theirs does to them. It is true that by invoking becoming-artwork as a capacity, one that can be increased or decreased, we imply the notion that what might prove too much, too strong for one might indeed prove too little, too weak for another. It is this which in part buttresses all of Deleuze and Guattari's calls for caution in their elucidation of becoming-minoritarian; there is no sense in which one could prescribe a standard for such becomings, which is in part why we have withheld from providing concrete examples or case studies in this thesis.

There is an instructive yet seemingly impertinent passage in Deleuze and Guattari's twelfth plateau, "Treatise on Nomadology: The War Machine," in which it is argued that the science of the State—which we should liken to reproductive, apprehensive models of striated space—construes the problems and proposals of nomads—which we should liken to smooth space, the rhizome, the plane of consistency—as so many issues of *safety*, because they "quickly overstep the possibility of calculation: they inhabit that 'more' that exceeds the space of reproduction and soon run into problems that are insurmountable from that point-of-view."^{lvii} As we have found, it is not that we should on this account surmise that such problems, proposals, projects as are undertaken, undergone, primarily in nomadic 'spirit'—indeed, which proceed precisely as does becoming-artwork—entail themselves alone the sort of risk for which we have been searching. Indeed, Deleuze and Guattari make clear that, left to themselves, nomads undertake several projects in different locations, always at varying rates of completion, such that the State is hard pressed to control or regulate them; to be a follower of flows scarcely entails any risk when one makes a flow of oneself, and so when becoming-artwork serves as one's sole engagement as artist with art, there is no risk incurred. It is rather in coupling such processes with a production on the reproductive State model, in those very passages between smooth and

striated, between the plane of consistency and that of organization or development, between the rhizome and the root—and back again, in all cases—that the special risk which we have been concerned to affirm emerges most readily. There emerges, then, the effort to contain, to temper, to render stable that which defies such containment on all accounts.

It is indeed only when an artist allows becoming-artwork to be put in relation with production, neither solely following the flows of the former nor solely trying to solidify everything so as to remain striated and reproduce striation, that one courts the risk we have been elucidating. Indeed, all worthwhile art ceases to emerge once one has deferred to one or the other, in the first case because no molar products subsist, in the second because what emerges is too closed, is not perpetually bursting and breaking down. It is not at all, we insist again, in order to establish a tidy dialectic between becoming-artwork and production that we invoke the necessity of both. Rather is it the case that we emphasize the former, pointing out that the latter serves as a necessary condition to its actualization, best serving it so that it conduces to an affirmation of life, in part by dint of the risk it incurs to both artist and artwork. This is in part why we find Kant's *Critique of the Power of Judgment* so revolting when we read the passage in which he insists that if either imagination or understanding, genius or taste, should be sacrificed, one should always defer in favour of the latter.^{lviii} Even if the debate is here shifted slightly to different terms, we cannot help but protest that such deferral, always in favour of the emergent product to be judged at a remove, in apprehension, is precisely what leads the productivity of so many to be suppressed, stifled. We wish on the contrary to promote an ethics of becoming-artwork such that, although production should prove necessary in order that it be best actualized, far better is it to fall back on becoming-artwork than onto a production which yields artworks all too regular, all

too stratified, that serve only to root us further still in our molarity, to enclose and imprison life rather than freeing it (if only into a void).

Becoming-artwork finds itself best actualized, indeed best conducive to increasing an artist's capacity to be affected, when such an artist affirms the necessity implied in chance and allows a product to emerge as what can rebound on her, affect her in turn, allowing herself to be deterritorialized by it. It would seem, then, that production should serve primarily to mediate between becoming-artwork on the model of becoming-minoritarian and its counterpart on the orchid-wasp model. For an artist to increase her capacity to be affected by allowing a work of art to emerge as something that can affect her in turn, and indeed strongly, does not merely mean a heightened sensitivity such that, at its best, the simplest of artworks could conduce to such an affecting. It is true that an increase in one's capacity to be affected to such a degree indeed allows for the emergence of such artworks, as Deleuze and Guattari write in *What is Philosophy?*, as

