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Rosi Braidotti and Patricia Pisters, eds. *Revisiting Normativity with Deleuze*. London: Bloomsbury 2014. i-xii, 238 pp. Notes, figures, bibliography and index. \$37.95 U.S. (pb). ISBN 978-1-4725-2468-3.

Review by Giuseppina Mecchia, University of Pittsburgh.

This new, paperback edition of a collection originally published in 2012 and only available at a prohibitive price, is certainly one of the most rewarding, worthwhile collective projects on the legacy of Gilles Deleuze for the twenty-first century that are currently available. In a rather inflationary number of Deleuzian studies, the outstanding intellectual caliber of the editors and of the contributors in their comprehensive, original approach to the issue of normativity, make for an illuminating volume that should become an invaluable reference for any Deleuzian scholar and, I believe, teacher of philosophy. Rosi Braidotti, who is one of the earliest readers of Deleuze and an eminent feminist scholar, and Patricia Pisters, who specializes in the burgeoning field of neuroaesthetics, have succeeded in publishing a volume that truly advances our understanding of Deleuze and Guattari's philosophical legacy. In particular, given the controversies surrounding the progressive potential of Deleuze's philosophy, which has been questioned by thinkers such as Alain Badiou and more recently Peter Hallward, I believe that the study of normativity is particularly apt to respond to these critiques and to shed light on the continued relevance of Deleuze's ethico-political legacy in the twenty-first century.

As the editors say in their short but crystal-clear introduction, the issue of the creation and institution of norms spans several fields of human endeavor: epistemology, jurisprudence, aesthetics, and ethics. Deleuze, with the collaboration of Guattari, elaborates a normativity proper to a "non-unitary subject of becoming [...] built-in in the monistic ontology that sustains its material and yet vitalist processes of self-actualization" (pp. 1-2). Seen from the perspective elaborated in the various contributions to the volume, we understand clearly how, according to Deleuze, life sustains itself through the creation and institution of norms, aimed at "sustainable modes, times and forms of becoming" (p. 2). The norm, therefore, is not reactionary or repressive: it is, on the contrary, a form of becoming that can certainly be recuperated and distorted by reactionary powers, but ontologically is simply a rule for being. In an era where discourses on sustainability, agency and self-actualization are increasingly prevalent, an assessment of these questions from the point of view of norms, or of an immanent ethics as life practices, is extremely useful, and does represent on the most enduring legacies of Deleuzian thought.

The volume is organized in four main parts, entitled "Normativity in Deleuze's Philosophy," "Normativity, Habits and Problems of Law," "Political Normativity and Deterritorialization," and "Normativity in Art and Media." For reasons of brevity, I will only address some of the most remarkable essays contained in each section, as they seem to advance the discussion in a more rigorous or original way. In the first part, Anders Raastrup Kristensen masterfully treats the question of transcendental empiricism, which Deleuze himself considered to be his own essential philosophical mode of thinking. He explains with remarkable clarity the difference between Kant's and Deleuze's notions of the transcendental: as an empiricist, Deleuze develops "a theory of learning" which is not "mediated by reason but by an ethical ethos about creation of possibilities of life" (p. 18). Normativity, therefore, corresponds to an "immanent ethical principle" (p. 19), which is continuously deployed in the "transcendental field" (p. 20) of consciousness, and therefore "can only be traced in the actions, beliefs

and aspirations of human subjects” (p. 22). Equally illuminating is the essay by John Protevi, which addresses the frayed question of the relation between Deleuzian philosophy, cognitive sciences and affect theory. In Deleuze, “affective cognition unfolds in a social context between embodied subjects formed by that context” (p. 33), but Protevi is absolutely right in remarking right away that the word “context” is too static: there are multiple levels and time scales involved” (p. 33). Politics is therefore not a matter of reason, but depends on a complex “differential field” of relations among “changing bodies” (p. 32). This section concludes with an essay by Arkady Plotnitsky on the relation between the fields of immanence sketched out in *What is Philosophy*, Riemann’s “geometry of manifolds,” Einstein’s theory of general relativity and Claude Monet’s *Nymphéas* project, and then an equally mathematically-oriented assessment of Deleuze’s relation with Leibniz penned by Simon Duffy.

