

Deconstructing Deleuze and Guattari's *A Thousand Plateaus* for Music Education

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February, 2011

Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari's work has been mined by writers about music and music education such as Ian Buchanan, Marcel Swiboda, Marianne Kielian-Gilbert, and Elizabeth Gould, as they have reflected on how music and music education should be construed.¹ Our present task is to examine critically Deleuze and Guattari's ideas in our reading of their book, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, with a view to determining the merits of their ideas as a basis for a philosophy of music education.² As such, we ask three principal questions: What are Deleuze and Guattari asking us to believe? What is our assessment of their contributions and detractions? What are the implications of our analysis for music education?

Throughout their work Deleuze and Guattari employ a number of metaphors to capture the essence of their ideas, despite their occasional disparaging their use.³ Their work is indeed rich with metaphors, many drawn from psychiatric thought and reinforced with those expressed in the arts, especially the literary and visual arts. We will occasionally highlight some of these metaphors, in particular, the rhizome, body without organs, the face, territorialization, the nomad, and war machine, examining what they reveal, not from a ground in psychiatry or literary criticism, but from the perspective of education, particularly music education.

When tackling such a large work, even though restricted to this one text, it is impossible to do justice to it all, and so we focus on those matters that we consider especially critical to the views that Deleuze and Guattari espouse and that potentially have a significant impact on how music education might be viewed. Nor do we want to get bogged down unnecessarily in technical terminology. Notwithstanding Deleuze and Guattari's suspicion of clarity as a potent agent of power,⁴ we prefer to shine whatsoever light we are able onto their ideas, explain their

gist as we see them as plainly as we can, and critique them especially for what they imply for music education. Our efforts at comprehension, clarity, and fair-mindedness prompt us to disagree with Deleuze and Guattari that “[i]t is in vain that we say what we see: What we see never resides in what we say.”⁵ Although it may be difficult to capture ideas fully in words, without the words in which to think and with which to speak, we may not be in a position to grasp self, the world, and whatever lies beyond our lived realities in particular ways. Our reading of Deleuze and Guattari suggests the possibility of explaining their ideas in ordinary language without resorting constantly to the special sense in which they use particular technical terms. The opaqueness of their exposition may suggest brilliance of thought just as it may mask nonsense and error. This being the case, we subject their ideas to the self-same analysis as those of any philosopher.

We would like to see a greater self-reflexivity and self-criticism regarding “postmodern” ideas in philosophical writing in music education just as we expect to encounter it in regard to other philosophical work.⁶ Although it is natural for the proponents of postmodern ideas to explore how they challenge modern philosophy and practice and could make a difference for music education, it is also crucial to ask the hard questions regarding the bases and merits of these ideas. In so doing, and since our approach is consonant with an analytic tradition in philosophy, our study may prompt a more critical approach to postmodern ideas and indicate how other such ideas might be examined critically as well as constructively.

Some Propositions Critiqued

What are Deleuze and Guattari asking us to believe? And what is our assessment of these

ideas? To begin, we are being asked to replace one system of thought with its inversion. For Deleuze and Guattari, the established approach to philosophy in the Western European tradition represents that of the State, philosophers are its domesticated servants, thinking those thoughts that are representative of, consonant with, or cultivated by the interests of the State, approaching their work within established tenets of abstract reason unencumbered by emotion, working within a closed-system of thought, and sidelining, separating, and suppressing minority interests from the trajectory of the main-line majority thinking of white educated males.

One of the first metaphors we encounter in this text is the rhizome. Deleuze and Guattari's metaphor for the system of thought and accompanying practice that has characterized the Western European tradition is the tree with its tap root reaching beneath the surface as a foundation for all that is above it. This objectified, striated, hierarchical, transcendent, logical, closed, static, abstract realm of thought is now to be repudiated in favor of its inversion—a subjectified, politicized, mystical, cosmic, flat, imminent, smooth, open, dynamic, abstract realm of thought. Here, the rhizome with its multiplicities of elements and interconnections, no one of which is necessarily foundational or primary, and without beginning or ending, but in a constant and dynamic state of flow and becoming, captures this replacement view.

Compared with constant references throughout the text to machines, the rhizome is organic, a living or at least a potentially living form that can grow under the right circumstances. The tap root of course is the same in many respects for it too is an organic part of a living plant. The rhizome however carries within itself more potential. The tap root is likely to die separated from the tree although pesky shoots may continue to grow after the tree is felled. The rhizome, on the other hand, sits brooding, waiting simply for the right soil and moisture

conditions. It is very difficult to destroy a rhizome, for it can wait several seasons on the gardener's shelf, full of potential.

Lacking the structure of the tap root, the rhizome is amorphous, promiscuous, even chaotic. It has a freedom to grow in any direction, and respond to any conditions that might seem fruitful. Its creative impulses are unbothered by rules and regulations. And rhizomic bodies of knowledge that might have been excluded by tap-rooted knowledge have an opportunity to flourish. But we should ask: Will they need to develop their own tap roots to become coherent, meaningful, and applicable? Are tap roots useless, unproductive, and unnecessary? Should taproots be dug up and thrown away or should they too be allowed to flourish in the garden of knowledge?

We stop short of referring to this inversion as a “paradigm shift” since there is much in Deleuze and Guattari’s writing that betrays their roots in and commitments to European philosophy. Nor do we view their writing as sufficiently revolutionary or even praxial in the transformative or Freirian sense of aspiring to change the world not only through a different way of seeing it but of acting in, with, and upon it. Still, Deleuze and Guattari seem like prophets crying in the wilderness, representatives of nomads, those disenfranchised, excluded, marginalized, faceless, and landless wanderers who dwell on the fringes in the minority and besieged by the all-powerful State, its apparatuses and its minions. They would like to dismantle the State and its apparatus but they do not provide a practical plan for achieving this. Their ideas remain just that—abstract machines whereby people may think differently about what they are and do. While this *Either/Or* approach might yield tyrannies on either side, they regard this possibility as immaterial and unavoidable, and see the real test of their ideas in how they are

useful and what can be accomplished with them. The end justifies the means. And the proof, ultimately, is in the pudding.

