

UNIVERZITA KARLOVA – FILOZOFICKÁ FAKULTA  
ÚSTAV ANGLOFONNÍCH LITERATUR A KULTUR

Brophy, Deligny, and Guattari: The Avant-garde as Subsumption and Stratification

DIPLOMOVÁ PRÁCE

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Praha, 11. srpna 2021

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V Praze dne 11. srpna 2021

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## **Acknowledgements**

I would like to express my gratitude to Louis Armand for his time and advice, which has enabled me to critically approach the area of my research. I owe a particular debt of gratitude to Louis Armand for guiding me towards questioning critical theory rather than taking it for granted, at face value.

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## Chapter 1. Introduction

### 1.1. The Multidimensional Avant-garde

The definition of the avant-garde, to some extent, represents the scope of the questions that have arisen in regard to its agenda and aims. Having traced its route from socio-political vanguardism to aesthetics and arts, as will be shown in the chapter, the avant-garde alternately wavered between the purely political and the purely aesthetic with the task of revolutionizing the world and thus persistently imbued it with the rhetoric of rupture, change, and shock. It has also become linked to a certain temporality whereby its success or failure, as well as its vitality and death, have also defined both its chronological borderlines and critical scope. Persistently shifting borders between the two have linked the avant-garde to a certain type of critical consciousness and such definition has bridged the divide between the avant-garde in the sense of its being a critical-methodological tool and a temporally framed phenomenon. Hence, this thesis does not approach the avant-garde as a phenomenon inevitably divisible into its method and its outcomes, but rather as an instance of transversality whose objective, as noted by François Dosse in his detailed biography of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, is “to unsettle binary structural oppositions and help set the machine in motion.”<sup>1</sup> The features of destabilization and motion in a definitional sense are thus the dimensions of the avant-garde taken as a foundation for the argument advanced in this thesis.

In his collection of essays, *The Organ Grinder's Monkey*, Louis Armand focuses on the poetics of the avant-garde as conceived beyond the rationale of the temporal, the theory and practice of the avant-garde having long ago transcended its modernist origins and evolved into a phenomenon conceivable, to some extent, a-historically partially due to “ambivalences of historicity or interpretation” and partially due to the resilience of the term applicable to a variety of contexts within and beyond art.<sup>2</sup> Definition-wise, according to Andrea Huyssen, although “both modernism and the avant-garde have always defined their identity in relation to “[...] bourgeois high culture [and] vernacular and popular culture transformed into modern commercial mass culture,” as well as in relation to the media they relied on, the avant-garde has nevertheless functioned as a sustained attack on modernist “notions of the self-sufficiency of high culture” and the originality and uniqueness of represented experiences.<sup>3</sup> Preceded by

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<sup>1</sup> François Dosse, *Gilles Deleuze & Félix Guattari: Intersecting Lives*, trans. Deborah Glassman (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010) 62

<sup>2</sup> Louis Armand, “The Organ-Grinder's Monkey,” *The Organ Grinder's Monkey. Culture after the Avant-Garde* (Prague: Litteraria Pragensia, 2013) 274.

<sup>3</sup> Andreas Huyssen, “Introduction,” *After the Great Divide. Modernism, Mass Culture, Postmodernism* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1986) vii.

humanist and romantic discourses focused on either the return and transformation of tradition or a re-working of the present/future, which further evolved into a modernist consciousness of severed historical ties in favor of the present and the emphasis on the new; the avant-garde has inherited a peculiar consciousness of temporality, repetition, and critique.

While discourse on the temporality of the avant-garde reflects on its death and resurrection, Krauss also notes that temporality is an essential feature of the avant-garde in juxtaposition to originality as the only thing that “seems to hold fairly constant in the vanguardist discourse.”<sup>4</sup> On the other hand, the avant-garde has inherited the consciousness of critique from its socio-political roots, being linked, according to Renato Poggioli, to the leftist politics of the 1840s and the 1870s. “Dear to the apostles of the anarchistic and libertarian revolt [...], the avant-garde image originally remained subordinate, even within the sphere of art, to the ideals of a radicalism which was not cultural but political.”<sup>5</sup> Such origins, to a large extent, have stipulated a discursive foundation of the avant-garde as the transformative practice expected to revolutionize social reality. While “it [was] rather rare to find the concept or term outside political literature in the 1870s,” the term of the avant-garde and its theoretical precursor ‘vanguardism’ are now approached from the perspective of blending the political and the artistic through the analysis of their techne, systemic elements, and mediation mechanisms.<sup>6</sup> For example, Phillip Gray in his study of vanguardism as “a certain form of political phenomena based upon an intermeshing of ideology and organizational form” distinguishes its ideological and epistemological levels.<sup>7</sup>

On the ideological level, vanguardism is based upon an epistemology that holds that only some types of people – based on some traits – are capable of seeing the “truth” of historical and social dynamics. [...] On the organizational level,

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<sup>4</sup> Rosalind Krauss, “The Originality of the Avant-Garde: A Postmodernist Repetition.” *October* ed. Annette Michelson, Rosalind Krauss. (MIT Press) 18 (1981), 54. By originality, Krauss implies “more than a rejection or dissolution of the past, [but rather] a beginning from ground zero, a birth [and] an organicist metaphor referring not so much to formal invention as to sources of life.” Such temporality as exemplified by the grid in the art of Mondrian and others is linked to repetition. While the grid stands for “the absolute stasis,” “the lack of hierarchy, of center, of inflection, [and] emphasizes not only its anti-referential character, but-more importantly-its hostility to narrative, [it is at the same time] impervious both to time and to incident.”<sup>4</sup> In this sense, “[s]tructurally, logically, axiomatically, the grid can only be repeated. And, with an act of repetition or replication as the “original” occasion of its usage within the experience of a given artist, the extended life of the grid in the unfolding progression of his work will be one of still more repetition [...]” See Kraus 54, 55, 57.

<sup>5</sup> Renato Poggioli, *The Theory of the Avant-Garde*, trans. Gerald Fitzgerald (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1968) 9.

<sup>6</sup>This, to some extent, is read as an attempt to reflect the internal dynamism of the avant-garde since these four features allow the avant-garde to function in an incessantly and recursively dialectical mode. See Poggioli 9.

<sup>7</sup> Phillip W. Gray, *Vanguardism. Ideology and Organisation in Totalitarian Politics* (New York, London: Routledge, 2020) 1.

vanguardism takes the notion of epistemology and moves it to a practical party [...]. [T]here will be an “advanced wing” within it, responsible for enlightening the advanced population to its “mission” [...]. It is this “advanced wing” of the “advanced population” that is the vanguard party, and its organizational form will influence and shape the ideology from which it arose.<sup>8</sup>

In a certain sense, a similar dynamic is presupposed by Huyssen in Modernism’s “anxiety of contamination” of high culture by mass culture when the author notes that the notion of the historical avant-garde refers to its attack against “modernism’s insistence on the autonomy of the art work [and] its obsessive hostility to mass culture.”<sup>9</sup> The dichotomy of “high” and “mass” culture at the core of modernism, on the one hand, echoes the epistemological position of a “party,” that Gray referred to. On the other hand, the fact that the avant-garde, which, in itself, was “retrospectively adsorbed by modernist high culture even to the extent that ‘modernism’ and ‘avantgarde’ became synonymous terms in critical discourse” foregrounds the nature of artistic ideology.<sup>10</sup> This is to say that, similar to the way in which vanguardism was initially framed as the epistemological space of critical vision and eventually transformed into an organizational structure with its own ideology, the avant-garde, in its critical and aesthetic sense, initially aimed at destabilizing dichotomous artistic ideology, as Huyssen notes, from within, eventually being subsumed by the very entity it sought to attack. The question thus arises as to the nature of the processes that, notwithstanding such subsumption, allow the avant-garde to sustain its critical and epistemological stance.

To approach such a question, it becomes necessary to assume what Armand terms “a broad conception of possibility [...] of emergent relations – paradigm shifts, perturbations and discontinuities within a seeming continuous process.”<sup>11</sup> Such a possibility can be said to account for the ongoing shifts between epistemological and organizational planes both in vanguardism in the historical sense and in the avant-garde as a critical and aesthetic discourse. Poggioli’s term “movement” attempts to reflect on such dynamism positing the avant-garde within “culture not as increment but as creation-or, at least, as a center of activity and energy” with its four moments of activism, antagonism, nihilism, and agonism.<sup>12</sup> While activism and nihilism can be deemed in Poggioli’s description as essential qualities remaining within the boundaries of the aesthetic phenomenon, antagonism, referred to as the “spirit of hostility and opposition” towards “the academy, tradition; [...] a master whose teaching and example, whose prestige and authority, are considered wrong or harmful; [...] that collective individual called the public,” is directed

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<sup>8</sup> Gray 9-10.

<sup>9</sup> Huyssen, “Introduction” vii.

<sup>10</sup> Huyssen, “Introduction” vii-viii.

<sup>11</sup> Louis Armand, “Preface,” *The Organ Grinder’s Monkey. Culture after the Avant-Garde* (Prague: Litteraria Pragensia, 2013) 5.

<sup>12</sup> Poggioli 20.



outwards, mediating the connection between vanguardism as a political phenomenon and the avant-garde as an aesthetic one.<sup>13</sup> Furthermore, the feature of agonism whereby the avant-garde “welcomes and accepts [its own] self-ruin as an obscure or unknown sacrifice to the success of future movements” with the latter actually feeding into the vitality of the former points of the dialectic nature of repetition.<sup>14</sup>

In the case of vanguardism, antagonism could be juxtaposed with the claim of French social and political activist, Louis Auguste Blanqui that “not only can power be taken on; it must, on moral grounds, be taken down.”<sup>15</sup> Additionally, the reference to this internal self-destructive drive can be found in Blanqui’s cosmology of infinity in *Eternity by the Stars* wherein he claims that mankind, in any of its subversive projects, functions as a mechanism facilitating the subversion of itself rather than as a mechanism of transformation of the surroundings towards which such subversion is directed: “we must therefore factor in this subversive influence that changes the course of individual destinies [while] all this violence takes place without leaving as much as a scratch on the skin of the earth.”<sup>16</sup> Within Balqui’s cosmology, such disturbances are the points of eternal return in the same way that “the differentiated celestial bodies or types are [...] reduced to a limited number, and the infinity of the globes can only arise from the infinity of repetitions.”<sup>17</sup>

In addition to temporality, repetition, and critique, the notion of an institution is also important for a discussion about the nature and status of the avant-garde. While it can be seen in a broader theoretical sense in terms of Krauss’s positioning of the avant-garde at the grid’s ground zero with its “barricade against speech [and] the protectiveness of its mesh against all intrusions from outside,” in a narrow sense that would refer to Blanqui’s institutions of power that, albeit fluidly, still confines the frames of Poggioli’s “movement.”<sup>18</sup> The relation between both the avant-garde and the

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<sup>13</sup> Activism is defined as “the sheer joy of dynamism, a taste for action, a sportive enthusiasm, and the emotional fascination of adventure” which drive the movement for “no other end than its own self.” Nihilism stands for “a kind of transcendental antagonism” and “the act of beating down barriers, razing obstacles, destroying whatever stands in its way.” These two features of the avant-garde can be linked to the avant-garde as a self-negating endeavor and therefore, to a large extent, can be seen to define the phenomenon from within. Then again, since the destruction of barriers is only attempted discursively by an artistic practice itself, it also speaks for nihilism’s being an internally delineated parameter of the avant-garde. See Poggioli 25-26.

<sup>14</sup> Poggioli 25-26.

<sup>15</sup> Louis-Auguste Blanqui, *Eternity by the Stars*, trans. Frank Chouraqui (New York, Berlin: Contra Mundum Press, 2013) 5.

<sup>16</sup> Blanqui 134

<sup>17</sup> Blanqui 121.

<sup>18</sup> Krauss 55.

theoretical and pragmatic conceptualization of an institution has never been straightforward.

