

## Book Review

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Rockwell F. Clancy, *Towards a Political Anthropology in the Work of Gilles Deleuze: Psychoanalysis and Anglo-American Literature* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2015).

At times, Deleuze scholars seem to be proverbial blind men and women describing an elephant. That's not a bad thing, nor should it be unexpected. Deleuze was a master at integrating multiple sources into his thought, and if you pursue the network of associations related to any one source, almost inevitably you are forced to deal with all the others. Deleuze has been viewed from the vantage of a number of philosophers, including his favorites—Nietzsche, Spinoza, Bergson and Hume—but also his enemies, such as Kant and Hegel. Clancy has chosen to approach Deleuze via a writer most would consider marginal to his enterprise: D. H. Lawrence. Through careful readings of Lawrence and Deleuze, Clancy manages to build a strong case for Lawrence as one of Deleuze's key influences, and in the process, he develops an account of Deleuzian politics that grants philosophy and the arts a central role in inventing new modes of existence and forming a viable future collectivity.

The primary texts of Lawrence in Clancy's discussion are not the novels or poems, but Lawrence's two critiques of psychoanalysis—*Psychoanalysis and the Unconscious* (1921) and *Fantasia of the Unconscious* (1922)—as well as his *Studies in Classic American Literature* (1923). In Lawrence's counter-theory to psychoanalysis, which Lawrence playfully calls "pollyanalytics," Clancy finds a precursor to the schizoanalysis of Deleuze and Guattari's *Anti-Oedipus* (1972). As Clancy skillfully shows, Lawrence, like Deleuze and Guattari, conceives of the unconscious in terms not of a psychic lack but of a positive somatic drive akin to Nietzsche's will to power or Spinoza's *conatus*. Lawrence also shares Deleuze and Guattari's view that the Oedipus complex, though real, is not universal, but rather the symptom of a modern Western malaise. Finally, Lawrence sees literature as a source of insight for psychoanalysis rather than a symptom of neurosis, and in a similar fashion Deleuze and Guattari approach literature and philosophy as creative means of going beyond psychoanalysis to invent new ways of living. In Lawrence's *Studies in Classic American Literature*, Clancy discerns not simply a source for Deleuze's understanding of Anglo-American literature, but also a Spinozistic

conception of mind, body and community in accord with Deleuze's philosophy, a "materialist-parallel perspective" that understands "individuals as 'modes' (aggregates of thoughts, perceptions, and feelings), communities as larger, further reaching modes, and the relations between them in terms of sympathy (shared thoughts, perceptions and feelings)" (78).

Clancy devotes his first chapter to Lawrence's "pollyanalytics," and his second to Lawrence's *Studies in Classic American Literature*. The ensuing two chapters examine the Deleuzian counterparts to these texts. In the third chapter, Clancy offers an extended and illuminating reading of *Anti-Oedipus*, showing the ways in which Deleuze and Guattari echo Lawrence's critique of psychoanalysis and extend the implications of that critique by detailing its Spinozistic characteristics and drawing out its political ramifications. In the fourth chapter, Clancy turns to Deleuze and Parnet's *Dialogues* (1977), specifically to the section titled "On the Superiority of Anglo-American Literature." Here, Clancy makes the ingenious argument that Deleuze treats "Anglo-American literature" not as a body of texts but as a philosophical concept, which has as its antithesis "Franco-Germanic literature." According to this reading, the heterogeneous elements of *Dialogues'* Anglo-American Literature section, many of which seem to have nothing to do with literature, are all constituents of the concept of Anglo-American literature. What seem to be digressive asides on Hume, Spinoza and the Stoics are actually specifications of features of this concept—that relations are external to their terms (Hume), that bodies are configurations of speeds and affects (Spinoza), and that sets of relations and configurations of bodies constitute events (the Stoics). Thus, Deleuze's "praise for Anglo-American literature concerns the metaphysical commitments it implies," commitments in accord with those of *Anti-Oedipus's* "model of the body without organs and a legitimate understanding of the syntheses of the unconscious, which give rise to a different understanding of individuals, community, and relations between them" (213).