The dualities that Deleuze and Guattari see as inimical to or characteristic of European philosophy are employed as vehicles to arrive at a process that “challenges all models.” They write: “We invoke one dualism only in order to challenge another.”⁷ Contra dualistic or dialectical thinking, they espouse a theoretical world of multiplicities thought of mechanistically and topologically. They are interested in the connections and ground “between things” rather than in the simplistic and static realities of what they take to be the dialectical or dualistic thinking of Western philosophy that they see as tending toward synthesis, unity, and harmony. In order to arrive at this world, their analysis is shot through with dualities of one sort or another. Even when they arrive at their new view, dualities lurk within and without it and in its plateaus, cracks, and fissures. Now, these dualities often comprise polar opposites that provide the source of energy for the current that runs betwixt and between them in both directions. Double articulations are evident everywhere,⁸ for example, in content and expression,⁹ form and substance,¹⁰ semiotic and symbolic expression,¹¹ territorialized and deterritorialized movement,¹² major and minor modes,¹³ subjectification and objectification,¹⁴ offensive and defensive postures,¹⁵ inhibiting and organizing forms of resonance,¹⁶ abstract mechanisms of overcoding and mutation,¹⁷ planes of transcendence and consistency,¹⁸ immanence and transcendence,¹⁹ punctuated and linear musical systems and approaches,²⁰ arborescent and rhizomatic models,²¹ classicism and romanticism,²² magician-kings and jurist-priests,²³ state science and nomad science,²⁴ *logos* or the word and *nomos* or the object,²⁵ smooth and striated space,²⁶ declination and vortex,²⁷ to name several. The currents that flow back and forth among

these various poles cannot disguise and even require the presence of dualities in this new model. One set of dualities has been replaced by another in a philosophical sleight of hand. Although Deleuze and Guattari urge us to abandon the “strata, segmentarities, sedentariness, and State apparatus,” they posit an alternative “theory-of-everything-in-the-world” with its own axioms, principles, propositions, and theorems, and its own, albeit different, strata, segmentarities, sedentariness, and apparatus requiring its own order, identity, and negation.²⁸ And in this new world, philosophers of the old order have been banished to be the new nomads and replaced by others with differing commitments but a similar urge to make the world in their own image.

Deleuze and Guattari’s argument by analogy regards such disparate fields as mathematics, physics, geology, astronomy, psychoanalysis, political science, zoology, archaeology, economics, religion, music, and cosmology as interconnected. In their view, it is possible to negotiate these fields more-or-less seamlessly or smoothly and make valid analogies between the various ways of construing the world. Rather than regarding analogies as potentially limited or even problematic, they assemble and defend them positively as if all things were united at the core. For them, this unity is based in the energy and vibration, movement and stasis, attraction and resistance evident throughout the Cosmos all the way from the “primordial soup” to musical expressions, theological beliefs and practices, political constructions, and scientific and mathematical propositions. Since all things are interconnected, literally and figuratively, it is important to articulate and map these interconnections. One thing sheds light upon another, as the lobster does upon God, the nomad does upon the State, the wolf does upon human behavior, or the machine does upon human thought.

The metaphor of the body without organs might very well appeal to some educators,

especially those who conceive of their role as guides and facilitators for the young as they construct a life of their own. As Deleuze and Guattari put it, we do not come “ready-made.”²⁹ The metaphor turns the tabula rasa model on its head in the sense that it is not the teacher writing out the life of the child by imparting wisdom and knowledge to that child. Instead, one imagines from the discussion of the body without organs that the teacher’s role, if any role at all, is to facilitate the learner in dismantling her sense of self, bodily worth, and psychic subjectivity, by removing the heart, kidneys, lungs, hands, and face to an empty trunk, in other words, to its shapeless intensities and energies so that something new can be constructed.

One of the appealing elements of the metaphor as Deleuze and Guattari write about it is the inviting nature of the body without organs (BwO): “. . .it awaits you,” they tell us and it seems to be an awesome thing.³⁰ The construction is full of challenge: “you can botch it,” “it can be terrifying,” it can even “lead you to your death.” On it we “experience untold happiness and fabulous defeats.” In typical fashion, the description is confusing for we seem both to be a BwO and yet we also strive to reach it; we are a BwO and yet also live our lives “on it.” Sometimes the body wants to slough off its organs,³¹ that is, overthrow imposed organization, while at other times it seeks to create new ones, that is by desirings, but all the while the BwO is ripe with becoming possibilities. The spiraling and alternating phases of construction and deconstruction are characteristic of human development, and a process that is seldom given full credit in developmental psychology which describes the life’s journey only in terms of upward and positive movement.

And yet the metaphor may in reality seem a little less appropriate for some than for others simply because there are significant differences in how the body is experienced. In a

white person's world, an ethnic minority, very aware of how bodies are different, may already see theirs as bodies without organs in some respects and filled with organs not of their choosing in another respect. In a man's world, it is women who birth bodies, feed and cloth bodies, make homes for bodies, comfort and mend and nurture bodies bodily, care for sick bodies, and in many cultures prepare bodies for burial. For women, this metaphor may suggest that their care of bodies with organs has been misguided.

However, it would be a misreading of Deleuze and Guattari if one were to read their discussion of the body without organs as an attempt to either remove or bring corporeality into consideration, as Elizabeth Grosz notes.³² The trouble is though that having introduced the body, the reader has the freedom to interpret and critique the metaphor as we (and many other feminist writers³³) have done.