By the time avant-garde studies became a full-fledged academic field in the 1950s [...], the artistic avant-garde had been doing its thing for well over a century, accumulating a vast body of works, theories, galleries, scandals, and legends. [...] Baudelaire and Gautier weren't professors; they were working artists and public intellectuals. And though Ortega y Gasset's book on dehumanization in art, Greenberg's essay on kitsch, Benjamin's on the work of art in the age of mechanical reproduction, and the Lukacs-Brecht debate are staples of academic essays and syllabi, they weren't written with canons and curricula in mind. Their critiques were intended to guide the Left's cultural apparatus, a set of institutions and organizations of which university departments and their faculty were only a minor part.<sup>19</sup>

Herein, the positioning of the works as those "intended to guide the Left's cultural apparatus" already makes the claim that "the avant-garde is not a child of the university and has often taken a spirited stand against that institution" quite problematic.<sup>20</sup> It becomes utterly unclear whether the institutional status of academia as a "minor part" of "the Left's cultural apparatus" signifies a degree of de-institutionalization and autonomy, or whether an approach to the status of the avant-garde simply lacks the sufficient conceptual apparatus to reflect on such inherent ambiguities and contradictions. Because an understanding of the avant-garde is tied to "the history of the field of avant-garde studies itself," along with the inherent contradictions accompanying any historical narrative of the avant-garde, there are also "the conceptual and historiographical limits that come into play when we define the avant-garde as an artistic, as opposed to a broader, cultural tendency."<sup>21</sup> Last but not least, such a contradiction may suggest that the notions of an institution and institutionalization are not necessarily the same.

Hence, the term avant-garde, associated with a certain consciousness, may find the definitional boundaries of a merely time and space-bound artistic movement inadequate. Since the publication of Peter Bürger's *The Theory of the Avant-garde* in 1974, wherein the avant-garde as a nonspecific term is distinguished from the historical avant-garde movements of Dada, Surrealism, and Futurism, the conceptualization of the avant-garde has acquired terminological multidimensionality. A wide theoretical scope of terminological application "may [in itself] simply reflect that the history of avant-gardism has always in some way [been] bound up [not merely] with the question of consciousness, its transformation, and re-invention but rather with self-reflexive consciousness."<sup>22</sup> For Poggioli and Bürger, the latter implies the avant-garde's

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<sup>19</sup> Mike Sell, "Resisting the Question, "What Is an Avant-Garde?" *New Literary History* 41 (2010): 755.

<sup>20</sup> Sell 755.

<sup>21</sup> Sell 754.

<sup>22</sup> Armand, "The Organ-Grinder's Monkey" 275.

potential in “deconstructing itself as a category.”<sup>23</sup> However, an issue of counter-consciousness, or counter-critique, with ‘counter’ and ‘critique’ operating as tautological clichés, has long been accommodated by the phenomena, such as commodity fetishism, far more “subversive than anything attempted by the various historical avant-gardes.”<sup>24</sup>

Therefore, seeing the avant-garde strategies as confined within the binaries of the conventional or revolutionary, theory or life praxis, high art or kitsch is no longer viable. These are irrevocably tied to the temporality of being, while the avant-garde’s vitality should be seen as the moment of becoming. This is precisely where the challenge of conceptualization of the avant-garde lies: the notion of a concept is operative exclusively on the level of being once the strata of the particular have reached a certain quantitative index to be subsumed under the hierarchical dimension of abstraction that demarcates the operational space of a concept. The notions of becoming, repetition, and critique are essentially deprived of the stasis inherent in the formulation of such strata and hierarchical dimensions of the process of conceptualization.

Within the latter, it is precisely this lack of focus on the avant-garde’s multidimensionality and multiplicity (i.e., the avant-gardes rather than the avant-garde), that leads to the propositions of its unfulfilled goals, failure to transform social reality, and, eventually, to proclamations of its death. Although “conformism has all but obliterated the original iconoclastic and subversive thrust of the historical avantgarde,”<sup>25</sup> it has not fully done so yet. As long as such canonization is reflected upon, the avant-garde continues to reinvent itself. Such reinvention is akin to Blanqui’s type-combinations, composed of “the very finite number of the simple bodies [...] whose endless repetitions fill up space [with the] different, differentiated, distinct, primordial, original, special.”<sup>26</sup> Such re-invention is a type of “aesthetic economy of the pairing of singularity and multiplicity, of uniqueness and reproduction.”<sup>27</sup>

Thus, the avant-garde’s vitality as an effect of its essential multiplicity and multidimensionality makes it possible to claim that the conceptual apparatus ascribed to the avant-garde should be re-thought with regard to terms potentially capable of

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<sup>23</sup> Louis Armand, “An ABC of Avant-Gardism,” *Solicitations. Essays on Criticism and Culture* (Prague: Litteraria Pragensia, 2008) 352.

<sup>24</sup> Armand, “An ABC of Avant-Gardism” 351.

<sup>25</sup> Andreas Huyssen, “The Hidden Dialectic: Avantgarde – Technology – Mass Culture,” *After the Great Divide 4*. Huyssen justifies such conformity by “the vast depoliticization of post-World War II art and its industrialization as administered culture[...] by canonizing the historical avant-garde [...]” See Huyssen 4.

<sup>26</sup> Blanqui 114.

<sup>27</sup> Krauss 64.

precluding any foreclosure and accommodating contradictions inherent in the avant-garde as a phenomenon. Such a conceptual apparatus should also be able to grant enough space for particular dimensions of the historical phases in the development of the avant-garde, as well as to exhibit a sufficient degree of universality accommodating the avant-garde as the phenomenon of becoming rather than being with its attendant upsurge, death, and resurrection. Such proclamations are precisely the effects of assigning the avant-garde into Poggiolli's binaries of school and movement or Bürger's binary of the historical avant-garde versus the avant-garde in a general sense.

Positioning the avant-garde beyond the binarism of the historical avant-garde versus the neo-avant-garde, revolution versus institutionalization would allow us to suggest that the avant-garde has always functioned as a non-referential machinic method, which, in Félix Guattari's words, tackles the potential to do away "with phantasmatic umbilical cord" to "divine totalization."<sup>28</sup> This present thesis, thus, posits the avant-garde's temporality, self-negation, and recuperation against Félix Guattari's notions of transversality, a collective assemblage of enunciation, deterritorialization, and group subjectivity as a theoretical framework against Fernand Deligny's notions of a network, tracing, attempt and nearby presences to foreground the possibility of the transformative potential of the institution per se and the institution of the avant-garde in particular. Considering the convergence of the discourses of vanguardism and of the avant-garde as an aesthetic phenomenon, Fernand Deligny's work with autistic children is taken up along with the analysis of textual dynamics in Brigid Brophy's *In Transit*. While the former is chosen for the possibility to counteract "a continuous attempt to assign intentionally designed spaces to people [...] considered refractory, special or abnormal, [to confirm] the legitimacy of the diagnostic procedures," Brophy's novel suggests that a text itself represents a space of legitimization while simultaneously attacking the legitimacy of normative practices.<sup>29</sup> On the other hand, Deligny's project of tracing the movements of autistic children, thus composing just another document (that of a map) along with Deligny's own textual approach whereby a whole network of metaphors is used to reflect on his clinical practice, also foregrounds the need for the conceptual apparatus to account for such projects. Therefore, based on the analysis of these works, it will be argued that the conceptual apparatus of the avant-garde can be extended through Guattari's and Deligny's notions as well as through Brophy's approach to the text. It is proposed that in order to preclude the theoretical foreclosure of its definition, the

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<sup>28</sup> Félix Guattari, "The Transference," *Psychoanalysis and Transversality: Text and Interviews 1955-1971*, trans. Ames Hodges (South Pasadena: Semiotext(e), 2003) 83.

<sup>29</sup> Jan Masschelein & Pieter Verstraete, "Living in the Presence of others: Towards a Reconfiguration of Space, Asylum and Inclusion," *International Journal of Inclusive Education* 16.11 (2012): 1189-1202. <doi:10.1080/13603116.2011.557444> 1194.

avant-garde needs to be seen in the light of subsumption and stratification underlying the principle of these complementary operations. The point of this thesis is, thus, to trace and outline the evolution of the critical conceptualization of subsumption and stratification and, subsequently, the principle of these complementary operations rather than their distinct processes. With that, it will be argued that such a principle has the potential to accommodate the vitality and terminological scope of the avant-garde without theoretical foreclosure.

## 1.2. Methodology

The notions of transversality, assemblage of enunciation, and group subjectivity were developed by Félix Guattari in his collection of essays *Psychoanalysis and Transversality. Text and Interviews 1955-1971* (1972) and *The Machinic Unconscious. Essays in Schizoanalysis* (1979). These would be used to analyze the possibility of application of the critical concepts of subsumption and stratification to the theoretical dimensions of the avant-garde. Furthermore, Brigid Brophy's *In Transit. An Heroi-Cyclic Novel* (1969) as a palimpsestuous space with several layers of generic inscriptions, its graphological and metafictional planes and Fernand Deligny's special education project as described in *The Arachnean and Other Texts* (the 1970s) are used to extrapolate philosophical and social conceptualizations of subsumption and stratification as developed by Kant, Hege, and Marx. Considering that the 1970s mark the 'theoretical moment' of the avant-garde when Peter Bürger's *The Theory of the Avant-garde* was published in 1974, taking a historical but not a historicizing approach, I aim to look at how the works of Deligny, Brophy, and Guattari expand the theoretical capacity of the terms of subsumption and stratification as applied to the avant-garde.

Brigid Brophy is known for her precocious campaigns for Public Lending Rights and her literary output that gestures "forward to successive waves of feminism, and the LGBTQ+ liberation movements, [framing now] twenty-first-century debates about sexual identity."<sup>30</sup> Fernand Deligny is a practitioner of special education, and, as several critics note reflecting on the role and contribution of Deligny to autism studies and the development of the area of special education, his main focus is "on modes of being that lie outside of the preexisting norms of the Symbolic Order and the dominance of language."<sup>31</sup> In this sense, Francois Dosse also summarizes the Deligny project in quite a

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<sup>30</sup> Sonya Andermahr, "Introduction: Brigid Brophy," *Contemporary Women's Writing* 12.2 (July 2018): 138.

<sup>31</sup> Chantelle Gray Van Heerden, "The Slightest Gesture: Deligny, the Ritornello and Subjectivity in Socially Just Pedagogical Praxis," *Education as Change* 21.2 (2017): 6.

succinct way and to the point stating that Deligny as a therapist “did not want to be part of the national health system bureaucracy [while] as a teacher, he remained very critical of professional educators.”<sup>32</sup> Deligny’s experiment is reflected upon in *The Arachnean and Other Texts* published in the 1970s. Félix Guattari is a militant psychiatrist whose *Psychoanalysis and Transversality* and *The Machinic Unconscious* include “more than purely psychiatric references [and broaden] the discussion to other areas and society in general.”<sup>33</sup> While Guattari’s works provide the theoretical framework, *In-Transit* and *The Arachnean and Other Texts* fall respectively into the categories of aesthetic and socio-pedagogic avant-garde experiments.

Predating by roughly ten years the publication of Félix Guattari’s *The Machinic Unconscious* and Fernand Deligny’s *The Arachnean and Other Texts*, *In Transit* (1969) is an avant-gardist representation of the semiotic processes of subjectivation suggesting instead mapping and deterritorialization as alternatives to fixed semiosis, or in Guattari’s terms, a-signifying semiotics. The fictional narrative described as “avant-gardism itself,” where “[a]ll is flux, movement, anonymity, flight” allows for conceptual parallels with the processes of subsumption as a mediative and transformative element tied to stratification.<sup>34</sup> Guattari’s theoretical propositions of transversality and schizoanalysis are read alongside *In-Transit* and *The Arachnean and Other Texts* to counter the claims that the avant-garde’s praxis, subversion syntax, revolutionary potential, and shock-value are the spaces which “once occupied [have now] lost something of [their] vagueness.”<sup>35</sup> This in many critical reflections is posited as the impossibility of the avant-garde as and within an institution. However, it is suggested that it is precisely as an institution that the avant-garde through the principle of complementary operations of subsumption and stratification can delimit the space and scope of institutionalization processes. Jacques Derrida’s point made in “Cogito and the History of Madness” can be used here to draw an analogy. Derrida analyzing Foucault’s proposition that the history of madness represents the archeology of silence poses a question of whether such archeology in itself would not be the project of “logic, that is, an organized language, a project, an order, a sentence, a syntax, a work.”<sup>36</sup> Derrida makes a point that the history of madness as the archeology of silence is in itself the repetition of the act against madness thus perpetrating the order precisely because “the universal, structural, and infinite complicity in which it

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<sup>32</sup> Dosse 72.