In the following two sections, the contributors address the issue of norms in a more directly socio-political manner. Constantin Boundas analyzes Deleuze’s understanding of the difference between the Law (transcendent idea) and jurisprudence (immanent practice): while leaning on the side of jurisprudence, Boundas argues that Deleuze still does not reject the issue of the normative “validation” of practices. For Deleuze, what is at stake in the polis is “prudence” itself, that is, “the analysis and production of actual assemblages for the sake of new situations” (pp. 75-76). There will be, therefore, in a just society, certain epistemic norms “in the direction of ethical *justesse*” (p. 79). Claire Colebrook, on the other hand, talks of the “norm wars” instigated by a certain reception of Oedipal psychoanalysis: “either one submits to the prohibiting law and renounces the fullness of desire or one fall backs in to the dark night of the undifferentiated” (p. 84). Colebrook, however, shows that Deleuze holds a de-personalizing understanding of singularities, so that immanence, for him, is always embodied in “a” life, and asserts, a bit against the grain of the collection, that this radical disjunctive understanding of what is shows that in fact “normativity has no sense” (p. 96). In the following essay, Ronald Bogue shows instead that the “chaosmos” for Deleuze and Guattari is the place where all life unfolds, and follows a “normativity of jurisprudence” aimed at bringing “the chaosmos and the polis together in a single concern” (p. 112).

In the section devoted more explicitly to politics, the essay by Matthiew Tiessen titled “Infinite Debt and the Mechanics of Dispossession” details Deleuze and Guattari’s understanding of the rule of capital over today’s forms of life. Tiessen is right in pointing out their “prescience” (p. 120), since today the despotic nature of the infinite debt imposed by capitalism on the world’s populations is more evident than ever. The following chapter, by Birgit Kaiser, explains the explicit adoption on the part of Edouard Glissant of Deleuzian categories in order to found a “post-postcolonial aesthetics of the Earth” (p. 131). The concept of “creolization” becomes an ethical model of social and political participation forged on the states of becoming allowed by “following and tracing paths with others” (p. 142). The very concept of the relation to the other is the theme of the following chapter, where Tina Rahimy explains how a “minor philosopher” would be always attentive to the “tongue of the other” (p. 157), and might be content with “speaking poorly,” reminding us of our “inability to clarify the world” (p. 157). This section ends with a more general assessment of the ethico-aesthetical tenets of Deleuze and Guattari’s philosophy, written by Matthew Fuller and Olga Goriunova. In particular, they delve into the notion of luck, or “chance,” in Deleuze and Guattari. A positive philosophy of being recognizes that “the stake of a metaphysics is to become adequate to the world” (p. 162), and therefore to an ethics of “the game as a choice of arbitrary rules and orders” (p. 162) which takes the natural datum of chance and redirects it toward a human aesthetics.

The transition to the last part is thus assured. The section devoted to norms in art and media opens with a theoretical chapter by Daniel W. Smith dealing with the creation of concepts in Deleuze, and continues with a remarkable essay by Felicity Colman on “how death can be indexed for its affective connection for the living, in the terms of the types of political affect that the mediatization of death is able to produce” (p. 190). In particular, the Australian scholar talks about the way indigenous suicide is presented in the media, and the “political field of death” (p. 196) and the “ontology of media bodies” (p.

199) that it helps us understand. In an original and surprising essay, Laura Marks then shows how Deleuze and Guattari's reflections on the rhizome shed light on what she calls "vegetable locomotion," that is, the way plants have travelled in the natural but most of all the artistic world throughout time and space. The book closes on a reflection by Stephan Zepke entitled "Art and the Aesthetics of the Interface," where he analyzes the way digital interfaces are now deeply embedded in the way we think and experience the world. Drawing on Italian post-Operaist thought and Steven Shaviro's critique of medias, Zepke writes that "capitalism and life are interfaced through digital media" (p. 218), which leads some to form an apocalyptic view of our present and future possibilities. But for Zepke, Deleuze allows us precisely to disjoin the future from the present: although chaotic and unpredictable "the event" of creation is an ontological possibility for Deleuze, and incarnates itself in the "asubjective affect" (p. 229) allowed by the artistic relation to what exists. It is in fact true that "Deleuze and Guattari stubbornly insist upon the radical efficacy of the autonomy of art and the sensations that it creates [...] as the creation of an untimely future that resists the present" (p. 230).

There could be no better conclusion for a volume that is, in many ways, exemplary for the consistent high quality and inner cohesiveness of the contributions. One might have wished for more theoretical essays devoted to the relation between normativity and creation, of the kind developed by Kristensen and Protevi in the first part of the book. However, this only leaves more space for future discussions, which will certainly find in this timely, well-conceived collection an excellent point of departure.

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