“may be contained in a few marks or a few lines, like a poem by Emily Dickinson. Of the sketch of an old, worn-out ass, ‘How marvellous! It’s done with two strokes, but set on immutable bases,’ where the sensation bears witness all the more to years of ‘persistent, tenacious, disdainful work.’”^{lix}

Such an increase, however, means also that the most complex, the most manifold artworks which meander inasmuch as they retain such structure as to render consistent what seems to burst out of molarity on all sides, might equally emerge, that the struggle of an artist who becomes-work no less than he produces would be to grapple with such an artwork, allowing neither for the greatest simplicity to overwhelm him nor for complexity to daunt him so that he can only contend with it by reining it in, domesticating it as a tightly constructed, enclosed form. In other words, the point

is to let the art emergent from one's process be something that *can* affect one strongly, sustainably, and to let it *do* so.

It is indeed that the risk entailed in these becomings is so real when coupled with production, and that becomings are perhaps more readily undergone by minorities themselves—most clearly by the child—that explains why so much of a given artist's or thinker's vital productive output tends to come from so early on in their careers. We need not invoke production on reproductive models of “tentativity, climax, repose” in order to explain how an artist can get washed up so early on. Rather, we are presented with the possibility that becoming-artwork is so difficult to sustain, even when coupled with production, for the risk that it incurs to the molar lives of those who undergo it—both artists and artworks. Since becoming-artwork alone does not garner an artist the recognition and remuneration she requires to sustain herself as artist, so often she allows herself to obstruct such becomings in favour of greater stability, by submitting her production to such reproductive models as lessen the vitality of the art emergent from it. Yet this resignation is not the only outcome of an early commitment to a fervent, dynamic configuration of becoming-artwork and production. Indeed, such a precarious configuration, especially when defaulting in favour of becoming-artwork—as we argue is most *vital*—explains the early deaths of so many artists, deaths which are too often presumed ‘tragic’ rather than acknowledged for the affirmation of life they exemplify. Deleuze and Guattari, moreover, describe the following outcomes as characterizing old age, even if the former might not mean a molar death so much as such chaos as would prevent an artist just as much from vitally producing:

“Old age is this very weariness: then, there is either a fall into mental chaos outside of the plane of composition [consistency] or a falling-back on ready-made opinions, on clichés that reveal that an artist, no longer able to create new sensations, no longer knowing how to preserve, contemplate, and contract, no longer has anything to say.”^{lx}

These two possibilities—and yet, the greatest challenge would be to straddle becoming-artwork and production in ways which cannot be imitations of others and which would carry an artist and her production through an unstable molar life which never ceases to yield so many precarious molar lives themselves, always allowing for the greatest of molecularity to dance through them, to run through so many deaths while carrying inorganic life to its fullest potential.

(vi) interpretation, reception, ...

Let us consider whether becoming-artwork might be extended to engagements with art that would not entail the sort of ‘writing’ with which we have been concerned in this thesis. We lied earlier on, when we wrote that X engages only in the sort of musical improvisation we elucidated in our first chapter. What music calls perhaps most immediately to mind is a practice which we had to rule out from the beginning of our considerations, but which might very well prove that, for all X’s ‘lack’ of production as normally construed, he knows how molar works of art function, how they hold together as organisms in their own right. This would be the art of interpreting extant artworks, a case in which, while it certainly involves some notion of ‘writing,’ it becomes difficult to declare one way or another that a new or different work of art has emerged by dint of such a process, no matter if it be one’s performance of artworks one oneself has produced or whether one interprets artworks originally produced by others. (Why we have opted to rule out such a process from our more pressing considerations is because we have been more concerned to wonder at the import of X’s neglect to yield products from a process all ‘his own’ even though he seems perfectly comfortable adapting, nurturing the products ‘of others.’)