<sup>33</sup> Dosse 61.

<sup>34</sup> Sonya Andermahr, “Both/And Aesthetics: Gender, Art, and Language in Brigid Brophy’s *In Transit* and Ali Smith’s *How to Be Both*,” *Contemporary Women’s Writing* 12.2 (July 2018): 249.

<sup>35</sup> Fernand Deligny, *The Arachnean and Other texts*, trans. Drew S. Burk and Catherine Porter (Minneapolis: Univocal Publishing, 2015) 38.

<sup>36</sup> Jacques Derrida, “Cogito and the History of Madness,” *Writing and Difference*, trans. Alan Bass (New York: Routledge, 2001) 35.

compromises all those who understand it in its own language” may also be the space, (i.e., the language), that “provides them with the form of their own denunciation. Order is then denounced within order.”<sup>37</sup> Analogously, an institution for the avant-garde as the latter’s form of existence can be seen both as the means of perpetrating the Order as much as the tool of its denunciation. It is in this sense that the concepts of subsumption and stratification may help account for the possibility of such a paradigm.

The thesis consists of three parts. Chapter 2 provides a brief outline of the terms of subsumption and stratification within philosophical, socio-political, and economic paradigms. Two parts of this chapter address the pre-history of the terms and their use in the context of cultural criticism and the avant-garde.

Chapter 3 discusses the concept of transversality from the perspective of subsumption and stratification processes. Using Guattari’s notion of transversality as developed in the 1950s as a result of his clinical practice at La Borde, this chapter outlines how Deligny’s and Brophy’s texts can expand the understanding of transversality through the dynamics of subsumption and stratification. The fact that prior to *Semiotext(e)* undertaking to publish Guattari’s own works, the Anglo-reception of Guattari was overshadowed by Gilles Deleuze is somewhat analogous to Brophy’s case as of a vanguard author ousted from the mainstream system of reception. Her daughter, Kate Levey notes that “an establishment she antagonized [...] still views her as too far removed from the compass of acceptability.”<sup>38</sup> Although that claim is made in relation to the rejection of Levey’s application for a ‘blue plaque’ by English Heritage as an acknowledgement of Brophy’s achievements, Levey, as well as other critics, note that “Brophy is not an easy read, nor can she be safely summed up in a pithy phrase,” which in many cases and despite the scope of her oeuvre served as the basis for Brophy’s status beyond the mainstream reception.<sup>39</sup> Thus, one of the objectives of the thesis, and of this chapter in particular, is an attempt to derive theoretical value from Guattari’s texts, despite their serving as a foundation for a wider scope in the works co-authored with Gilles Deleuze. The juxtaposition of these texts with Brophy’s text also allows for expansion on already thoroughly commented aspects of her work, such as its metafictional elements and linguistic experimentation. This chapter also looks at Deligny’s theoretical framework underlying his work with autistic children in the light of

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<sup>37</sup> Derrida, “Cogito” 35.

<sup>38</sup> Kate Levey, “A certain Detachment,” *Brigid Brophy. Avant-Garde Writer, Critic, Activist*, ed. Richard Canning, Gerri Kimber (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2020) 259.

<sup>39</sup> Levey 255.

the challenges these notions pose to some of Guattari's notions essential for understanding transversality. The aim of the chapter, in general, is to foreground that the notions and techniques used by these three authors argue in favour of complementary operations of subsumption and stratification as a path to de-territorialization.

Chapter 4 takes the conclusions of the previous chapter and places them in the context of signification. Using Guattari's notion of de-territorialized assemblages produced by both signifying and a-signifying semiotics, this chapter argues that an institution should be distinguished from the notion of institutionalization, whereby the former can function as the space of deterritorialization. Brophy's way of de-territorializing the discursive signification of her own text is used to suggest that there is no such notion as ground zero signification but rather incessantly produced and reproduced strata with the embedded potential to destabilize hierarchies and counteract subordination. This further leads to the argument that the principle of complementary operations of subsumption and stratification as applied to the avant-garde can preclude the foreclosure of many of its features such as its institutionalization, death, and recuperation.

Chapter 5 summarizes these arguments and proposes further areas for research.

## **Chapter 2: Subsumption and Stratification in Theory**

### **2.1. Kant, Hegel, and Marx**

The terms of subsumption and stratification have evolved on the borderline between philosophy and critical social theory but are currently used as a conceptual currency in a range of critical discourses. The development of the term stratification can be traced along the lines of political theory and sociology. Plato's *The Republic* (375BC) claiming that "different men are apt for the accomplishment of different jobs," takes natural differences as a foundation for a natural class system in society.<sup>40</sup> On the one hand, this 'natural difference' serves as a foundation of stratification in Plato's political society; on the other hand, it results in a hierarchy operative by the principle of 'justice' as a mediating element between the strata. Foreclosure in the conceptualization of the stratum based on the principle of 'one man, one art' stipulates the rigidity of the socio-political hierarchy but nevertheless does not ensure its stability.<sup>41</sup> Revolutions and changes ensue based on the principle of deficiency: each regime has a

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<sup>40</sup> Plato, *The Republic*, trans. Alan Bloom (Basic Books, 1968) 46.

<sup>41</sup> Plato 47.



distinctive ‘virtue’ and ‘vice’ with the latter functioning as a deficiency sought to be resolved by the revolutionary change for another type of hierarchy. In a way, Plato’s rationale for revolution caused by a ‘vice’ of the regime foregrounds the essentially unstable nature of the hierarchy in its quest for the whole to resolve its own internal deficiencies. Hierarchy, thus, appears far from possessing any totalizing potential but rather reveals that “the Whole itself is a product, produced as nothing more than a part alongside other parts, which it neither unifies nor totalizes, though it has an effect on these other parts simply because it establishes aberrant paths of communication between noncommunicating vessels [...]”<sup>42</sup> What is more, Plato’s writings “instruct us as to the contiguous nature of all discourse,” and the notion of deficiency as a space of change illustrates that.<sup>43</sup>

Further on, social stratification has been used as a foundation of several significant works. Starting from Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels’s *The Communist Manifesto* (1848) positing social history as the history of class struggles and the proletariat as a truly universal class endowed with social power, to Max Weber’s definitions of class as “an economic category determined by the market,” stratification read in the discourses of political economy and sociology invariably has referred to certain operations of exclusion and inclusion.<sup>44</sup> Furthermore, theories of stratification presupposed a certain dynamic relationship between the strata, which functions in many cases as a force of destabilization. Thus, if Marx “stressed that class is a social relationship,” Weber who had already witnessed the development of the working class within modern society had to further specialize the social hierarchy by adding to it more elements such as “status group, status and parties.”<sup>45</sup> This in principle illustrates Plato’s notion of deficiency as inherent in stratification; thus, a potential for a change per se is, to some extent, embedded in the conceptualization of stratification.

While the detailed delineation of the theories of social stratification is beyond the scope of this thesis, this brief overview can be deemed sufficient to represent two important elements in the notion of stratification. These are its inherent link to hierarchies as the spaces of rigid systematization/structuring and simultaneously a certain degree of essential change potential. The question thus arises as to what kind of relation between the strata can activate the change potential within the structure originated with the exclusive purpose of achieving stasis and

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<sup>42</sup> Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus. Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Mark Seem, Helen R. Lane, Robert Hurley (Minneapolis: University of Minneapolis Press, 2000) 43.

<sup>43</sup> Louis Armand, “Nomad is This,” *The Organ Grinder’s Monkey. Culture after the Avant-Garde*, (Prague: Litteraria Pragensia, 2013) 78.

<sup>44</sup> Andreas Hess, *Concepts of Social Stratification* (New York: Palgrave, 2001) 28.

<sup>45</sup> Hess 28-29.

finality, in other words, the state of being rather than becoming. Herein, it becomes possible to suggest that such a relationship can be referred to as subsumptive.

The concept of subsumption has been approached from the philosophical-critical perspective in the works of Immanuel Kant and Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel and in the socio-economic works of Karl Marx. Nevertheless, the evolution of the concept can be seen as a continuum because (since its first inauguration by Kant) subsequent theorists responded to this initial conceptualization, which explains certain recursive components in the notion of subsumption but also allows it to reveal its theoretical vitality in a variety of contexts, including arts and culture.

Historically, the concept of subsumption was used in transcendental, dialectical, and socio-economic contexts. Its transcendental implications were foregrounded by Immanuel Kant in his First (*Critique of Aesthetic Judgement*) and Third (*Critique of Judgement*) parts of *Critique of Judgement* (1790). The concept of subsumption in Kant, Hegel, and Marx is thoroughly analyzed by Andres Sáenz De Sicilia in his dissertation *The Problem of Subsumption in Kant, Hegel and Marx*. The author undertakes to show the evolution of the concept of subsumption from its historico-philosophical origins in Kant through Hegel to the critical conception of subsumption in Marx. The value of this reference for the present work lies in the way the author foregrounds the continuity between the philosophical and critical conceptualisations of subsumption.

De Sicilia characterizes subsumption in Kant as an attempt of logical determination of the self-sufficient totality of heterogeneous elements: in “Kant’s entire theory of rational cognition subsumption [functions] as the mediating act connecting particular representations with the predicates, or ‘marks’ (*Merkmale*), of universal concepts.”<sup>46</sup> Since Kant’s framework presupposes the existence of self-sufficient totality and subsumption functions as a mediating link between the particular and the universal within the foreclosed and fixed hierarchy, it is possible to claim that the transcendental view on subsumption barely distinguishes it from the notion of stratification also linked to fixed hierarchies. Subsumption operates both as a function and a basis of stratification: without it, the hierarchy would be inconceivable, and subsumption in itself is a function of that hierarchy. Such a recursive relationship invariably results in subordination whereby the difference of heterogeneous elements functions within negative feedback. In this sense, subsumption becomes both the condition for self-sufficient totality and the totality of composition perceived as a pre-existing unity of the subsumed and the

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<sup>46</sup> Andres Sáenz De Sicilia, “The Problem of Subsumption in Kant, Hegel and Marx,” *Thesis for the Degree of the Doctor of Philosophy* (Kingston University, April 2016) 12.

subsuming.<sup>47</sup> The self-sufficient totality, fictitious as it may be, thus brings forth a teleology of a power absorbing potentiality of the positive feedback of subsumption.

Nevertheless, De Sicilia postulating “the centrality of subsumption as the core operation underlying the logical relationship between universals and particulars [...],” notes that Kant foregrounds judgement as in itself a subsumptive process.<sup>48</sup> Subsumption, for Kant also functions as the “lawful, and most importantly communicable, form.”<sup>49</sup> Overall, Kant’s treatment of subsumption foregrounds its mediative nature, its potential to conceptualize the relationship between the universal and the particular in a communicable form, and for the purpose of creating structures. The latter is bound to be characterized by deficiency as an essential feature of hierarchy in its failure to achieve a totalizing stasis.

Another philosophical-critical conception of subsumption as analyzed by De Sicilia, appears in Hegel’s discussion of conceptual determination, though it does not play the central role that it does in Kant’s work. Subsumption is seen as the antithesis to inherence: abstract universality is posited as inherent to the logico-grammatical subject with the latter yet subsumed under the predicate as its determination. Subsumption functions antithetically to the relation of inherence but the latter, as the quality of universality, foregrounds universality as stratification per se. Subsumption in conceptual determination, thus, does not mediate these absolute extremes precluding the particular and the universal to function as such.

The interplay of the universal and the particular, according to De Sicilia, is further transposed to subsumption as the bonding of individuals to the universality of social forms in the structure of its spirit: “[...] the dominant universality of the social substance [...] subsumes individuals with antithetical desires [...],” which marks the contribution of Hegel’s philosophy to the social evolution of the term.<sup>50</sup> This defines subsumption as the basis “of objectively universal structures of sociality which constitute their collective and individual identities and practices. We are no longer dealing with *synthetic judgment acts* internal to an individual consciousness [as in Kant], but rather the development of *relational social forms* that determine individual identities and collective practices [...]”<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> De Sicilia 7.