Moving onto their primary point about the body, though, we begin to get into very deep waters, for the objective is to "find your body without organs," "to dismantle the self."³⁴ Presumably this is the self that has been put in place by some authority, organized and structured, and dead in ways that the BwO is not dead. The BwO is "occupied, populated only by intensities"³⁵ but these are not significances or subjectivities or phantasies. Rather they are transformative and kinematic energies. Here we would note that it is difficult to paraphrase what Deleuze and Guattari mean exactly and we wonder if this is not the reason that many commentators on their ideas are reduced to quoting large passages directly from their writings. For instance, on this point we read:

The BwO causes intensities to pass; it produces and distributes them in a spatium that is itself intensive, lacking extension. It is not space, nor is it in space; it is a

matter that occupies space to a given degree—to the degree corresponding to the intensities produced. It is nonstratified, unformed, intense matter, the matrix of intensity, intensity = 0; but there is nothing negative about that zero, there are no negative or opposite intensities. Matter equals energy.³⁶

So what are we to make of such a description? Or on the surface of it, does this mechanistic, geographic, mathematical description explain moments of potentiality and enlighten us at all? If not, then we should look to our writers for additional explications of the BwO. There is talk of the BwO being opposed not to organs but to organizations of organs into organisms³⁷ and not to “disarticulation as the property of the plane of consistency, experimentation as the operation on that plane, and nomadism as the movement.”³⁸ But these additional insights do not seem to rise to the level of clarity either and the play on words and endless cycle of metaphoric reference to other metaphors only seems to complicate rather than to explicate. There are glimpses of something profound behind and between the words, sometimes rising to the surface as instances of coherence and inspiration. In this context, one such moment is when they talk about how we are bound and oppressed as people with organs:

You will be organized, you will be an organism, you will articulate your body—otherwise you’re just deprived. You will be signifier and signified, interpreter and interpreted—otherwise you’re just deviant. You will be a subject, nailed down as one, a subject of enunciation recoiled into a subject of the statement—otherwise you’re just a tramp.³⁹

That is why one with active desire, who reaches for freedom and probably sanity, needs to

achieve the body without organs, throwing off all the accoutrements imposed on one over time, defining one. But it is disturbing to read about the origins of this metaphor. Deleuze and Guattari draw their inspiration from psychopathology: hypochondria, schizophrenia, masochism, and anorexia. “We must start here,” they assure us, because it is important to know why these pathologies happened.⁴⁰ In essence, we all are sick and need to do what the hypochondriacs, schizophrenics, masochists, and anorexics do but do it more thoroughly: step back to the place where we can find our body without organs for until we locate it, we cannot figure out how to construct it anew. What is particularly pathetic about us, they explain, is that we are already on our BwO, “scurrying like vermin, groping like a blind person, or running like a lunatic” all over it.⁴¹ While our human development approaches to young learners may have been viewed through rose-tinted glasses, far too optimistic and blind to the realities of growing up, this metaphor and all its attendant metaphors takes us a long way, probably even too far, in the opposite direction toward corrective or balancing measures. We propose that helping ourselves and others grow healthily does not have to start with making them sick first; deconstruction does not have to be destructive.

In developing a philosophy of education, we question whether this metaphor, apart from being somewhat unclear and abstruse, has much of substance to inform our purposes and practices. Primarily it suggests preventatives—preventing the build up of subjectivities, articulations, and significances. But no matter what we do with the curriculum and organization of education, these are the very things we cannot prevent for these are the work of education. At the most, this metaphor alerts us to the negative downside of our work with the young: shaping, constricting, prescribing according to our (or the State’s or some other imposing institution’s)

design. But in essence, the body without organs is a corrective rather than a forward looking concept; it suggests what we should not do, but is largely silent about what we should do.

We might expect a model preoccupied with space and territoriality to emerge from Deleuze and Guattari's emphasis on exteriority, or the search for how things may be beyond the self and grounded in things in the phenomenal world in contrast with interiority, in which things external to self are explained in terms of one person's subjective view which is then employed to interpret the external world. Still, this view is curiously Cartesian in its bifurcation of self and whatever lies beyond, even as the model works inversely to the way Descartes hypothesized. It is certainly a very masculine view and different from the ways in which women may see the world, at least, as Carol Gilligan describes things.⁴²

Instead, visual maps abound with grids, lines of latitude and longitude, flow diagrams, vectors, lines that transcend horizontal and vertical into a third and other dimensions. As Deleuze and Guattari explain, these lines bifurcate space and seem to "flatten" the disjunctions and striations and "smooth" otherwise "rough" surfaces. The plethora of lines and surfaces, directionality between points, and abstract planes that intersect or parallel each other focused on sight rather than sound are juxtaposed in various abstract assemblages. Sound is something of an anomaly, at once more diffuse, abstract, and ambiguous than sight. Music and mathematics, exemplified by Deleuze and Guattari as consonant with the world of smooth spaces that they wish to create, seem curiously out of tune with this visually construed external space. A topographic and geometric preoccupation seems consonant, however, with the evocation of abstract machines or assemblages that navigate the terrain according to particular rules.⁴³ The little Rover navigating Mars, and getting stuck after years of wandering about across particular

coordinates springs to mind as an image of how this exteriority seems to work. The Rover's position can constantly be monitored, fixed, modeled neatly, lines drawn between point to point as the Rover moves from one to another until it inevitably gets stuck, at which newer machines are needed.

What happens to these machines after their usefulness has passed, or they, in turn, become stuck, whichever comes first, and to the resulting litter on the conceptual ground is unclear. Deleuze and Guattari seem to suppose that the materials in the machines are recycled or transformed to make other machines by means of "assemblage converters."⁴⁴ They also write that things are discarded and left behind, and after the passage of time, one supposes that a super machine, or a dedicated junk removing machine will be needed to destroy the debris—a giant vacuum that can suck up or eat the litter or deposit it who knows where—maybe further out in space where it may be less of an immediate problem. So machines are needed to create and to destroy what is made.

The mechanosphere, as Deleuze and Guattari describe their world,⁴⁵ requires a cartographic and mechanistic imaginary that supposes the destruction of biosphere, noosphere, and all other spheres for that matter. Things personal and spiritual seem to be swallowed up in the quest for exteriority and its inevitable requisite conquest and mapping of territory. Rather than illumine self *qua* self, the model sees self only in terms of one's roots in the "primordial soup" and the agencies of the external world, and becoming in terms of those other things rather than in respect of one's growing internal knowledge of one's physical, mental, psychological, gendered, and spiritual self. In the process, morality has lost humanity and become mechanistic, animalistic, and physical or elemental. Even the advocate for the mechanosphere, Professor

Challenger, becomes a machine, “an abnormal clock ticking” in the “dark, cosmic rhythm of the mechanosphere or rhizosphere.”⁴⁶ We are left not only with a vision of machines capturing the very ones who design, produce, and use them, but of some invisible power in the machine—shades of Star Wars, Star Trek, and other cinematic fantasies—that ultimately destroys human selves and even the Cosmos.