We find it to be the case that interpretation can operate both without and with a becoming-artwork—in the former case, when molar works of art are re-cast as something quite

tamer, quite less demonic and more oedipalized than the works which serve as their models. The issue of interpretation presents itself here in full force, as it becomes a matter for the artist of determining the degree of withdrawal from which he shall interpret the given artwork, whether it shall be a matter of reproducing it from a point of striation, piecing it together as though from a plane of organization or development, and ensuring that what defines it always as an extant work is retained in an interpretation. What is crucial in order that becoming-artwork carry the art of interpretation to its fullest is that a given artist enter into such a proximity with the given work that he loses any sense of how a given part 'belongs to the whole,' instead carrying off fragments onto such lines of deterritorialization or of flight as conduce to rendering the artwork considered utterly unfamiliar and new, indeed more demonic and less oedipal. It is in such cases that a new work of art has been clearly produced, however much attribution one finds to be owed to the artwork's original 'artist.' In the case of music, a given melodic fragment might be culled, yet extended in different directions entirely, put into entirely different harmonic and rhythmic arrangements, though endless other possibilities abound. (We should think here of those extreme cases of jazz greats, with all the tumult and fragility of their molar lives.) We have not the scope in what remains in this thesis to consider other conditions of becoming-artwork such as we expounded in our second chapter, in order to find how actualized they might find themselves in the art of musical interpretation. We wish simply to make the point that becoming-artwork can indeed proceed in the presence of a molar artwork—that, when pushed to its limits, it can even entail the risk involved such as conduces to an affirmation of life. What we shall not deign for now is to determine the extent to which this is true compared to that of a becoming-artwork in the absence of a molarly stable work of art.

Let us also consider, however, the possibility of extending becoming-artwork to receptive engagements with art. The traditional roles of listeners, viewers, readers, spectators, normally pit these at such a remove from works of art, at such apprehensive vantage points, that they are hard pressed to engage with artworks except in what we have described of striated space, on what we have elucidated of the plane of organization or development, and according to the contrary of the rhizome, namely the tree or root models. It is even such engagements that inform so much art theory, leading such analyses to construe the 'creation' of art to be likened to the act of an artist as God, and leading such an absence of becoming-artwork to result in a judgment which would also be the judgment of God, both of which we have strived to get beyond in this thesis. We mean only to point out here the potential, or rather what it takes, what it would take, for an engagement with art we would normally term 'receptive' to involve what we have described as becoming-artwork. We must remark that insofar as the artwork is something singularly recorded and not continually performed anew, as is often a work of music, that the engagements of the 'artist' who gave rise to it and of the listener, the viewer, the reader, etc., are placed on the same level. What this becomes, then, is a question of how possible it is to become-artwork in the presence of a molar work of art, without having much bearing on the molar constitution thereof. For those works of art whose molar constitution remains relatively stable, whose molecularity and the organic life which it unleashes remain conditioned by the extent to which its molarity allows for it, it would seem that one could become-artwork with it only for a limited time, to a limited extent, until such striation should emerge as would lend itself to fixed conceptions of the ways one part relates to another, how several parts belong to a whole. It is perhaps in this light that Kant suggests that an artwork should be judged according to the sustained *continuity*, the perpetuity of the free play of the faculties which it induces among its viewers, its listeners or

readers.^{lxi} The merit of an artwork on such a model would be the extent, marked not only by length of time but by depth of engagement, to which it allows for such a becoming-artwork before the inevitable emergence of the transcendent contraries of smooth space, the plane of consistency, and the rhizome—before the death of a becoming-artwork, all of which would take place upon withdrawal from or taking leave of the work of art in question.