<sup>48</sup> De Sicilia 14.

<sup>49</sup> De Sicilia 34.

<sup>50</sup> De Sicilia 50.

<sup>51</sup> De Sicilia 51.

This, in turn, allows us to see the nature of subsumption in its pre- if not non-subordinating light. Nevertheless, subsumption in Hegel is yet only a unilateral relation: since the universality of subsumptive relations “is stunted at the point of ‘allness’, it can only determine its own being in the subject unilaterally and externally [and] it has no deeper reach to an explicit unity with that which it subsumes.”<sup>52</sup> Thus, the Hegelian framework foregrounds the relational forms of subsumption transposed into the interplay between individual and collective social structures; moreover, universality itself posited as a stratified unity casts off its absolute and totalizing form as its only feature.

Marx, on the other hand, suggests a socio-economic concept of subsumption whereby the ideal dimension of Kant and Hegel is replaced with a new object of the critique, that of social reality. Through the medium of labor, subsumption acquires the function of double determination: in production, the subject subsumes the object producing it as a result of its will and intention while in consumption the object reciprocally subsumes the subject. This marks the fundamental difference of Marx’s subsumption, which creates an autonomous dimension of being called ‘human existence’ wherein the ontological continuity of natural and/or biological life processes is actualized through an exclusively human activity, that of labor. The moment of consumption also represents the actualization of the intention realized by labor and objectified in the form of the produced object because a product becomes such at the moment of its consumption. According to De Sicilia “the true activity of the social subject, then, is consummated in this reproductive process of production/consumption, as that through which it gives form to its own sociality, to its ‘socio-natural form’ of existence.”<sup>53</sup>

Through these philosophical and socio-economic accounts of subsumption, the term has entered the critical discourse by “[d]eveloping an account of this ‘critical’ concept of subsumption requires a far more expansive and deeper engagement with its conditions, structure and effects than is normally afforded to it.”<sup>54</sup> Subsumption that used to refer to a totalizing mechanism, of “the productive and oppressive dimensions of conceptually organized ‘systems-in-process’ and, [later on] a dynamic articulation of concepts such as abstraction, composition, form and totality” has come to include the social, economic, and cultural dimensions as well.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> De Sicilia 60-61.

<sup>53</sup> De Sicilia 111.

<sup>54</sup> De Sicilia 2.

<sup>55</sup> De Sicilia 15

## 2.2. The Avant-Garde Project

Regarding the terminological scope of subsumption and stratification as applied to the context of the avant-garde, Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno's *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (1947) with its notions of the culture industry and administration could be a starting point for several reasons. In the chapter, *Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception*, the authors note the move towards a certain totalizing hierarchy functioning three-dimensionally on social, economic, and technological planes subsuming the phenomenon of culture and producing the culture industry. While "technology is gaining power over society [based on] the power of those whose economic position in society is strongest," this is accompanied by "the common determination of the executive powers to produce or let pass nothing which does not conform to [...] their concept of the consumer."<sup>56</sup> All of these result in a "hierarchy of serial qualities purveyed to the public [...]" by means of a schematic procedure ensuring that "the mechanically differentiated products are ultimately all the same" and leaving nothing else for the consumer to classify, "since the classification has already been pre-empted by the schematism of production."<sup>57</sup> Herein, the culture industry is not only illustrative of subsumptive processes in production and commodification; what is more, the culture industry, schematized to the level of the uniform and no longer classifiable, appears as a fossilized edifice of being.

Subsumption here results in stratification as a state of stasis: while subsumption ensures mediative relation within stratification, the latter can be seen as the former's quantitative index. It is in this sense that both are bound to each other for positive feedback and de-stabilization to take place. Through the edifice of 'administration', culture reproduces itself as a system in its branches such as arts, architecture, and media with and within sameness when "[e]ach branch of culture is unanimous within itself and all are unanimous together."<sup>58</sup> The inward and outward movement is thus not of production but of circulation and re-circulation: "the conspicuous unity of macrocosm and microcosm" and "false identity of universal and particular."<sup>59</sup>

Even though Horkheimer and Adorno do not use the terms of subsumption and stratification in a terminological sense but rather as a function of the processual apparatus of the culture industry, and despite the fact that such use of the terms presupposes a

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<sup>56</sup> Max Horkheimer & Theodor W. Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment. Philosophical Fragments*, ed. Gunzelin Schmid Noerr, trans. Edmund Jephcott (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press., 2002) 95-96

<sup>57</sup> Horkheimer & Adorno 97-98.

<sup>58</sup> Horkheimer & Adorno 94.

<sup>59</sup> Horkheimer & Adorno 94-95.

numbing rather than a productive effect, their work allows for the application of these terms to the avant-garde. While both subsumption and stratification on the level of totalizing unity of 'administration' solidify stasis reflecting "generic conceptual operation [...] synonymous and interchangeable with [...] integration and administration," such outcomes are not the invariable effects of, but rather the objectives towards which subsumption and stratification are used in this particular historical context.<sup>60</sup> Ultimately, if administration acts as a subsumptive mechanism, both should be seen as essentially capable of production and destabilization while the unifying effect should be seen only as a provisional objective of the mechanism rather than as a final terminus. This point will be dealt with in Chapter 4 in relation to the difference between an institution and institutionalization.

Meanwhile, although *Dialectic* foregrounds the unifying effect of the culture industry, the notion of the latter also suggests the possibility of the critical potential in subsumption and stratification once applied to the avant-garde. Since "the general designation "culture" already contains, virtually, the process of identifying, cataloguing, and classifying, which imports culture into the realm of administration," Horkheimer and Adorno divest subsumption of its mediating and destabilizing power and, similar to Kant, use it as a term almost synonymous with stratification.<sup>61</sup> Their claim that "only what has been industrialized, rigorously subsumed, is fully adequate to this concept of culture" reveals a degree of reductionism since it only focuses on the strata themselves rather than on the possibility of different relationships between such strata.<sup>62</sup> Such an effect can partially be attributed to the specificity of the period when *Dialectics* was written, the period marked by the commodification of culture resulting in a certain degree of uniformity. Hence, the notion of totalizing 'administration' ensues, presumably functioning on subsumption and stratification but depriving them of their essential destabilizing potential.

In his essay *Adorno in Reverse: From Hollywood to Richard Wagner*, Andreas Huyssen notes that "theoretically, adherence to Adorno's aesthetics may blind us to the ways in which contemporary art, since the demise of classical modernism and the historical avant-garde, represents a new conjuncture which can no longer be grasped in Adornean or other modernist categories."<sup>63</sup> The notion of the culture industry, for Huyssen, "is by no means as closed as it may appear at first sight" because on a broader level it may point toward "a desirable and overdue exploration of how modernism itself appropriates and transforms elements of popular

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<sup>60</sup> De Sicilia 201.

<sup>61</sup> Horkheimer & Adorno 104.

<sup>62</sup> Horkheimer & Adorno 104.

<sup>63</sup> Andreas Huyssen, "Adorno in Reverse: From Hollywood to Richard Wagner," *After the Great Divide* 19.

culture.”<sup>64</sup> Reading Adorno “against the grain”, the author notes that Adorno, positing the divide between modernism and mass culture, remains blind as “to what extent and for what purposes the products of the culture industry might precisely speak to and activate [archaic pre-ego impulses where the idea of freedom derives from] in a non-regressive way.”<sup>65</sup> In other words, positing the great divide along the binary between the mass and high culture, Adorno, although suggesting a potentially and theoretically viable term for the culture industry, remains oblivious as to “what spaces it opens and what possibilities it closes off.”<sup>66</sup>

This argument can also be applied to the theoretical moment of the avant-garde with its explicitly dichotomous discourses of art/life, revolt/conformism, and the political/cultural. That could be the result of the zeitgeist which, as much as previous political and aesthetic moments were characterized by “imputing a single, overriding agency and intention to avant-garde activity, [measuring its successes and failures] against a singular criterion of revolutionary political transformation.” (new lit hist, intro VI). However, the decades of the 1960s and 1970s when the works of Poggioli and Bürger were produced were also the time when the works of Félix Guattari in institutional psychotherapy, Brigid Brophy’s *In Transit* and Fernand Deligny’s project in de-institutionalized education appeared. These works have substantially amended previously dichotomous theorization of the avant-garde and, in many ways, have laid the foundation for its contemporary discourses.

A significant point of departure of placing a theoretical moment of the avant-garde alongside Guattari’s framework is the fact that Guattari himself was in the vanguard of institutional psychotherapy movement in the 1960s when he called for the creation of a theoretical frame for “situating psychiatric problems on the platform that does not yet exist.”<sup>67</sup> In his presentation to GTPSI, Guattari notes that “with support from a minimum number of avant-garde groups, the problem of analytical, political and ethical control will be posed starting with the need to find a common approach to a total strategy more than actions alone [...]”<sup>68</sup> Herein, being a practitioner of group psychotherapy, Guattari, nevertheless foregrounds the necessity of addressing a certain theoretical deficiency on an interdisciplinary level.

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<sup>64</sup> Huyssen, “Adorno in Reverse” 20.

<sup>65</sup> Huyssen, “Adorno in Reverse” 27.

<sup>66</sup> Huyssen, “Adorno in Reverse” 28.

<sup>67</sup> Félix Guattari, “On Nurse-Doctor Relationships,” *Psychoanalysis and Transversality* 33.

<sup>68</sup> Félix Guattari “Introduction to Institutional Psychotherapy,” *Psychoanalysis and Transversality* 63.

Brigid Brophy's *In Transit* (1969) starts with the linguistic leprosy of the narrator that launches the space of linguistic uncertainty and the semiosis of absence and dislocation. The almost delusional journey of the narrator verges on madness, which according to Foucault "engages within itself the world's time, masters it, and leads it; [while the novel] opens a void [and] provokes a breach without reconciliation where the world is forced to question itself."<sup>69</sup> Sweeney notes the intellectualism of Brophy's work, noting that such intellectualism, in many cases, "served as a basis of critical disparagement of her work as a kind of "eccentric aesthetic agenda and willfully "cultured" prose."<sup>70</sup> Nevertheless, written at the time of "a dying modernism and a not-yet-born postmodernism," Brophy's novel resembles an avant-garde readymade: the generic elements of already commodified literary products become a space for both self-reflexive critique and creativity.<sup>71</sup> Herein, Brophy unlocks the potential of the culture industry raised by Huyssen's argument: *In Transit* becomes a palimpsest, "a forerunner of British postmodernism" but even as such it "is not easily accommodated in a literary historical continuum."<sup>72</sup> For Brophy, in contrast to those who in the 1960s welcomed the return of realism as the only empirically substantial form of the British novel, "looking back, reassessing, and reusing past languages and cadences [serves as an] inventive" technique.<sup>73</sup> The strategies of textual multimodal stratification and referential subsumption do not only account for both the fantastic plot and the resultant critical interpretations of the novel but also posit it as a space for critical and theoretical investigations of subsumption and stratification.

Fernand Deligny as a practitioner of special education had worked with delinquent, psychotic, and autistic children and adolescents since the 1930s, and in 1968 he established in Cévennes, a rural region located in the south of France, a non-institutionalized environment for autistic children. This project, and Deligny's theoretical propositions juxtaposed to Michel Foucault's concept of social apparatus, suggest that the notions of an institution and institutionalization while intersecting are not necessarily equivalent. Foucault posits a coercive social apparatus "distributing individuals, fixing them in space, classifying them, extracting from them the maximum in time and forces, training their bodies, coding their continuous behaviour, maintaining them in perfect visibility, forming around them an apparatus of observation, registration and recording," and claims that such an apparatus is "intended to render individuals

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<sup>69</sup> Michel Foucault, *Madness and Civilization. A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Vintage Books, 1988), 288.

<sup>70</sup> Carole Sweeney, "Why This Rather Than That?": The Delightful Perversity of Brigid Brophy," *Contemporary Women's Writing* 12.2 (2008): 234.

<sup>71</sup> Sweeney, "Why This Rather Than That?" 238.

<sup>72</sup> Sweeney, "Why This Rather Than That?" 236.