Not surprisingly, the obsession with territoriality obviates war when the powerful State and its institutions are resisted by nomads who represent minority perspectives and peoples. These powerful forces and resistances require war machinery or technologies to mount offensives and defend territory, be it conceptual or physical. The militarism exerted by State and nomad has its counterpoint, Deleuze and Guattari argue, in forces in the physical world. The entire mechanosphere is shot through at the molar and molecular level with militarism as territory is recaptured, ground is given, or new territory is acquired. Applying as it does not only to political, economic, and historical realities, but also to abstract ideas, territoriality is indicative of power and control (or the gaining, waning, ceding, or removing of this power and control). Dynamic and evolutionary ideas of adaptation, survival in a hostile environment, and transformation or becoming seem to take on a militaristic nuance, and survival becomes the *raison d'être* of existence.

A case in point is the State’s imposition on children of language, or as Deleuze and Guattari put it “semiotic coordinates possessing all of the dual foundations of grammar,” which is undertaken as an agency of power and control so that words will be “obeyed.”⁴⁷ This attempt at subjugation must be met by the nomad’s utilization of the “war machine” to defend, if possible, the importance of objects as much as words, and to hold minority views that are not in

keeping with the State's ideology, and by the State's cooption of the war machine as a device to oppress the nomad. In the process, one force is met by another, territory is won or lost, and as in all wars, there are consequences for winners and losers. The self-same mechanism of warfare seems to operate regardless of the particular majority or minority views involved and it seems that rather than a peaceful place, the mechanosphere is a place of perpetual war. Nor do we have far to look for such a place, as Randall Allsup reminds us in his study of music education in a time of perpetual war.⁴⁸

If you have read Ken Follett's Pillars of the Earth or World without End, you have seen the war machine at work epistemologically in the way Tom Builder and his progeny cut stone to lay upon cut stone to erect a massive cathedral guided not by computer algorithms or theoremic calculations but by the sense of flow and connectedness and intuitive weighing of forces. One form of science derived from Plato, Deleuze and Guattari explain, is called Compars, the legalistic approach to knowing driven by a search for laws and constants (the way we might go about building a cathedral today); the other, Dispars, is a nomadic science, "placing . . . variables . . . in a state of continuous variation" and if there are equations they are adequations, inequations, differential equations irreducible to the algebraic form and inseparable from a sensible intuition of variation,"⁴⁹ (as used by medieval masons). Striated space, marked out in metric units and grids is the space of Compars, but Dispars takes place in smooth spaces, ungraded and uncalibrated, and like the war machine operating against the State, it hides in the interstices and deviances. The trouble with Compars science is that it tends to want to remove all intuition and replace it with categories, making its findings safe and reproducible but not really able to solve problems "which are tied to a whole set of collective, nonscientific

activities.”⁵⁰

War machines are of an entirely different composition than imperiums. They are a force that checks the power of the State, or organized bodies of knowledge, which in many respects are congruent. Calling these counterforces “war machines” draws attention to the fact that they are foreign forces, an “exteriority of thought [that] is not at all symmetrical to the form of interiority” and “are violent in their acts and discontinuous in their appearances,” destroying “every possibility of subordinating thought to a model of the True, the Just, or the Right.”⁵¹ From the point of view of the nomad, the disenfranchised, the eccentric, or even the social change activist, when often the establishment seems so impenetrable and undefeatable, the sense that countervailing thought is a war machine with speed and weapons and mobility can be heartening. Elizabeth Gould, who has written extensively on how the ideas of Deleuze and Guattari relate to music education, is hesitant about employing the expression “war machine” but in the end does so but not lightly for this very reason. She explains her choice this way: “I deploy the war machine to subvert both within and outside music education disappearance, impoverishment, and exploitation. It is, I think, that important.”⁵² This task is critically important, but nevertheless, the actual provenance of the nomad/eccentric/activist is usually characterized as pacifist, ecofriendly, and pro-life, that is, in the sense of being unwarlike and non-machinic. The metaphor jars and seems out of place, masculine and bellicose, dangerous in the wrong kinds of ways, and antithetical to the kind of nomadic thinking that the world needs today.

We have spoken of how the model seems to function, but of what is it comprised and what is its point? The idea of a plateau suggests a relatively smooth and flat “space” of sustained

energy or intensity “between things” where “things pick up speed.”⁵³ Here, the interest is in the middle and not in the ends or particular climactic points—an idea that Deleuze and Guattari borrow from Gregory Bateson’s analysis of Balinese culture.⁵⁴ Rather than unities in opposition, there are multiplicities in which “each element ceaselessly varies and alters its distance in relation to the other.”⁵⁵ “Multiplicities of multiplicities” form “assemblages” that replace the notion of unity.⁵⁶ Boundaries shift, things flow from one stratum to another and interpenetrate, interior and exterior exchange places, “a new organization of content and expression, each with its own forms and substances, technological content, symbolic and semiotic expression” emerges, and double articulations are evident in the resulting abstract machines that “stretch their pincers out in all directions at all the other strata.”⁵⁷ “Discursive multiplicities” of expression and “non-discursive multiplicities of content” intersect.⁵⁸ Across the various strata, dynamic levels of causation or hierarchies, from “elementary life forms to most complex,”⁵⁹ be they “physiochemical, organic, and anthropomorphic,”⁶⁰ a “plane of consistency” exists that “*knows nothing of differences in levels, orders of magnitude, or distances*” or “*the difference between the artificial and the natural*” or “*the distinction between contents and expressions or that between forms and formed substances.*”⁶¹ As Buchanan explains, consistency is evident “in the types of relations a particular substance embodies and the changes that ensue when they enter into relations with other substances.”⁶² This smooth space “flattens” distinctions, allows “reciprocal presuppositions and mutual insertions to play themselves out,” and represents a “super-linear form”—a rhizome.⁶³ Deterritorialization is always double, a flight from territory in which meanings are also reworked in ways that create a single rhizomatic plane of interconnections “in simultaneous becoming.”⁶⁴ Still, Deleuze and Guattari admit that we cannot escape

segmentation. They state: “We are segmented from all around in every direction.”⁶⁵ Even though every “multiplicity is transforming itself” especially at the “borderline” (and they are interested in the limits of things),⁶⁶ the plane of consistency only “appears to be flat.”⁶⁷ In counterpoint to the plane of consistency in which “relations of movement and rest, speed and slowness” are grasped,⁶⁸ there is the “plane of transcendence”—“a teleological plan(e), design, mental principle” that is “hidden” and “inferred” and “wearing away” at the plane of consistency and that plays an organizational role.⁶⁹ One “passes from one plane to another, from transcendence to imminence” “without being aware of it.”⁷⁰ Since each plane enables one to see what is evident on the other plane, it is necessary to jump from one to the other by means of a “dualism machine” so that what is imperceptible on the one plane becomes perceptible when one jumps to the other.⁷¹