We have to declare that, on the traditional model of viewership, listenership, readership, the roles we tend to ascribe to these figures do not entail the risk incurred by such a precarious teetering as occurs in an artist's wobbling between becoming-artwork and production. It is true that such an engagement indeed allows for the viewer, the listener, the reader involved to be affected, to be deterritorialized by the artwork in question, but not for the converse. Moreover, so long as there is a withdrawal which allows the viewer, the listener, the reader in question to take leave of the artwork, it seems that becoming-artwork can only operate to a limited degree in the face of the molar work of art, at least insofar as we restrict ourselves to these traditional models. Such models tend to foreclose the active participation of the 'spectator' involved, precluding that she should have an effect on the molar constitution of the artwork, that she might serve to deterritorialize it in turn beyond the mere molecularity which its molarity conditions.

It is impossible, however, to exhaust—especially in such brief section as this—receptive engagements with molar works of art. It is even true that some artworks, for all their defiance of molarity, still allow for some role of the sort we would normally ascribe to 'receivers,' roles that would allow these last to serve as producers in their own right (e.g., performance art), even if what is recorded of such works is inscribed only in memory; and that others still allow for those we would normally term 'receivers' to have an immediate bearing on their molar constitution,

however much by unconventional, ‘incompetent’ means. We shall leave it to others to identify other such art practices in which becoming-artwork might or might not be able to proceed.

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Our final chapter has taken up a Deleuzo-Guattarian conception of ‘life’ in order that an affirmation thereof might serve as a standard by which to appraise or evaluate various manifestations of becoming-artwork. Once we found that a certain risk of molar life, on the part of both artist and artwork, is crucial to this end, we proceeded to inquire into more or less concrete configurations of becoming-artwork and production in order to see how X’s engagement at the piano might be opened out, extended to further possibilities. There are indeed helpful resources to be found in supplementing becoming-artwork as an extension of becoming-minoritarian with Deleuze and Guattari’s other model of becoming as operating between orchid and wasp, two relatively stable molar entities. Although there are limits to the extent to which becoming-artwork might proceed in the presence of a molar work of art, the same is true of a becoming-artwork in the absence thereof, which is why we have enlisted production as construed all along to mediate between them. In no way do we mean to place becoming-artwork and production in a dialectic; rather, in seeking to carry becoming-artwork to its fullest tilt, we have found it to most entail the risk—and thus the affirmation—of life when it places production in its service. It is not only that such production as yields molar works of art renders becoming-artwork a sort of ‘escape *with* investment,’ precluding that nothing comes from X’s engagement other than a contentedness to return to what he left in undertaking, undergoing it. Rather, production renders becoming-artwork more enduring, more sustainable, allowing it to carry forth the vitality of its lines of flight or of deterritorialization much more so than does an exclusive devotion to becoming-artwork. Once more, it is by allowing for the oscillation between

becoming-artwork on the model of becoming-minoritarian and becoming-artwork on the model of orchid-wasp that production best serves a becoming-artwork, ensuring that the 'dicethrow' is not only taken up in its results but brought back, perpetually renewing and driving forth the process with which we have been concerned.