<sup>73</sup> Sweeney, "Why This Rather Than That?" 237.



docile and useful.”<sup>74</sup> Deligny in Cévennes also traces and records the wanderings of autistic children, but the borderline difference is in the denotation of the predicate ‘intended’. On the other hand, Foucault posits the social institutions of school, family, and health working in the name of reason and normality as agents of power over the social bodies framed as anomaly, madness, or disease. Deligny preaches “anti-pedagogy” in “seeking to evade unending control and impositions of ways of being.”<sup>75</sup>

During his visit to La Borde in 1965, Deligny refused to be involved in group therapy sessions later writing that “psychoanalysis [was] a curiously foreign language [which] renders enunciation unintelligible by [an] endless chain of interpretations.”<sup>76</sup> Dosse notes Deligny’s tendency to stay “aloof from all institutions” and his rejection to get involved in Guattari’s system of group therapy may well suggest that Deligny’s vision of such a method was that of yet another imposition of the power of the signifier though exercised by Guattari within a presumably subversive agenda. Then Deligny met “an autistic individual who, clearly, could no more understand our language than [Deligny] could psychoanalysis.”<sup>77</sup> This autistic individual was Janmari, a twelve-year-old child diagnosed with severe autism, who Deligny adopted before leaving La Borde. Subsequently, Deligny’s notions of maps, traces, and nearby presences become crucial for the reconceptualization of the space where subsumption and stratification may acquire new meanings in terms of sustaining of what Deligny called a-conscious unconscious.

Hence, the works of Brophy, Deligny, and Guattari suggest that “[s]emiotic and social subversion are far from being synonymous, and the defiance of artistic convention comes without political guarantees.”<sup>78</sup> Such acts of such subversion may also be a matter of strategic choices intended to produce disturbances that may or may not give rise to targeted possibilities. Along with this, the notions of the institution and institutionalization are in no way completely identical. It is thus, in this sense, that the avant-garde appears on the battle lines, defining the boundaries and extracting the potential from the difference between the two. The choice of theoretical and critical tools becomes essential, and it is from this perspective that this present thesis seeks to use the works of Félix Guattari, Brigid Brophy, and Fernand Deligny to foreground the

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<sup>74</sup> Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish. The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage Books, 1995) 231.

<sup>75</sup> Mariana Louver Mendes, Eliane Dias de Castro, “Fernand Deligny and a Clinic Yet to Come: Mobilizations About Ways of Caring in Children and Teenagers’ Mental Health,” *Cadernos Brasileiros de Terapia Ocupacional* 28.1 (2020): 344. 18. June 2021 <<https://doi.org/10.4322/2526-8910.ctoEN1754>>

<sup>76</sup> Deligny 171.

<sup>77</sup> Deligny 171.

<sup>78</sup> Jonathan P. Eburne and Rita Felski, “Introduction,” *New Literary History* vii.

applicability of the notions of subsumption and stratification to the avant-garde, as many of the contemporary approaches to the avant-garde are already doing.

One such approach belongs to John Roberts. His concept of the suspensive avant-garde is derived from the critique of Hal Foster's concept of the neo-avant-garde. Roberts claims that "the category of the neo-avant-garde tends to float freely from its counterrevolutionary formation and history, as if contemporary art is able to choose all the best bits of the avant-garde legacy without all the other messy political stuff getting in the way."<sup>79</sup> Foregrounding "the new community based and participatory forms of art practice, and the widespread forms of digital interactivity and intervention," Roberts suggests the term 'non-aesthetic reason' to refer to the new ethos which "has tended to identify art's participatory advance with art's general expansion into the realm of non-artistic practices and non-artistic knowledges."<sup>80</sup> Using the notion of non-aesthetic reason, Roberts shows that the neo-avant-garde attempts to achieve the maximum utility of art precisely by its association with the former, which in turn weakens "the fundamentally decisive role of aesthetic reason under capitalism: art's embodiment of non-instrumental forms of labor and cognition as a negation of dominant modes of (in)attention and their circuits of power and knowledge."<sup>81</sup>

In other words, it points in the direction of subsumption and stratification processes occurring in isolation from each other. On the one hand, "the aestheticization of the avant-garde," (i.e., its reduction to the resequencing of its historic formal moves) selectively stratifies the generic conceptualization of the avant-garde into a form of temporally motivated hierarchy fully discarding the unifying vanguardist consciousness essential throughout aesthetic and non-aesthetic reason.<sup>82</sup> On the other hand, since its prominence after the French Revolution, "the concept of an avantgarde has remained inextricably bound to the idea of progress in industrial and technological civilization."<sup>83</sup> With such a bond a proposition ensues that the avant-garde becomes inclined towards the non-aesthetic and that "no other single factor has influenced the emergence of the new avantgarde art as much as technology."<sup>84</sup> Yet, the question of whether such a case speaks for the weakening of the aesthetic reason as much as for "the notion of culture [as] a potentially explosive force and a threat" or rather illustrates a certain degree of the malleability of the avant-garde that results in its vitality even in newly emergent technological

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<sup>79</sup> John Roberts, "Revolutionary Pathos, Negation, and the Suspensive Avant-Garde," *New Literary History* 721.

<sup>80</sup> Roberts 722.

<sup>81</sup> Roberts 723.

<sup>82</sup> Roberts 723.

<sup>83</sup> Huyssen, "The Hidden Dialectic" 4.

<sup>84</sup> Huyssen, "The Hidden Dialectic" 9.

conditions should probably be dealt with through the prism of the unity of subsumptive and stratifying processes.

Although the subsumption of art and the avant-garde agendas under the aesthetic and non-aesthetic reason resemble Bürger's own political and aesthetic agenda, such a division at least necessarily discards the transient nature of revolutionary pathos, which even in the most radical critique subsides and is inevitably appropriated (i.e., critique and expected change literally ceasing being both the critique and the change, respectively), becoming rather the disconnected strata resembling the Platonian notion of deficiency within the preceding order/regime. This eventually launches revolutionary mythmaking turning the avant-garde into mythology. Herein, the proposed notion of suspensive avant-garde defined as its "liminal identity—its capacity to move across aesthetic reason and non-aesthetic reason, art and non-art—is the very condition of its renewal" presumably goes against "the avant-garde mythology of end times."<sup>85</sup>

The motion, both inward and outward, here is unanimously posited as the productive motion of renewal. Roberts suggests that

[...] in non-revolutionary periods the avant-garde is necessarily positioned between the forces of total revolutionary praxis [...] and the pragmatic exigencies of autopoiesis [and is, therefore, locked] into an active but *subordinate* relationship to the historic forms of its core social and political program. [...] What is achievable socially and politically in the name of art is mediated by the determinate loss resulting from this process of subordination. [...] Consequently, what marks out art's autonomy under these strictures is the extent to which it is able to sustain its passage between aesthetic reason and non-aesthetic reason as the redefinition and expansion of the relations between these two spheres.<sup>86</sup>

The processes referred to as 'redefinition' and 'expansion' of the relationship between aesthetic and non-aesthetic reason are described here as subordinating. Therefore, the claim, it can be argued, represents an aporia since the relation of subordination may hardly be seen in terms of renewal. Such an aporia, Roberts suggests, is resolved by "ideological disinvestment" - an artist's ability "to incorporate and utilize various artistic or non-artistic practices without *fully* investing ideologically and socially in these activities," which can secure [art's] autonomy and the open-endedness of its research programs."<sup>87</sup> However, simultaneously positing the subordinative relationships of the avant-garde to "the historic forms of its core social and political program" and the

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<sup>85</sup> Roberts 725, 723.

<sup>86</sup> Roberts 724.

<sup>87</sup> Roberts 725.

possibility of ideological disinvestment would simply bring the avant-garde back to the revolutionary mythology since ideological disinvestment in such a case can be read as an opposition from within those very historic forms.

Therefore, the unity of subsumption and stratification transposed into the argument for the suspensive avant-garde in place of subordination will ensure a free flow between the strata of historical forms and will account both for art's operation "out of a direct sense of its own impossibility and impermanence" in search for an escape from the legitimizing traditions and institutional supports without any revolutionary banners flapping in the wind.<sup>88</sup>

Moreover, Roberts distinguishes the avant-garde from the historical and the recent neo-avant-garde by its suspensive nature as "a condition of its explicit anti-capitalist and oppositional character", which represents what he terms the 'third space': "neither the space of revolutionary transformation such as (the building of a revolutionary culture or the production of 'thought experiments' as part of a mobilization of the working class), nor the pragmatic adjustment of critical and radical art to the new postwar administration of modern art (the neo-avant-garde), but the concrete implication of artistic practices in the critique of "[...] the official institutions of art."<sup>89</sup> It should be mentioned that the tertiary positioning of the avant-garde strategies also appears in Louis Armand's *Joyce Cineaste/Godard Auteur* in relation to the question of a critical margin as the space of the avant-garde; but, in this case, the question is more concerned with the poetics of the avant-garde as a modus operandi of critique, with the focus on the medium and the process.<sup>90</sup> Herein the 'third image,' "amoral and irreflexive, possessing neither content nor conscience" refers to the product of montage as "a critical suspense of judgement" and as a refusal of "categorical thought [and] categorical morality."<sup>91</sup> In both cases, whether the avant-garde is reflected upon from the perspective of its location among other discourses or in regard to the medium, the notion of subordination appears particularly out of place while subsumption and stratification processes can preclude "categorical thought [and] categorical morality."<sup>92</sup>

Subsumption and stratification processes find their reflection in the theoretical approach of Armand in his collection of essays *The Organ Grinder's Monkey: Culture After the Avant-Garde* (2013). The bond between the notion of the contemporary and the logic of commodification results in the reciprocal mediation of the commodity and the avant-garde: while the genius of the commodity accommodates any arbitrariness into a coherent system, the avant-

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<sup>88</sup> Roberts 725.

<sup>89</sup> Roberts 726.

<sup>90</sup> Louis Armand, "Avant la Lettre," *The Organ Grinder's Monkey* 10.

<sup>91</sup> Louis Armand, "Joyce Cineaste / Godard Auteur," *The Organ Grinder's Monkey* 26.

<sup>92</sup> Armand, "Joyce Cineaste" 26.

garde becomes a means for the commodity to purify itself, which the author terms “a stasis-in-flux of transcendent obsolescence.”<sup>93</sup> Such a stasis-in-flux is operative on subsumption and stratification. First and foremost, the relationship between the commodity and the avant-garde is posited as one of quid pro quo, which in contrast to causal or temporal planes accommodates both contradiction and discontinuities inherency in the avant-garde.<sup>94</sup>

Moreover, noting that the forms of production in language encompass all fields of human activity, the author notes that simply grounding the critique within the spaces of language ends up in a loop. In such a case, the “means of production are supplanted by the content of a self-myth: the commoditization of the avant-garde.”<sup>95</sup> The loop herein appears once in an avant-garde endowed with the mission of saving culture from commodity fetish already operates in the space of the trope of the return of the repressed “by which the contemporary is both instantiated and perturbed.”<sup>96</sup> Thus, the dynamics of reciprocity positioned as both stasis and flux can be used to further suggest that the static positioning of the avant-garde within commodity fetishism reflects the discursivity of the strata, while the relation of reciprocity and mediation counterintuitively places stasis in motion, constantly shuffling and re-shuffling these strata in a productive way, all of which eventually hints directs one to the notion that “there is no degree zero of signification.”<sup>97</sup> The latter could be used to propose that the absence of a zero degree of signification precisely constitutes the essence of the avant-garde as subsumption and stratification.

Thus, the value of the terms of subsumption and stratification for the current work lies in their conceptual potential to reflect a “refusal of paradigms, the maintained temper of an open investigation, an experiment in de-institutionalizing thought across the generalized margin.”<sup>98</sup> By quantitatively and qualitatively delineating the conceptual essence of subsumption and stratification, it becomes possible to address such a cultural, discursive, technological, and in many respects, transversal phenomenon as the avant-garde.

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<sup>93</sup> Armand “Avant la Lettre” 9.

<sup>94</sup> “And by a simple quid pro quo the avant-garde, in an historically recuperative gesture that bears all the marks of legitimization stinking of ancient regime, have received the keys to the academies [...]” See Armand “Avant la Lettre” 9.

<sup>95</sup> Armand, “Avant la Lettre” 10.

<sup>96</sup> Armand, “Avant la Lettre” 10.