In his final two chapters, Clancy elaborates on his understanding of Deleuze's politics by discussing the role of philosophy and the arts in inventing a people to come. Chapter Five concentrates on Deleuze and Guattari's critique of opinion in *What Is Philosophy?* (1992), a critique that has been largely unexamined by other commentators and here undergoes masterful analysis. Clancy shows that Deleuze and Guattari approach the venerable philosophical problem of *doxa* via the concept of chaos. Here, once again, Deleuze and Guattari find inspiration for their analysis in Lawrence, whose brief essay "Chaos in Poetry" conceives of poetry as a force that rips holes in the umbrella of opinion that shields us from chaos. Deleuze and Guattari argue that implicit in traditional notions of opinion are the existence of discrete human subjects, stable world objects, and common perceptions and feelings among subjects that allow them to reach consensus and thereby form a community of reasonable individuals. For such individuals, chaos is

the enemy, in that it undermines the certainties of an unchanging world. By contrast, Deleuze and Guattari regard chaos as an uneasy ally, a disruptive force that allows philosophy and art to undo received opinion and fashion new modes of existence. Philosophy and art establish “relations of sympathy, cultivating shared thoughts, perceptions and feelings,” but those relations and shared thoughts, perceptions and feelings are formative elements of the metamorphic processes that bring into existence subjects, world objects and communities, not secondary products of fully-formed entities in a stable world. “Unlike opinion,” Clancy specifies, “the relation by which philosophy and art bring order to chaos is conceived as extrinsic and variable, determined by chance encounters. The correspondences established determine the nature of subjectivity and the kinds of relations into which subjects enter, which in turn determine the inter-subjective community formed as a result” (255-6).

What such an inter-subjective community might be is the subject of Clancy’s final chapter. Toward the end of his life, Deleuze spoke often of the necessity of inventing a “people to come,” and through a close reading of three essays from Deleuze’s last book, *Essays Critical and Clinical* (1993), Clancy develops an insightful explanation of what Deleuze meant by this phrase. Clancy sees in Deleuze’s essay on Lawrence’s *Apocalypse* an articulation of the basic political problem Deleuze addresses: how may we avoid the extremes of an inclusive universalism, whereby individuals become interchangeable constituents of a pan-species mass, and an exclusive particularism, whereby individuals and groups define themselves through their agonistic opposition to the other? In Deleuze’s essay on T. E. Lawrence’s *Seven Pillars of Wisdom*, Clancy discerns a partial answer to this question in Deleuze’s remarks on Lawrence’s complex relationship with the Arabs he leads in guerrilla warfare. But it is only in Deleuze’s essay on Walt Whitman that Clancy finds a full response to this question. For Deleuze, Whitman’s notions of camaraderie, the open road and Unionism constitute the fundamental principles necessary for the formation of a people to come, principles Clancy identifies as those of an inclusive particularism. In this view, relations among humans are “singular and variable rather than universal and fixed” (293), created rather than given, and it is through philosophy and art that bonds of sympathy are forged via the production of shared thoughts, perceptions and feelings, which are mutually constitutive of individuals and a community that organizes heterogeneous elements without reducing them to a homogeneous collectivity.

Clancy’s ultimate goal is to delineate the contours of a “political anthropology” in Deleuze. In Clancy’s analysis, the liberal tradition in political philosophy promotes a neutral tolerance of citizens’ diverse moral and religious views, yet such neutrality “implies a conception of human nature as rational, disinterested, and risk averse” (19). The corrective to liberalism, Clancy argues, is not to abandon claims to the existence of a knowable human nature, but to take up the task of philosophical

anthropology and develop an alternative conception of human nature. This is precisely what Deleuze does, Clancy claims. He offers “a philosophical anthropology where the mind *is not* given priority over the body, individuals are conceived as unique sets of relations—what Spinoza calls ‘bodies’—community is conceived as wider, further reaching sets of relations than individuals, and the basis of relations between individuals and community is sympathy—such that the goal of political activity consists in the production of shared thoughts, perceptions, and feelings” (29).

This is an ambitious book that makes significant contributions to Deleuze studies. Clancy’s advocacy of a Deleuzian political anthropology offers a provocative alternative to previous accounts of Deleuze’s political philosophy, especially in its valorization of the arts as primary forces in the creation of a viable collectivity. Clancy’s exposition of Lawrence’s critical works, especially his books on psychoanalysis, brings to the fore texts that have been ignored by Deleuze scholars, and the parallels he draws between Lawrence and Deleuze/Guattari are striking. Readers will have to decide for themselves to what extent the parallels are signs of Lawrence’s influence on his successors or a mere confluence of interests. There is no doubt that Lawrence is the primary source of Deleuze’s understanding of Anglo-American literature in general and Whitman in particular. But one might well argue that Deleuze and Guattari developed their critique of psychoanalysis independently of Lawrence and simply saw in him a welcome ally in their struggle against the pieties of the Oedipus complex. Whether the Lawrence-Deleuze/Guattari connection constitutes influence or a confluence of interest, however, is of little moment. What counts is the connection itself, which in Clancy’s treatment gives rise to an original and compelling reading of Deleuze and Guattari, one that deserves the serious attention of everyone in the field.

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