In recognizing the interplay of these two elements, Deleuze and Guattari may also be read to require both the arborescent and rhizomatic models that are, respectively, formalized, linear, hierarchical, and centralized on the one hand, and interconnected, branching, non-hierarchical, and decentralized on the other. Notwithstanding their aversion to duality, dialectic, and synthesis, rather than an inversion of the arborescent model, maybe they are really after some amalgamation of the two.⁷² Their reluctance to repudiate arborescent thought entirely, but to work it into their musical model, for example, leads us to wonder if theirs is not a paradigm shift so much as the search for a broader view that would energize both planes of consistency and transcendence as current flows between them. Such an interpretation would be consistent with the double articulations present everywhere else in their thinking. Inconsistencies of this sort lurk across the philosophical literature and are probably more typical than they are not.⁷³ It

seems to us that read dialectically and even dialogically, the passage betwixt and between the planes of consistency and transcendence constitutes a dynamic one in which Deleuze and Guattari's metaphor of the sea as in a state of flux, flowing or moving between striated and sedentary spaces to create smooth or nomadic spaces and "smooth spaces constantly being reversed and translated into striated spaces" and vice versa is particularly apt.⁷⁴ In the end, however, our sense is that notwithstanding some ambiguity in their ideas, they are really after the creation of smooth, nomadic, and rhizomatic spaces.

The face is a metaphor full of potential, especially for women, because the face, particularly the welcoming face of a child's mother,⁷⁵ is one of the first objects an infant recognizes and responds to. Deleuze and Guattari recognize its power and adopt it to represent in some ways the very opposite, for it is our destiny to escape our face⁷⁶ and dismantle it.⁷⁷ It is one important manifestation of the white wall of significance (where signs are inscribed) and the black holes of subjectification (in which are lodged "consciousness and passion," for instance).⁷⁸ Most importantly, the face is socially produced and takes on an imperialistic demeanor, a politics, produced from a "despotic and authoritarian concrete assemblage of power."⁷⁹ In other words, for Deleuze and Guattari, the face is not an individually constructed persona, but what orders and shapes us and makes us appear as we do, that is, the State, and also the Church.⁸⁰

This is somewhat reminiscent of the psychoanalytic work of Ana-Maria Rizzuto who describes how individuals develop a father or God-image which takes on great significance in how one understands the world and how one should live one's life in it.⁸¹ The image in Rizzuto's sense serves in much the same way as the face in Deleuze and Guattari's sense—the source of

authority, control, and identity in one's life, but where Rizzuto sees this as individual, our writers see it as collective; and where she sees it as evidence of positive development as long as the image is a healthy one, they see it as inevitably limiting and destructive. The tension between the two views can be instructive: the development of the face may be a normal part of growing up yet there may very well come times when that face has to be challenged and even replaced. But, can an individual live without any face? Rizzuto would probably say no, which makes us want to turn the question back to our writers. They would likely give us a different answer, because their starting point is that face is inevitably problematic. "The face, what a horror!" they declare in italics. "It is naturally a lunar landscape, with its pores, planes, matts, bright colors, whiteness, and holes: there is no need for a close-up to make it inhuman; it is naturally a close-up, and naturally inhuman, a monstrous hood."⁸² So escape from the imperialism of State and Church and probably other institutions as well, which is appealing as a call to freedom and creativity, opening up, as they say, "a rhizomatic realm of possibility effecting the potentialization of the possible,"⁸³ means one becomes faceless, even mandatorily giving up a face of one's own making. But that too seems to be inhuman.

Quite aside from the epistemological character of Deleuze and Guattari's model, important political implications are evident, for example, in notions of territoriality that underpin the tension between State- and nomadic thought and practice, and the political significance of thought systems. The principle of de-territorialization (emphasized over its polar opposite territorialization and indicative of Deleuze and Guattari's preference for the creation of smooth spaces associated with nomadic thought) plays out not only in various political and militaristic engagements between State and nomad, but is exemplified in music and art, among other cultural

undertakings. In short, thought cannot be divorced from political and artistic implications and the exercise of power. Since the State has coopted the nomadic war machine and used it for its own purposes, it is now essential to reclaim not only the territory lost, but to escape the sedentariness and territoriality essential to the State's survival by engaging in rhizomatic thinking and thereby create spaces and inventing ways of seeing between the strictures of State thought and practice. By creating this alternative milieu, in which connectedness, multiplicity, and dynamic engagement flourish, one is enabled to reclaim the means of resisting the State's oppression. Deleuze and Guattari may also hope that seeing matters of transcendence and imminence differently may constitute a source of empowerment for political as well as intellectual struggle.