<sup>97</sup> Armand, “Avant la Lettre” 11.

<sup>98</sup> Armand, “Preface” *The Organ Grinder’s Monkey* 7.

### 2.3. Critical Conclusions

As a matter of conclusion to the historical and discursive overview of the terms of subsumption and stratification, several propositions can be made. The critical-philosophical conceptualization of subsumption and social conceptualization of stratification are tied to a certain foreclosure that represents their respective limits if both terms are perceived in isolation. The theoretical foreclosure in both Kant and Hegel is thus that of the totality of the structure or that of dialectical development, respectively. Such “*theoretically* bound totality [...] circumscribes the limits of relation, form and composition.”<sup>99</sup>

The lack of strict boundaries between subsumption and stratification and subsumption functioning as the means of stratification results in positing a fixed hierarchy both in a logical and a dialectical sense. In this regard, subsumption renders stratification as an effect by which judgement, law, and the features of identity invariably create the category and a paradigm. “In its traditional philosophical form, subsumption names the hierarchical relationship between a ‘universal’ and ‘particular’, [and simultaneously] also refers to the *act* (of judgment) that produces this relation, that of *subsuming* the particular under the universal.”<sup>100</sup> The outcome of such operations is a multitude of discursive classifications.

In the case of Marx, the notion of totality is embodied in society. However, in contrast to Kant and Hegel, such totality for Marx is rather a process of historical development and hence acquires a provisional character because society is “constituted in the tension between its own immediate horizons (that act as a form of structural limitation) and the open series of possibilities that are both immanently present and active within those horizons and yet at the same time transcend them.”<sup>101</sup> Here, subsumption functions within the stratified system of subjective (individuals) and objective elements (classes) and also affects “the compositional structure that grounds their social power and actuality (‘the body politic’).”<sup>102</sup>

Similar dynamics can be observed in the theorization of the avant-garde that implicitly appeals to the critical notions of subsumption and stratification. Roberts’ paradigm of the suspensive avant-garde seeks to account for these processes still by distinguishing discursive planes of aesthetic and non-aesthetic reason coupled with the notions of ‘ideological disinvestment’ and ‘third space’. The latter attempts to reflect on the relations within the

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<sup>99</sup> De Sicilia 65.

<sup>100</sup> De Sicilia 12.

<sup>101</sup> De Sicilia 6.

<sup>102</sup> De Sicilia 7.

discursive planes but only to land on an aporia of positing the avant-garde presumably beyond the two spaces of aesthetic and non-aesthetic reason but is nevertheless in subordination to those.

The proposition by Armand in relation to language as a medium foregrounds the necessity to broaden the notion of a conceptual apparatus beyond the mere perception of such apparatus in terms of technique towards “the much more considerable task of accounting for the generative technics of discourse per se [for the apparatus to] be generalizable not only with regard to a closed system [...] but in its broadest possible sense.”<sup>103</sup> A similar claim can be made in regard to the conceptual apparatus of subsumption and stratification, especially considering the long way these terms made into a variety of discourses. One of the propositions is to have a theory of subsumption that moves from relational dynamics of the particular and the general to the “occlusive constitution of the field of categories themselves.”<sup>104</sup> “What is key to this critical procedure is that the two orders of being (which appear from a systemic standpoint as ‘universal’ and ‘particular’) have the contradictory dual status of ‘specific heterogeneity’ and ‘generic homogeneity’, a contradiction that is comprehended with reference to a mediating ‘ground of unity’ irreducible to either order but containing both (the *compositional totality* in which they subsist).”<sup>105</sup>

It is from this perspective that Brophy’s textual poetics, Deligny’s de-territorialized signification, and Guattari’s transversality can help to avoid at least some of these foreclosures. Using Guattari’s concept of transversality which is composed of de-hierarchized and de-stabilizing assemblages of layers within the institutional unconscious and group subjectivity, I suggest that the terms ‘subsumption’ and ‘stratification’ can be used as alternatives to subversion and resistance within the avant-garde’s rhetoric. The application of these terms allows both to transcend and recuperate the syntax of negation from the status of the avant-garde trope.

Stratification is one of the essential mechanisms of Guattari’s institutional deregulation exemplified by ‘the grid’ and resulting from the application of the concept of transversality. While within institutional psychiatry, all these provide the space for group subjectivity; once applied to the avant-garde, stratification acquires a Janus face, which is precisely its very value. On the one hand, stratification breeds commodification:

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<sup>103</sup> Armand, “Avant la Lettre” 12.

<sup>104</sup> De Sicilia 5.

<sup>105</sup> De Sicilia 5.

the higher the quantitative indices of the avant-garde's production, the lower its subversion coefficient and the higher its commodified subsumption effect. On the other hand, novelty and uniqueness as the provisional products of ongoing stratification are also the quantitative indices within the liberating space of "material assemblages, biological assemblages, [and] social assemblages, [...] creating heterogeneous [and multiple] complex universes."<sup>106</sup> This creative process has a de-stabilizing effect on each separate stratum and within all strata as a whole. As a result, the ongoing dynamic of subsumption in contrast to fixating subsumption machinery marks the borderline between the avant-garde as praxis and as the effect of commodification.

Hence, stratification and subsumption operative both in tandem and in constant opposition to each other offset commodifying and subversive economy threatening to accommodate the avant-garde for its own ends. Therefore, the value of Brophy's, Deligny's, and Guattari's works lies precisely in revealing the interlinked dynamic of subsumption and stratification which, if treated separately, produce an enslaving semiology of binaries.

### **Chapter 3. Transversal Subsumption and Stratification**

#### **3.1. Transversality and the Avant-garde**

In 1964, Guattari presented a report *La Transversalite, Transversality* to the first International Psychodrama Congress in Paris, and it was published in 1972 collection of essays *Psychoanalysis and Transversality*. Since its introduction, the concept of transversality has been used in a range of works including those which Guattari co-authored with Gilles Deleuze. Transversality, which became "a core critical concept [developed at Clinique de La Borde] as a therapeutic and political tool in Guattari's analytical critique of and experimentation with intra-institutional formations of subjectivity," theoretically reflects the evolution of Guattari's professional activity.<sup>107</sup>

The La Borde Clinic, opened in April 1953 by Jean Oury to treat psychotic patients, "attracted [Guattari] more [by] the intellectual aspect of the work [...] than [by the possibility to study] psychosis."<sup>108</sup> By 1955, when Guattari accepted Oury's invitation and moved to La Borde to work at the clinic, he was already an experienced political activist and a leader. Guattari undertook the organization and management of the clinic and, having regularly attended Lacan's seminar since the 1950s, he also "acquired real psychiatric training" at the clinic while

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<sup>106</sup> Félix Guattari, *The Machinic Unconscious*, trans. Taylor Adkins. (Semiotext(e), 2011) 157.

<sup>107</sup> Gary Genosko, *Félix Guattari. A Critical Introduction* (London, New York: Pluto Press, 2009) 48.

<sup>108</sup> Dosse, 46.



personally supervising the patients.<sup>109</sup> It is under Guattari's initiative that La Borde experienced two waves of what Dosse terms 'barbarian invasions' when several young militant students were brought to the clinic "to be in direct contact with the world of mental illness."<sup>110</sup> Moreover, Guattari oversaw work schedules at La Borde and established what he called 'the grid' whereby each employee on a rotational basis was assigned duties different from his usual ones, thus participating in a deregulatory mechanism within the clinic's institutional hierarchy. It is in this way that the concept of transversality was rooted in its author's professional praxis of institutional deregulation within the context of the 1950s French psychiatric reform movement known as institutional psychiatry.

Transversality is posited as an intervention into the role of the institution which binds the subjectivity to the notions of punishment and the past and, thus, functions as Freudian super-ego. Therefore, in addition to its connection to institutional deregulation, transversality was developed as a challenge to Freudian transference. While "the transference [...] holds the unconscious hostage to the past, the castration complex and the intersubjective relation of analysand to analyst, transversality projects an image of the unconscious as collective, non-hierarchical, futural and machinic, directed toward the possibility of heterogeneous forms of relation not restricted to human interaction."<sup>111</sup> In other words, as a matter of definition, transversality in its non-hierarchical sense invites the application of the notion of stratification and its collective heterogeneous relations between strata leads to the discussion of subsumptive processes.

Later on, the concept re-appears in *Anti-Oedipus* (1972) with a substantial change under the influence of Deleuze's *Proust and Signs* (1972), where "transversality loses the temporal character with which Guattari originally imbued it in 1964, and receives a spatial one in its place."<sup>112</sup> In response to Genosko's critique of Deleuze's "retreat into literary criticism", which "stripped transversality of its psychoanalytic scaffolding with regard to the modification of the superego and empowerment of groups," Eng notes that "literature, and the work of art in general, [like transversality itself, represent] a practice

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<sup>109</sup> Dosse, 46.

<sup>110</sup> Dosse, 47.

<sup>111</sup> Michael Eng, "Institutional Schizophrenia and the Possibility of the Humanities' 'Other Scene': Guattari and the Exigency of Transversality," *Deleuze Studies* 6.2 (Edinburgh University Press, 2012): 330.

<sup>112</sup> Michael Eng, "Deterritorialising Transversality: The Antagonism of the Object between Deleuze and Guattari," *Parallax* (2015), 448. Herein Eng attributes such a change to the way Deleuze applies transversality initially defined by Guattari to the literary analysis of Proust's *In Search of Lost Time*. The latter though focused on time is read by Deleuze based on its consistent use of spatial metaphors as a transversal and non-totalizing Whole accommodating a variety of different relations, thereby disrupting meaning-making process by breaking down the correspondence between the signifier and the signified. See Eng, 448-452.

that works at the possibility of an experience of non-negating difference, of becoming.”<sup>113</sup> The issue of temporality as the now, and as the moment of becoming is, therefore, essential to transversality, especially in its opposition to Freudian transference working only with the temporally linear spaces of the past and its traumas.

The phenomenon of the avant-garde, as reflected in Peter Bürger’s *The Theory of the Avant-Garde* (1974), is also linked to the discourse of “the possibility of an experience of [...] becoming.” Bürger’s historical avant-garde places an emphasis on the institution of art whereby the aim (albeit the unachieved one) of the historical avant-garde is seen as the re-integration of art into the praxis of life and the development of the self-critique of the erased boundary between the contents of works of art and art’s institutional essence. Bürger’s argument starts from Marx’s critique of “the progressive construction of history as the prehistory of the present.”<sup>114</sup>

For Marx, the concept of the present merely as the evolution of the past stages of development is one-sided; the construction of history should rather be linked to the concept of the self-criticism of the present that implies the self-criticism of a social formation as an institution. Bürger notes that “the self-criticism of the social subsystem, art, [with the avant-gardiste protest, whose aim it is to reintegrate art into the praxis of life] makes [the ‘objective understanding’ of past phases of development] possible [and] the totality of the developmental process of art becomes clear only in the stage of self-criticism.”<sup>115</sup> Such an outcome is achievable only upon the isolation of art as an institution from the contents of individual works of art when the latter “lose their political character, and art wants to be nothing other than art”; this stage is referred to by Bürger as nineteenth-century Aestheticism.<sup>116</sup>

In the context of the avant-garde, two significant features should be noted alongside its temporality: its connection to the institution and its self-criticism. While the former intersects with Guattari’s transversality as essentially a space of intervention, the latter is linked to the notion of futural unconscious directed towards the possibility of heterogeneity. Furthermore, Bürger’s Marxist point of departure in positing the construction of history as linked to the notion of the self-criticism of the present, places the moment of becoming in the spotlight, since the self-criticism of the present should be seen, using Armand’s terms, as a phenomenon of “transcendent obsolescence”: as “all cultural forms [become] bound up with a self-supplanting economic rationale [which is] a stasis-in-flux of transcendent obsolescence,” the act or activity

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<sup>113</sup> Eng, “Deterritorialising Transversality” 452.

<sup>114</sup> Bürger *The Theory of the Avant-Garde* (Minneapolis: Manchester University Press, 1984), 20.

<sup>115</sup> Bürger, *The Theory*, 22.