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- i Deleuze, Gilles, and Félix Guattari. *A Thousand Plateaus*: 155.
- ii "Knowledge should never be confused with obedience to a command, to a moral order that prescribes Good and Evil. Rather, knowledge bears a direct relation to ethics; it determines the difference between good and bad." Uhlmann, Anthony. "To Have Done with Judgment: Beckett and Deleuze." *SubStance* 25.3 (1996): 113-14. The 'good' in question here is understood as that which agrees with our nature and increases our power; the 'bad,' the converse. See also Gilles Deleuze's *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy* (Trans. Robert Hurley. San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1988): 22-25.
- iii Deleuze, Gilles, and Félix Guattari. "Rhizome." *On the Line*: 2.
- iv Deleuze, Gilles, and Félix Guattari. *A Thousand Plateaus*: 158, 499.
- v *Ibid.*, 498.
- vi Deleuze, Gilles, and Félix Guattari. *Anti-Oedipus*: 95-96.
- vii Deleuze, Gilles, and Félix Guattari. *What is Philosophy?*: 213.
- viii Deleuze, Gilles, and Félix Guattari. *A Thousand Plateaus*: 261.
- ix *Ibid.*, 277.
- x *Ibid.*, 276.
- xi *Ibid.*, 499.
- xii May, Todd G. "The Politics of Life in the Thought of Gilles Deleuze." *SubStance* #66 (1991): 24-25.
- xiii *Ibid.*, 25, 27.
- xiv *Ibid.*, 26.
- xv *Ibid.*, 29.
- xvi *Ibid.*, 27.
- xvii *Ibid.*, 25.
- xviii Qtd. in Bogue, Ronald. "Deleuze's Style." *Man and World* 29 (1996): 251.
- xix Deleuze, Gilles, and Félix Guattari. *What is Philosophy?*: 190.
- xx *Ibid.*, 171. See also Bogue, Ronald. "Deleuze's Style." *Man and World* 29 (1996): 256. See also Todd May's "The Politics of Life in the Thought of Gilles Deleuze." *SubStance* #66 (1991): 32.
- xxi Qtd. in Bogue, Ronald. "Deleuze's Style." *Man and World* 29 (1996): 256, 257.
- xxii Consider Bruce Baugh's Deleuzian account of "Death," in which he distinguishes between "a state of affairs, when a body's parts, through external causes, enter into a relation that is incompatible with that body's continued existence;" "an impersonal event of dying, expressed through an infinitive verb (*mourir*, to die);" and "the experience of zero 'intensity' that is implicit in a body's feeling or experience of an increase or decrease in its force of existence;" among others. *The Deleuze Dictionary*: 61.
- xxiii May, Todd G. "The Politics of Life in the Thought of Gilles Deleuze." *SubStance* #66 (1991): 29.
- xxiv Deleuze, Gilles, and Félix Guattari. *Anti-Oedipus*: 330.
- xxv *Ibid.*, 330.
- xxvi Deleuze, Gilles. "Literature and Life." Trans. Daniel W. Smith and Michael A. Greco. *Critical Inquiry* 23 (1997): 228. See also Deleuze, Gilles, and Félix Guattari. *What is Philosophy?*: 172.
- xxvii Deleuze, Gilles, and Félix Guattari. *Anti-Oedipus*: 27.
- xxviii *Ibid.*, 27.
- xxix *Ibid.*, 27-28.
- xxx See Elizabeth Grosz's book *Chaos, Territory, Art*: 29-30, 63, for an insightful explanation of how sexual selection and the art involved therein (e.g., the bright plumage of many species of male birds) puts life at risk.