Now we come to the case of music. Deleuze and Guattari invoke Sylvano Bussotti's "Piano Piece for David Tudor 4," from his *Five Pieces for Piano for David Tudor*, as the touchstone for how rhizomatic thought works.⁸⁴ Buchanan observes that for Deleuze and Guattari, music is "a double articulation: it brings together a block of content (the refrain) and a form of expression (becoming)."⁸⁵ In Bussotti's piece, we see the various characteristics that Deleuze and Guattari postulate for the "smooth space" that they are after. Here, time serves in a similar role to space, as a means of rhizomatic thought and practice. Although utilizing traditional score, with five staves, the performer is given considerable latitude to perform the piece unencumbered by measured time, with reference to differing timbres, intensities, pitches, durations, and other expressive elements. One begins somewhere in the middle, or *intermezzo*, and presumably returns to refrains (*ritournelle*) that allow the performer to develop and elaborate even chaotically on motifs or thematic material and thereby transform them in multiple ways

throughout the performance.⁸⁶ It is unclear where the beginning or end of the piece should be in any normative sense, and the piece's ambiguity allows for a multiplicity of constructions in how it should be performed. Presumably, smooth and striated spaces will interchange throughout the performance of the piece which has a dynamic and improvisatory feel. The score serves a suggestive rather than prescriptive purpose. The hard boundaries between performer and composer are softened as the performer assumes one after another roles just as the hard-boundaries of a regular pulse and mensuration are transformed into a smooth temporal space that freely flows from one point to the next. Since the score implicates sounds rather than silences, we are not exactly sure what the roles of silences are to be in this composition except as a backdrop to the sounds the pianist creates. Nor is it clear if there are to be some aspects of the music that are to be more important than others, save to indicate five elements in each of the staves that seem to assume particular importance. Multiple lines also move diagonally across this non-pulsed time. The score also suggests "shifting relations" with other expressive elements. Rather than marking distinct motifs that stake out a musical territoriality, this example seems more the case of a withdrawal to indistinct motifs that Deleuze and Guattari would characterize as the deterritoriality of rhizomatic or nomadic smooth spaces. That many of the markings in the score seem jagged rather than smooth suggest the intersection of arborescent and rhizomatic models as old and new come together in a new piece of music. This is a composition for a solo artist where the claims of coordinating the contributions of other musicians are not at issue. Still, Bussotti's piece is open to multiple interpretations, transcriptions, and translations, and it might be possible to interpret this piece literally or figuratively, with solo or massed instruments where musicians bring their own interpretative characteristics to the performance.⁸⁷

Implications for music education

Notwithstanding the detractions of Deleuze and Guattari's ideas, we can rescue several aspects that can contribute positively to our understanding of music education. Among them, Deleuze and Guattari highlight the "road less traveled"⁸⁸ and the importance of the spaces between taken-for-granted realities. Their approach necessitates a critical engagement with and resistance to established beliefs and practices. Certainly, in our time, the arts, including music, constitute alternative world-views that are often marginalized in the school curriculum, and merit foregrounding more than is the case in traditional practice. We also see the importance of composing and improvising as central ways to engage music rhapsodically and informally. In a world of multiplicities as means and ends, grasping connections between things and viewing them in fresh ways provide opportunities to enrich all of the musical traditions and processes whereby people come to know music. This is an active approach to music that engages new technologies and new musics from whichever traditions and pushes the horizons of musical understandings outwards. Not only does it mean constructing new musical traditions but creating new milieus or communities that form around these musical expressions.

Such an approach also suggests the importance of coming to grasp minority as well as majority perspectives in a constant transformative sense of becoming. Rhizomatic or hyper-textual approaches to musical curriculum enable access to music from many different points of entry and toward multiple ends—a view that challenges notions of standardization since the means and ends of musical instruction are divergent. Engaging with music from this perspective implies contextual, social, and political approaches that see music as a part of lived experience

rather than divorced from it, or stress immanence in counterpoint with transcendence. It would also seem to be impossible to undertake such a musical education without regarding music subjectively and objectively as expressive and formal construct, and thereby facilitating those who come to know music to grasp it procedurally and propositionally, with reference to its syntactic as well as semantic elements, knowing both how to do it and about it.

Notwithstanding their potentially positive contributions, we caution that Deleuze and Guattari's ideas resonate particularly with two sets of pictures of music education that Estelle Jorgensen has examined critically in her *Pictures of Music Education*, namely, the web and connectivity and the seashore and energy.⁸⁹ In that writing, she argues that these picture-sets cannot cover the host of ways in which music education is conducted around the world nor do they suffice when taken alone as the sole approach for music education. Merely substituting one value set for another does not address the multiplicities of values, ways of regarding music, and approaches to music teaching, learning, instruction, curriculum, and administration.

The problematic aspects of Deleuze and Guattari's ideas to which we have alluded throughout this paper should alert music educators to the pitfalls for music education of following them uncritically. Rather than repudiate dualities, binaries, polarities, and dialectics, as Deleuze and Guattari are wont to do, we prefer to see somewhat messy and dynamic pictures in which the resulting tensions, conflicts, and exclusions may energize music education as ideas are discussed, debated, and contested in the public sphere. We are also as interested in the places where we cannot see the connections between things as in those in which the connections are evident. Delusion and disarray can arise when claims are not carefully examined, traditional thought and practice are needlessly discarded, and visions of a Deleuzian and Guattarian

mechanosphere that threatens to extinguish life, turn people into species of machines, and potentially lead on to despair and madness are uncritically accepted. Deleuze and Guattari's ideas suggest a particular view of music education which when taken on its own is, in our view, limited, alienating, depressing, and even hopeless. While we might wish to rescue aspects of their ideas for music education, we are doubtful that they can suffice as a basis for our own approaches to the philosophy of music and general education.

When we focus on the metaphors offered by Deleuze and Guattari, a number of patterns emerge. There is no doubt that the metaphors they employ are not trivial or superficial. They are large and fundamental and radical. They are not used merely to expand an idea already formed but seem to be used more to suggest an idea which further reflection will probe and articulate. In other words, their metaphors are grounding metaphors, upon which a philosophy is built. Because of this they are difficult to engage, and our writers themselves use metaphors to comment on metaphors, intertwine metaphors, and pile metaphors on so deeply that one can scarcely read a page or a paragraph that is not chock full of metaphors, even choking on them. Their explanatory power could continue to illumine events and experiences in this postmodern age, and once considered, particular metaphors might pop into mind again and again for their aptness and insight. In this process they will either gain more glosses and greater coherence or die for lack of vitality and aptness. They are also likely to have greater appeal to those who prefer to engage ideas impressionistically and intuitively, rather than propositionally and logically, although Deleuze and Guattari suggest they follow a logic (or illogic) of their own and they are certainly making claims.