<sup>116</sup> Bürger, *The Theory*, 27.

of self-criticism acquires permanent transience with its actuality only at the moment of appearance and before the moment of being subsumed by “a poetics of the contemporary [which] is always bound to the logic of the commodity.”<sup>117</sup>

Within such temporal problematics in the origin of the avant-garde, whose aim was to regain practical aesthetic experience, albeit while keeping its function as self-criticism beyond a mere progression from the past to the present, the historical avant-garde may already be seen as a transversal phenomenon whose history is not simply a temporal linearity but a cross-temporal outcome of subsumption and stratification processes. The ensuing critical discourse, the one Bürger constructs, is nevertheless precisely the former because, while “the notion of a contemporary-as-such is uneasily situated between assertions of cultural historicity and the deconstruction of concepts of presence and the present” and within such a notion “the new both exhausts and exceeds itself [...]” the historical avant-garde as a moment of art’s self-criticism can only be seen as a moment of becoming rather than being.<sup>118</sup>

The concept of the self-criticism of the present, linked to the historical avant-garde, as a particular state of the social subsystem of art, at a particular moment in time is already a stratum in the avant-garde seen as a type of consciousness. A stratum as such is essentially deprived of temporal linearity which is its only externally imposed parameter. Considering that Bürger actually theorizes the by-gone movements of the 1920s, his pronouncement of the impossibility of the neo-avant-garde is yet another aporia: this “transposition of his results as valid for a period that comes after [as] a strategy [...] is not really possible on the methodological premises that he himself has set up.”<sup>119</sup> In this sense, the concept of transversality bound to the moment of becoming and the aim of “critical redirection or deterritorialization” of the institutional intra-structural processes is similar to self-criticism.<sup>120</sup> However, Bürger’s framework renders the effect of the transference whereby the historical avant-garde is theorized and territorialized in rigid historical frames. “Bürger does not – in 1974 – observe that the notion of art has changed, or rather ‘imploded’, after the massive attack on art as institution put forward by the historical avant-gardes and their ‘inheritors’ in the 1960s.”<sup>121</sup> This could be seen as simply displacing stratification with subsumption: a certain stratum (the historical avant-

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<sup>117</sup> Armand, “Avant la Lettre” 9.

<sup>118</sup> Armand, “Avant la Lettre” 8.

<sup>119</sup> Per Bäckström, “One Earth, Four or Five Words: The Notion of ‘Avant-Garde’ Problematicized,” *Action Yes* (Winter, 2008): 6.

<sup>120</sup> Eng, “Deterritorialising Transversality” 454.

<sup>121</sup> Bäckström, “One Earth” 6.

garde) is projected in the transference manner towards another stratum (the neo-avantgarde) overlooking the fact that none of those are formations of stratification in isolation, but rather in Godard's terms parts of "history [which should be seen] as unresolved anachronism [proceeding] not as an unfolding narrative, but fully as montage [...]"<sup>122</sup> Herein, it is worth mentioning that montage represents not merely the juxtaposition of the images but also the relation between them; in other words, this cinematic method resembles the stratification and subsumption working in unison.

Thus, Bürger's conceptualization of the historical avant-garde works more along the lines of the Freudian link between anxiety as "the instinctual internal danger" and external dangers. Speaking of the difference between system-immanent criticism and self-criticism, Bürger notes that the former simply exercises the critique of the ideas within its own discourse rather than against itself as an institution which is the aim of the latter, capable of doing so due to the critical distance it can assume.<sup>123</sup> In this sense, system-immanent criticism simply externalizes its object, while self-criticism becomes an externality incorporating, and at the same time distanced from, its object. This marks the similarity of Bürger's theorization to Freud's interplay of interiority and exteriority characteristic of the super-ego. It is from this perspective that Bürger's theorization of the avant-garde misses out on the potential of the latter as of a mechanism based on a self-critique inextricably linked to a variety of its economic, ideological, and technical machinery and, therefore, already integrated into multiple layers of the praxis of life. As one such layer, the avant-garde is the flux at the moment of becoming; it is the 'eternal now', which is not frozen in the stasis of a single moment, not a discursive stratum but the moment as a splice of a multitude of layers of social praxis. Hence, the accusation of the avant-garde of its failure to achieve such integration also loses ground.

The discussion of transversality vis-à-vis the avant-garde, thus, brings forth three levels on which the issue of subsumption and stratification can be dealt with: the temporality of stratification, subsumptive assemblages, and the institution as the space of subsumption and stratification. The following sections focus on the discussion of these elements of stratification and subsumption.

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<sup>122</sup> Armand, "Joyce Cineaste" 26.

<sup>123</sup> Bürger 21.

### 3.2 The Temporality of Stratification

The understanding of Guattari's notion of transversality is bound to the critical understanding of the notion of stratification. In *On Nurse-Doctor Relationships* (1955) Guattari responds to Jean Oury's statement that "everything is stuck in the systems of hospitals and social status", and that it is important to begin to situate hospital staff "not in a general way but as a whole."<sup>124</sup> While this posits the initial, and obviously fixed, professional hierarchy, it also recognizes the possibility of re-defining the hierarchy as a whole, which brings forth the issue of relations between the strata within the system. In other words, stratification as much as it poses the possibility of hierarchy accommodates within itself the possibility of destabilization of that very structure it seeks to establish as well as its own demise. That is to say that stratification, along with transversality, is a result of both encoding and decoding "while at the same time disarticulating this process [and bringing] about a rupture."<sup>125</sup> Transversality, then, should essentially be associated with radical contingency.<sup>126</sup>

Because the possibility of transversality is essentially linked to heterogeneity, it is seen by Guattari as a space of group subjectivity – the subjectivity that ceases to be an object for other groups but rather "becomes a subject of its own destiny and assumes its own finitude and death."<sup>127</sup> In this sense, belonging to a group is not motivated by a collective neurosis caused by desire and the fear of death, but by a particular transitory problem nevertheless collectively addressed.<sup>128</sup> Such subjectivity is posited against the following conditions. First and foremost, Guattari claims the 'inaccessibility' of the subject: "direct access to the individual is not possible."<sup>129</sup> This, obviously, rests on the premise of the existence and, furthermore, the possibility of the definition of subjectivity. What is more, considering the premise of the inaccessibility of the subject, the question arises as to how to construct group subjectivity out of a collection of inaccessible subjects. Such reflections on Guattari's framework are significant for delineating the nature of stratification in a critical sense.

Then, Guattari poses the question of the possibility of replacing the bureaucracy of the prolific institutions in the contemporary society with 'institutional creativity' as a certain type of detour to access the fundamental desires of the subject (whose presumable

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<sup>124</sup> Guattari, "On Nurse-doctor Relationship" 23.

<sup>125</sup> Louis Armand, *Technē* (Prague: Nakladatelstvi Karolinum, 20003) 78

<sup>126</sup> Armand, *Technē* 78.

<sup>127</sup> Guattari, "The Transference" 79.

<sup>128</sup> Guattari, "The Transference" 79.

<sup>129</sup> Guattari, "Introduction to Institutional Psychotherapy" 62.

existence subsequently provides for the existence and, moreover, accessibility of desire) who both produces these institutions and is produced by them. Although the notion of institutional creativity may sound synonymous with creative bureaucracy, Guattari deals with it as a practitioner trying to activate the possibilities of rupture, albeit only theorized, within a specific institution as a bureaucratic entity. “The concept [of transversality] emerged from the very concrete fields of experience of the running of the clinic at La Borde and the organization of groups and groupuscules, to become (with the events of May 1968) an approach that was coextensive with the destabilization of the real as a structured whole[...].”<sup>130</sup> It is important to consider such context when assessing certain theoretical gaps in the notions of group subjectivity and transversality. With this in mind, it is possible to suggest that the notion of group subjectivity appears partially as a slice of institutional structure and as a part of a bureaucratic machine that can activate rather than accommodate and subordinate a rupture.

Guattari further poses the question of if there are “particular techniques that allow the object we want to study to speak.”<sup>131</sup> The justification for posing this question for Guattari lies in the fact that “if we do not start with the definition of the subject as an unconscious subject, or rather as a collective agent of utterance, we risk making the institution a thing, in the form of a structure, along with society as a whole.”<sup>132</sup> This implies that subjectivity as well is a thing and only positing it within the context of the transversal (i.e., collective) and thus against the processes of subsumption and stratification can help to transform this lifeless matter into a discursively productive and critical entity. Finally, focusing on the difference between the subjugated group and the group subject, Guattari poses the question as to how the latter ‘speaks’ and whether “a group [can] be the subject of its own enunciation.”<sup>133</sup> Based on these reservations as related to Guattari’s propositions, it may be claimed that transversality within institutional psychiatry, at least before the notion of de-territorialization came to complement it in the 1970s, was rather a detour to the established hierarchy than a possibly transformative principle of operations.<sup>134</sup>

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<sup>130</sup> Éric Alliez, Andrew Goffey, “Introduction,” *The Guattari Effect*, ed. Éric Alliez and Andrew Goffey (London, New York: Continuum, 2011) 8.

<sup>131</sup> Guattari, “Introduction to Institutional Psychotherapy” 62.

<sup>132</sup> Guattari, “Introduction to Institutional Psychotherapy” 70.

<sup>133</sup> Guattari, “Transference” 76.

<sup>134</sup> In a very much vanguardist sense of previous centuries, Guattari claims that “a certain type of group initiation has its own special imprint: real militant activity in a reified social context creates a radical break with the sense of passivity that comes with participation in the usual institutions. [...] I have tried to schematize this break, this difference, by distinguishing between the subject group and the object group. [...] A small group of militants is something apart from society; the subversion it plans is not usually directed to something in the immediate future [...]. Its horizon is the boundary of history itself: anything is possible, even if in reality the universe remains opaque. Even in impossible, dead-end situations, one tries to tinker with the institutional machinery, to produce an effect on some part of it [...]. See Guattari, “The Group and the Person,” *Psychoanalysis and Transversality* 213.

In this sense, the notion of stratification still maintains its narrow hierarchical denomination. These conditions reveal further problems once juxtaposed to Fernand Deligny's framework. From the 1960s onward, working in the Cévennes with autistic children, Deligny posed several questions that added to Guattari's framework and specifically to the temporality of stratification. To begin with, subjectivity is posited by Deligny in the context of autism and is fundamentally challenged by the autistic inability to "identify with someone," which, at the very onset, runs counter to the possibility of group subjectivity.<sup>135</sup> Furthermore, counter to Guattari's propulsion towards allowing the object of study to speak, Deligny seeks to identify whether psychoanalysis, "which like all languages constitutes a whole that has its own coherence, might not be eclipsing something else that persists around the edges."<sup>136</sup> When Deligny claims that "autism is envisioned like a charade, the subject going silent and seeking refuge in identification with some object in which obliteration of the subject would be seen," he also seeks for that something around the edges.<sup>137</sup> In that sense, an autistic individual is seen as attracted towards the thing in the identificatory move, which subsequently presupposes a temporal sequence: there is an object pre-existing a-priori existing subject undergoing obliteration. Even further down the scale of temporality, Deligny locates the intention: "If I read that Janmari is a subject who would identify himself with anything whatsoever, and in so doing would be obliterating himself, I see an inkling of intention [or] the indication of the existence of the S at the center of the human system [...]."<sup>138</sup> Eventually, Deligny asks "How can something that has never existed be obliterated? and in order for the self to lose itself, it first has to be."<sup>139</sup> Thus, the something eclipsed by psychoanalysis and persisting around the edges is the temporality of the various strata that underlie the operations of transversality. Once such strata are put into a linear succession, as Deligny's argument shows, the range of notions becomes theoretically foreclosed. Thus, stratification in its critical conceptualization and as related to transversality should be seen as a-temporal especially when considered in relation to yet another critical notion, that of the assemblage of enunciation.

The theoretical arc from the inaccessibility of the individual subject to the collectivity of the subject-group is based on Guattari's critique of language: "words cannot really serve to mediate desire; they operate on behalf of the law."<sup>140</sup> Since "what

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<sup>135</sup> Deligny 173.

<sup>136</sup> Deligny 171.

<sup>137</sup> Deligny 171.

<sup>138</sup> Deligny 173.

<sup>139</sup> Deligny 174.