- xxxix Deleuze, Gilles, and Félix Guattari. *A Thousand Plateaus*: 159.
- xxxix Ibid., 160.
- xxxix Ibid., 161.
- xxxix Deleuze, Gilles. *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy*: 3.
- xxxix Qtd. in Bogue, Ronald. "Deleuze's Style." *Man and World* 29 (1996): 252.
- xxxix Deleuze, Gilles. *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy*: 3.
- xxxix Deleuze, Gilles, and Félix Guattari. *What is Philosophy?*: 164. See also Kant's *Critique of the Power of Judgment*: 196, where he explains that the genius leaves in the work of art deformities which cannot be "removed without weakening the idea. This courage is a merit only in a genius, and a certain boldness of expression and in general some deviation from the common rule is well suited to him, but is by no means worthy of imitation, but always remains in itself a defect which one must seek to remove, but for which the genius is as it were privileged, since what is inimitable in the impetus of his spirit would suffer from anxious caution."
- xxxix We have found resonance for this idea in Heidegger's description of "a repose which is an inner concentration of motion, hence a highest state of agitation," no less than in his description of the struggle between world and earth. "The Origin of the Work of Art." *Poetry, Language, Thought*: 47, and several passages between 41 and 73.
- xxxix Deleuze, Gilles, and Félix Guattari. *A Thousand Plateaus*: 270.
- xl Deleuze, Gilles, and Félix Guattari. *What is Philosophy?*: 164.
- xli Cf. "Does the male lover not impose upon the beloved woman that which he cannot see in himself? That which keeps him from becoming what he is, and from being able to encounter her, herself? Wrapping her up in what he cannot bear of his own identity, he secretly places her in the maternal position." Luce Irigaray's *An Ethics of Sexual Difference*: 213.
- xlii Heidegger, Martin. "The Origin of the Work of Art." *Poetry, Language, Thought*: 32, 44.
- xliii "Agreeable arts are those which are aimed merely at enjoyment; of this kind are all those charms that can gratify company at a table, such as telling entertaining stories, getting the company talking in an open and lively manner, creating by means of jokes and laughter a certain tone of merriment, in which, as is said, much can be chattered about and nobody will be held responsible for what he says, because it is only intended as momentary entertainment, not as some enduring material for later reflection or discussion. (Also included here is the way in which the table is set out for enjoyment, or even, at big parties, the table-music—an odd thing, which is supposed to sustain the mood of joyfulness merely as an agreeable noise, and to encourage the free conversation of one neighbor with another without anyone paying the least attention to its composition.) Also included here are all games that involve no interest beyond that of making time pass unnoticed." By contrast, mechanical art is said to be merely "adequate for the cognition of a possible object [and] merely performs the actions requisite to make it actual," while handicraft is characterized as remunerative labour, "disagreeable (burdensome) in itself and ... attractive only because of its effect (e.g., the remuneration)[.]" Kant, Immanuel. *Critique of the Power of Judgment*: 183, 184-85.
- xliv "If we are accustomed to presenting the author as a genius, as a perpetual surging of invention, it is because, in reality, we make him function in exactly the opposite fashion." Foucault, Michel. "What is an Author?" *The Foucault Reader*: 119.
- xlv Deleuze, Gilles, and Félix Guattari. *Anti-Oedipus*: 131.
- xlvi Houle, Karen, and Paul Steenhuisen. "Close (Vision) is (How We) Here." *Angelaki: Journal of the Theoretical Humanities* 2.1 (2006): 15.
- xlvii Grosz, Elizabeth. "A Thousand Tiny Sexes: Feminism and Rhizomatics." *Topoi* 12 (1993): 175.
- xlviii Deleuze, qtd. in Bogue, Ronald. "Deleuze's Style." *Man and World* 29 (1996): 263.
- xlix Deleuze, Gilles, and Félix Guattari. *Anti-Oedipus*: 382.
- l Deleuze, Gilles, and Claire Parnet. "A Conversation: What is it? What is it for?" *Dialogues II*: 5.
- li Deleuze, Gilles. *Nietzsche and Philosophy* (Trans. Hugh Tomlinson. New York: Columbia University Press, 1983): 26-27.
- lii Ibid., 27.
- liii Deleuze, Gilles, and Félix Guattari. "Rhizome." *On the Line*: 11.
- liv Deleuze, Gilles, and Félix Guattari. *Anti-Oedipus*: 4.

iv Ibid., 6-7.

lvi Deleuze, Gilles, and Félix Guattari. *A Thousand Plateaus*: 161.

lvii Ibid., 374.

lviii "To be rich and original in ideas is not as necessary for the sake of beauty as is the suitability of the imagination in its freedom from the lawfulness of the understanding. For all the richness of the former produces, in its lawless freedom, nothing but nonsense; the power of judgment, however, is the faculty for bringing it in line with the understanding. Taste, like the power of judgment in general, is the discipline (or corrective) of genius, clipping its wings and making it well behaved or polished; but at the same time it gives genius guidance as to where and how far it should extend itself if it is to remain purposive; and by introducing clarity and order into the abundance of thoughts it makes the ideas tenable, capable of an enduring and universal approval, of enjoying a posterity among others and in an ever progressing culture. Thus if anything must be sacrificed in the conflict of the two properties in one product, it must rather be on the side of genius: and the power of judgment, which in matters of beautiful art makes its pronouncements on the basis of its own principles, will sooner permit damage to the freedom and richness of the imagination than to the understanding." Kant, Immanuel. *Critique of the Power of Judgment*: 197.