Although there are multiple metaphors, and we have only touched on a few, they share

some common threads: becoming, desiring, non-conformity, difference, dynamism, resistance, eccentricity. These are truly big ideas which have yet to penetrate education to any depth and there has probably never been a more compelling time to do so when every impulse in educational organization and policy making is towards setting standards for all to reach at each step along the way, massification of texts and curricula, and obliteration of the individual teacher and specific learner from the equation.

But we suggest that the roots of these ideas and how they are framed, and where and how they direct us should be examined with the same rigor as any and it is our responsibility as philosophers in music education to do so. Grosz suggests that before one begins to critique and evaluate, one needs to enter the work of Deleuze and Guattari with “a kind of trust rarely required in philosophical texts . . . in order to grasp, to be moved by, and to be able to utilize their works,”⁹⁰ and she is probably right. With that in mind, we offer some critique in order to preserve what is helpful in their work.

There is a distinctive masculinity about A Thousand Plateaus that should be acknowledged. We see it in the ways images of bodies and faces are developed and employed, in the mechanistic and belligerent description of different ideas as “war machines,” the militaristic juxtaposition of difference and control, images of lines of escape, speed, gaining and losing territory, and so on. The masculinity of the text is not gender-specific, for two men composing a text together are going to express maleness which does not have to be problematic, but when feminists of either gender approach the text with what Elizabeth Schüssler Fiorenza calls “a hermeneutic of suspicion,”⁹¹ the universalizing and totalizing proclamations of A Thousand Plateaus override the particular and the feminine. It is universal and totalizing in several

significant ways: first, in its description of modernist thinking it too ignores the alternative voices of different others that have always been present even though rendered largely silent and marginalized; second, in its description of postmodernist thinking the “exclusivity of its inclusiveness . . . reproduces and reconstructs women’s absence” and fails to take into account its own particularity.⁹² The mechanistic and militaristic and male-dominated images are problematic, especially in the sense that they seem to ignore the possibility of an alternative viewpoint. And this is especially surprising given the agenda of celebrating rhizomatic and nomadic ways of being.

There seems to be a difference between the kinds of thinking they are speaking for, rich and wide in its compass, open to alternative ways of thinking and being, and the kind of thinking they employ, specific, bounded, particular. We see this in a number of ways. The rhizome is proposed; the tap root of Western thought is to be thoroughly uprooted. The body with organs is dead; the body without organs is alive and full of potential. Organized and structured knowing and being are condemned; nomadism is celebrated and to be sought. The net result is that positions they espouse are just as dominating as those they would replace, for only one view on this has a seat at their table. There is an exclusivity, an in-crowd versus an outsider mentality that is problematic in its narrowness and alarming in its arrogance. It is ironic that in an attempt to open up to alterity and marginality, that which is familiar and central has to be condemned and replaced with their own view of things.

Our writers recognize a closely related problem: how do you describe an all-encompassing ontology or epistemology when you must revert to dualisms. They admit that there are “knots of aborescence in rhizomes, and rhizomatic offshoots in roots . . . despotic

formations . . . specific to rhizomes, just as there are anarchic deformations in the transcendent system of trees”⁹³ In endeavoring to talk pluralistically or monistically, one inevitably lapses into dualisms. This peril is one they acknowledge at the beginning but do little to ameliorate throughout the text. The dualisms in their account are not only a “problem of writing”⁹⁴ as they put it, an accident of language, but fundamental to their point. One way of thinking and being is juxtaposed to another: middles versus beginnings and endings, smooth spaces versus striated, nomads versus the State; becoming versus resemblance; plateaus versus culminations and termination points. The “is” of something else is their “not-is.”

There is a darkness in their work. The lowly rhizome is one of the most unfortunate looking plant forms. The nomad is increasingly perceived as a figure of terror. One needs to slough off one’s face and organs. Ideas are war machines. This may be the manifestation of the psychoanalytic roots they share, where the focus is more often on pathologies than health. It may fulfill a quite deliberate purpose of shocking readers, disturbing their complacency to draw them into new modes of thought and being. Or it may be their preferred or accustomed way of viewing the world, a personal predisposition to living on the underside. It may be a reflection of a particular weltanschauung, part of the zeitgeist of postmodernism and a badge of identification. Whatever its origins, this darkness is not something that will have immediate appeal to many educators, especially those who are drawn to the task of teaching and guiding the young because they are optimistic and hopeful about their prospects for success, their students’ futures, and life in general. At least we can say Deleuze and Guattari serve as important correctives to being overly optimistic, especially in their highly significant contribution of pointing out the limiting and destructive routes that are usually taken.

We notice that Deleuze and Guattari expect few people to find their work particularly helpful and they instruct their readers to take whatever portions of their work are useful in the living of their own lives. Still, the work of music education has cultural and social consequences for the conduct of public policy. Simply taking ideas uncritically a bit here and a bit there of whatever one likes or believes to be useful cannot satisfy, especially when it is necessary to think and act collectively in the public sphere. Rather, it would seem prudent to subject every view to careful criticism, recognize the value of multiple perspectives on music education thought and practice, but none-the-less grasp the importance of doing our work in a community of those whose ideas may differ from our own but whose critical insights can contribute to our individual and collective work.

¹ Ian Buchanan and Marcel Swiboda, eds., *Deleuze and Music* (Edinburgh, UK: Edinburgh University Press, 2004); Marianne Kielian-Gilbert, "Music and the Difference in Becoming," in *Sounding the Virtual: Gilles Deleuze and the Theory and Philosophy of Music* Brian Hulse and Nick Nesbitt, eds., (Farham, Surrey, UK; Burlington, Vermont: Ashgate, 2010); Elizabeth Suzanne Gould, "Social Justice in Music Education: The Problematic of Democracy," *Music Education Research* 9 (2) (July 2007): 229-240, DOI: AN MAH0001660001; Elizabeth Suzanne Gould, "Thinking (as) Difference: Lesbian Imagination and Music," *Women and Music: A Journal of Gender and Culture* 11 (2007): 17-28, DOI: AN MAH0001719479.

² Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia (TP)*, trans., Brian Massumi (Minneapolis, Minnesota and London, England: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), cited hereafter as *TP*.

³ *TP*, 77. Also, one finds in their writing a statement such as: ". . . the plane of consistency is the abolition of all metaphors; all that consists is Real" (69).

⁴ *TP*, 227-228.

⁵ *TP*, 67.

⁶ Geraldine Finn, "Why Are There No Great Women Postmodernists?" In *Relocating Cultural Studies: Developments in Theory and Research*, eds. Valda Blundell, John Shepherd and Ian R. Taylor (London, England and New York, New York: Routledge, 1993), 123-152, observes that postmodernism is "not critical enough, if it is critical at all" (132).

⁷ *TP*, 20.

⁸ *TP*, 40.

⁹ *TP*, 57, 416.

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- ¹⁰ *TP*, 63, 416.
- ¹¹ *TP*, 63.
- ¹² *TP*, 88.
- ¹³ *TP*, 106.
- ¹⁴ *TP*, 167.
- ¹⁵ *TP*, 218.
- ¹⁶ *TP*, 218.
- ¹⁷ *TP*, 223.
- ¹⁸ *TP*, 226, 423.
- ¹⁹ *TP*, 270.
- ²⁰ *TP*, 294-295.
- ²¹ *TP*, 328.
- ²² *TP*, 338-342.
- ²³ *TP*, 354.
- ²⁴ *TP*, 362, 364.
- ²⁵ *TP*, 369.
- ²⁶ *TP*, 384, 474
- ²⁷ *TP*, 489.
- ²⁸ *TP*, 24.
- ²⁹ *TP*, 149.
- ³⁰ *TP*, 149.
- ³¹ *TP*, 149-150.
- ³² Although she mounts her own critique and suggests that other feminists have missed the point Deleuze and Guattari are making about the body, Elizabeth Grosz summarizes the primary objections to the Body without Organs discussion in *Volatile Bodies: Toward a Corporeal Feminism* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1994), 160-164.
- ³³ *Ibid.*
- ³⁴ *TP*, 151.
- ³⁵ *TP*, 153.
- ³⁶ *TP*, 153.
- ³⁷ *TF*, 158
- ³⁸ *TP*, 159.
- ³⁹ *TP*, 159.
- ⁴⁰ *TP*, 150.
- ⁴¹ *TP*, 150.
- ⁴² Carol Gilligan, *In A Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1982).
- ⁴³ *TP*, 70, 71.
- ⁴⁴ *TP*, 325.
- ⁴⁵ *TP*, 69.
- ⁴⁶ *TP*, 74.
- ⁴⁷ *TP*, 75-76.

⁴⁸ Randall Everett Allsup, "Rough Play: Music and Symbolic Violence in a Time of Perpetual War," *Action, Criticism and Theory for Music Education* 8 (1) (March 2009): 35-53, http://act.maydaygroup.org/articles/Allsup8_1.pdf, accessed July 31, 2009.

⁴⁹ *TP*, 369.

⁵⁰ *TP*, 374

⁵¹ *TP*, 376,77.

⁵² Elizabeth Gould, "Women Working in Music Education: The War Machine," *Philosophy of Music Education Review* 17 (2) (Fall, 2009): 126-143.

⁵³ *TP*, 25.

⁵⁴ *TP*, 21. See also, Gregory Bateson, *Steps to an Ecology of Mind* (New York, NY: Ballantine Books, 1972), 113.

⁵⁵ *TP*, 30.

⁵⁶ *TP*, 34.

⁵⁷ *TP*, 48, 50, 53, 60-61, 63.

⁵⁸ *TP*, 67.

⁵⁹ *TP*, 335.

⁶⁰ *TP*, 502.

⁶¹ *TP*, 69-70.

⁶² Buchanan & Swiboda, eds., *Deleuze and Music*, 13.

⁶³ *TP*, 70, 90, 95.

⁶⁴ *TP*, 306, 508.

⁶⁵ *TP*, 208.

⁶⁶ *TP*, 249, 251.

⁶⁷ *TP*, 251.

⁶⁸ *TP*, 266, 267.

⁶⁹ *TP*, 265, 270.

⁷⁰ *TP*, 270.

⁷¹ *TP*, 284, 281, 282.

⁷² *TP*, 423.

⁷³ We see such an inconsistency in the work, for example, of Schiller whose stance toward aesthetic education can be read variously as both the means and end of education. Friedrich Schiller, *On the Aesthetic Education of Man in a Series of Letters*, trans., Elizabeth M. Wilkinson (Oxford, England: Clarendon Press, 1967).

⁷⁴ *TP*, 474, 478.

⁷⁵ *TP*, 169.

⁷⁶ *TP*, 171.

⁷⁷ *TP*, 186.

⁷⁸ *TP*, 167.

⁷⁹ *TP*, 181.

⁸⁰ *TP*, 172.

⁸¹ Ana-Maria Rizzuto, *The Birth of the Living God: A Psychoanalytic Study* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981).

⁸² *TP*, 190.

⁸³ *Ibid.*

⁸⁴ Sylvano Bussotti, "Piano Piece for David Tudor 4," from his *Five Pieces for Piano for David Tudor* (Milan: Recordi, 1970). See *TP*, 3.

⁸⁵ Buchanan & Swiboda, eds., *Deleuze and Music*, 16.

⁸⁶ *TP*, 312.

⁸⁷ In his performance of Bussotti's *Five Pieces for David Tudor* in his lecture recital entitled, "Kinetic Art and Music: Chance as a Determinant in Composition and Improvisation," presented to the Eighth International Symposium on the Philosophy of Music Education, Sibelius Academy, Helsinki, Finland, June, 2010, David Ward-Steinman noted that the fourth piece is both picture and piece of music.

⁸⁸ Robert Frost, "The Road not Taken," first published in his *Mountain Interval* (New York: H. Holt and Co., 1916).

⁸⁹ See Estelle R. Jorgensen, *Music Education as Metaphor and Model* (Bloomington IN: Indiana University Press), in press.

⁹⁰ Grosz, *Volatile Bodies*, 166.

⁹¹ Elizabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her*.

⁹² Finn, "Why are there no Great Women Postmodernists?" *Relocating Cultural Studies: Developments in Theory and Research* (1993): 133. See also Grosz, *Volatile Bodies*, 180-183.

⁹³ *TP*, 20.

⁹⁴ *TP*, 20