lix Deleuze, Gilles, and Félix Guattari. *What is Philosophy?*: 165.

lx Ibid., 213-14.

lxi Kant, Immanuel. *Critique of the Power of Judgment*: 102-04.

conclusion

It will be objected that we draw conclusions quite present in, even critical to, the thought of Deleuze and his collaborators. Yet what we hope to have made clear is the different perspective from which we have approached this thesis—not taking for granted as do Deleuze and Guattari a production which indeed amounts to the yielding of molar products, but rather running up to their very limits the concepts Deleuze and Guattari present as an alternative to which such production might be seen as a compromise, a curtailment. In no way do we maintain that X should temper the sort of improvisation in which he engages, the particular sort of becoming-artwork to which he accedes, in order to favour the production of works of art. Rather, we insist that one always have recourse to productive engagements with art that nevertheless yield no products. As Deleuze and Guattari write of the schizo in *Anti-Oedipus*:

“wherever he is, there are problems, insurmountable sufferings, unbearable needs. But why try to bring him back to what he has escaped from, why set him back down amid problems that are no longer problems to him, why mock his truth by believing that we have paid it its due by merely figuratively taking our hats off to it?”¹

If we have failed in this thesis, it is by glossing over other potentials still for such a concept as becoming-artwork, by placing it too soon in connection with production without conceiving yet more possibilities for alternative engagements.

Let us indicate a few lines of inquiry which we have neglected to pursue in this thesis, taking stock of what might be taken up by others still, and not only by dint of their engagements with art that diverge from those we have identified here. It is true that becoming-artwork holds great potential for extensions to a becoming-*work* more broadly construed, or merely to other, more specific but different, sorts of work or labour (or play). Moreover, we have left unwritten all that our conception of becoming-artwork informs in turn of Deleuze and Guattari’s own

versions of becoming-minoritarian, becoming-wasp and -orchid—that the ways we have deterritorialized these last might contribute, for instance, to those more conventionally political problems of ethics which becoming-minoritarian concerns. Most interesting for us, however, are those questions which from X’s current standpoint are far more difficult, namely what it is to go from one work of art to the next, whether and how to mediate how artworks ‘relate’ to one another, and what it is to engage in those collaborative efforts which X’s particular variety of improvisation has ruled out until now. Becoming-artwork has indeed proven a concept with a mobility all its own, not only by how we have applied it variably in this thesis but in all that we have left unwritten of it, that others might find cause to carry it off into becomings all their own, all *its* own.

We hope that those who are vitally productive, who indeed become-artwork without failing to give rise to molar products, will have found nothing of use in these pages. As Deleuze writes in “Literature and Life,” “[t]he writer does not speak about [writing], but is concerned with something else.”ⁱⁱ In other words, it is only those who are deemed unproductive—whether by themselves or by others—whose perspective allows them to wonder at the ‘need’ for or the lack of an emergent molar artwork. What we hope to have brought to light in this thesis, however, is a productive engagement with art which need not be construed in terms of such a lack, that all the sufficiency which we have been arguing for it might grant X the sort of forgetfulness required that a vital production, a sustained and sustaining productivity, might unleash the life which until now has only emerged from him in fits and starts, however powerful.

ⁱ Deleuze, Gilles, and Félix Guattari. *Anti-Oedipus*: 23.

ⁱⁱ Deleuze, Gilles. “Literature and Life.” Trans. Daniel W. Smith and Michael A. Greco. *Critical Inquiry* 23 (1997): 230.

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