<sup>140</sup> Guattari, "The Group and the Person," *Psychoanalysis and Transversality* 227.

gives rise to a particular set of utterances in an analytic situation is not an ‘individuated’ unconscious articulating itself in relation to the universal (logico-mathematical) form of a language but a potentially far broader set of elements and processes,” called an ‘assemblage’ of enunciation, the latter as a set of elements can be considered only at the moment of appearance (i.e., the moment of enunciation) itself.<sup>141</sup> On the other hand, enunciation still remains bound by language, and hence the issue is still that of linear temporality: whether it is the group unconscious that gives rise to an assemblage of enunciation or the latter actually defines the former. This foregrounds the dualistic essence of such an assemblage: it remains a stockpile of language elements without any bonds only up to the point when its link to group subjectivity is posited. With the latter, the stockpile is no longer an assemblage but a ring in a chain which means that it moves further along the linear scale of sequential occurrences (whether from an assemblage of enunciation to group subjectivity or vice versa), invariably losing its stratifying nature and moving in the direction of hierarchy. This then foregrounds a certain stoppage, a so-called edge of a-temporality, for the assemblage of enunciation: the strata can temporarily, continuously subsume in a recursive manner, but once subsumption transcends the recursion, subordination ensues, creating hierarchy, that very psychoanalytic discourse that Deligny opposed.

Still, there is a certain degree of connection between Deligny and Guattari in relation to the critique of language. Guattari’s critique being the result of his substantial experience with psychotic patients links to Deligny’s notion of the mode of being beyond language signification. Guattari’s engagement with psychosis was a part of the overall critical climate of the post-May ‘68 upheaval marked by linking madness to “political struggles against power.”<sup>142</sup> Similar to Deligny’s work with autistic children, Guattari, considers the psychotic’s lack of access to the Symbolic and hence to the language and deems it at least illogical, if not preposterous, to attempt to cure him by those very means, the access to which he utterly lacks. In Deligny’s words, that would be exactly the charade imposed on the psychotic – “the charade comes from us, and not from autistic [or psychotic] individual, the fear of nothingness inspiring us, this nothingness supposed by us [...]”<sup>143</sup> Such fear certainly arises from the absence of the real/thing and the fact that the object of identification once it “becomes a thing, it is nothing.”<sup>144</sup> This becomes a point of convergence between the two: while Deligny switches to pre- and beyond-linguistic tracing of

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<sup>141</sup> Andrew Goffey, “Guattari, Transversality and the Experimental Semiotics of Untranslatability,” *Paragraph* (2015): 235.

<sup>142</sup> Goffey, “Guattari, Transversality” 231. In addition to “explicitly acknowledged consideration of languages and their limits” Guattari’s own “understanding of psychosis attributes significant social and political aspects to what is otherwise theorized as a refusal of the symbolic order.” See Goffey, “Guattari, Transversality” 233.

<sup>143</sup> Deligny 173.

<sup>144</sup> Deligny 173.



gesture and motion, Guattari calls for the necessity of allowing the group subject to speak. While Deligny asks “whether the ‘Humans-that-we-are’ are deprived of access to acting in the present without symbolic referents to depend upon [and whether] a mode of being outside of notions of self and auto-biographical narrative [are conceivable],” Guattari’s concepts of group subjectivity and an assemblage of enunciation are preceded by a system of referents.<sup>145</sup>

Stratification-wise, the superimposition of such a system of referents certainly does create a hierarchy, but such a hierarchy is no longer stratification per se but rather its discursive outcome. Stratification is, to some extent, pre-discursive with strata as forms of being in the pre-becoming stage and with the notion of singularity irrelevant as a construct: “To insist on the plurality of the word réel, suggests that each one of us is a singular being, which is no doubt true for us – felt by us - but not for Janmari.”<sup>146</sup> Herein the issue of articulation is at stake: while hierarchy is articulated by the fixed relationship that follows from the pre-existing strata and is therefore of a temporal nature, stratification equals to neither a singularity nor a multitude. Stratification functions similarly to the notion of “possible worlds [which are] parallel and alternative versions of our own world” with the only difference that strata are parallel and alternative to each other and it is only a matter of hierarchy to limit this potential of combinability and compatibility.<sup>147</sup> It is in this sense that the present and presence can be thought of only in terms of stratification. Such is the case of the Joycean world of hypertextual transversality as “a kind of palimpsestic illusion [as] a textual surface [appearing] to preserve a record of otherwise concealed strata of differing [...]”<sup>148</sup> Such is, to some extent, the case of Brigid Brophy’s *In Transit*.

Brigid Brophy’s novel has been critically read in the light of Joycean technique. Carole Sweeney reads *In Transit* as a “baroque marriage of Joycean badinage, typographic experiments, Steinian punnery and Sternean metanarrative digressiveness.”<sup>149</sup> David Vichnar sees “the theme of Irishness [as] functionally employed in service to Brophy’s chief project of the “immolation of language.”<sup>150</sup> Karen R. Lawrence places Brophy’s work on the “often repressed“ continuum from modernism

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<sup>145</sup> Damian Milton, “Tracing the Influence of Fernand Deligny on Autism Studies,” *Disability & Society*, 31.2 (2016): 286. 8 June 2021. <<https://doi-org.ezproxy.is.cuni.cz/10.1080/09687599.2016.1161975> >

<sup>146</sup> Deligny 174.

<sup>147</sup> Armand, *Technē* 40.

<sup>148</sup> Armand, *Technē* 102.

<sup>149</sup> Carole Sweeney, “‘Groping Inside Language’: Translation, Humour and Experiment in Christine Brooke-Rose’s *Between* and Brigid Brophy’s *In Transit*,” *Textual Practice* 32.2 (2018): 310.

<sup>150</sup> David Vichnar, “The Fearless Iconoclast,” *equus press. [Écriture En Quete D’Usage]*. 18 August (2014).

to postmodernism claiming that Brophy's *In Transit* "is a postmodern text that explores its own origins in an Irish inflected modernism" and presents the Irish as both one of the "colonial groups in their "speak[ing] English as a foreign language, even when [they] have no other"<sup>151</sup> and as "a special case of the colonial legacy, [i.e.] particularly inventive foster-children."<sup>152</sup> However, what seems problematic in this particular reading of the novel is the claim that "Brophy suggests that the Joycean revolution of the word works its disruptions still within a certain phallic framework" while attempting "to figure more radical indeterminacies of sexual identity, even as they pay homage to Joycean [...] exile."<sup>153</sup> Such claim lands on the loop of seeing the novel's purpose in precisely what it attacks. Admittedly, sexual indeterminacy is a part and parcel of the novel's plot; however, in the novel "commonly held distinctions and binary oppositions are brought to interact with and collapse upon one another," and hence the start of the novel's journey with the language leprosy and the end – with the narrator resurrected to be "read like a book."<sup>154</sup> This could mean that the novel can be read as the space of enunciation stratified into generic, linguistic, and metacritical layers.

The reconstruction of the novel across textual, social, political, and individual planes allows for the visibility of the textual machinery of stratification whereby Brophy's novel functions as "the institutional framework of enunciation" transversally linking textual techniques to political and social practice.<sup>155</sup> The notion of textual machinery is widely attributed to Joyce and is associated with "disarticulating the sequence of encoding and decoding [...] aris[ing] at moments of recurrence."<sup>156</sup> Such recurrence indicates an archive-like suspension of time within textual stratification. Brophy's text represents such an archive at the moment of stasis, when using the trope of the journey, Brophy's text serves as "an end point" where "all scheduled flights are cancelled, replaced by detour and digression [in] a literal and metaphoric" sense and yet "hermaphroditic circulation [of subjectivity] launches a fantastic, punning linguistic journey."<sup>157</sup> The schedule as the structure inherently linked to temporality in a signifying sense is

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<sup>151</sup> Brophy 34.

<sup>152</sup> Karen R. Lawrence, "In Transit: from James Joyce to Brigid Brophy," *Transcultural Joyce*, ed. Karen R. Lawrence (Cambridge University Press, 1998) 37-38.

<sup>153</sup> Lawrence, "In Transit: from James Joyce to Brigid Brophy" 39.

<sup>154</sup> Vichnar, "The Fearless Iconoclast."

<sup>155</sup> Goffey, "Guattari, Transversality" 234.

<sup>156</sup> Armand, *Technē* 77. Armand further claims that "this disarticulation reveals that what remains necessary for meaning to arise is not a predetermined system of codes, but rather a network of internal textual differences which participate in another kind of code breaking.[...]This process of "breaking" codes gives rise to another text comprised of ruined sign structures and quasi-fragmentations [...].The dis-articulation of sequences of encoding and decoding would thus inaugurate a type of archive, a text whose memory is suspended in the timelessness of its own present in the absence of any code prior to those from which it is assembled and to which it is ultimately indifferent." See Armand, *Technē* 77-78.

<sup>157</sup> Karen R. Lawrence, *Penelope Voyages. Women and Travel in the British Literary Tradition* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 2018) 231-232.

suspended: its signifiers like “words coexist[ing] with power” at the same time signify “a symptom of the general revolutionary crisis.”<sup>158</sup> Thus, temporality as a signifier is disarticulated towards a mere agglomeration of flight numbers as signifiers without their essential reference point, be that called an archive or mere stratification.

The novel commences in the first person and from the very onset posits the issue of temporality against experience and enunciation as events: “I cruise, my jaws wide to snow plough in the present tense, the plankton of experience. This, I then excrete rehashed into continuous narrative in the past tense. [...] You know only that you ingest the present and excrete it as a narrative in the past.”<sup>159</sup> Although the novel is formally written in the past, the grammar machinery of the verb tenses malfunctions creating the sense of the experience of the present moment because Brophy transverses several territories of generic conventions subsuming all of them to metafictional Interludes. Hence, when the critics claim that the novel “imposes a present-tense simulacrum of perpetuity,” such critical readings of the novel’s temporality certainly reflect on the disarticulation of time signifiers.<sup>160</sup> However, positing the narrative as a ‘simulacrum’ of the present also means subsuming the text as a singularity under the universality of language – an enterprise that Brophy’s novel seems to reverse by formal use of the past tense as the space of present and experiential uncertainty. After all, the past tense, even in its modalities of speculation and uncertainty, is, nevertheless, the space of ‘the fact’ – an irrevocable reporting agency of certainty, of the ‘narratable’ and of the ‘reportable’. This stands in stark contrast to the future tense as the space of possibility, and to the present, inherently uncertain, an enunciation of now, of the experience in its bodily implications as the moment of speech but yet not as the language in its power to confine the experience to myth, history, genre, convention, and the past by ‘being re-told or narrated’.

This is particularly evident when in a game show wherein Pat (apart from the predicament of uncertain sex, and subsequent abandonment of the first-person narration) reverses the machine of grammatical temporality, making the past a simulacrum of the experiential present of the game, but not the other way around. On the one hand, a game is inherently a ‘present-tense’ phenomenon, whereby both watching and participating in it is the discourse of simultaneous experiential presence in/with the game. While other types of narratives associated with the game, be that its outcomes, or the records of its

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<sup>158</sup> Armand, *Technē* 98-99.

<sup>159</sup> Brophy 13.

<sup>160</sup> Annegret Maack, “Concordia discors: Brigid Brophy’s *In Transit*” *The Review of Contemporary Fiction* (22 September, 1995).

winners, are a ‘reportable’ history, and hence, the past, the process of the game in its sequential and processual nature rarely, if ever at all, functions as the space of the past ‘replayed’: the game, in a sense, is “an experience of time with enlarged pores.”<sup>161</sup> The game in the novel, apart from being yet another cultural space for Brophy to transverse and incorporate into her stratified narrative, is also the space of enunciation. As a result, within the course of the game Pat’s switches between Patricia and Patrick exemplify the effects of discursive narrative projections of the jury: “In which persona should Pat speak? His/her own. Don’t deceive the public.”<sup>162</sup> Hence, a text ceases to be “a matter of the semantics of its verbal syntagmata” and is further typographically de-territorialized by a “juxtaposition of elements convey[ing] an impression of simultaneity;” the text becomes “amphisbaena, the serpent with a head at either end, to evoke duality in simultaneity.”<sup>163</sup>

Apart from the game, framing the novel’s temporality as a-signifying to the past tense narrative, metafictional Interludes - "Interludibrium", "Interlugubre", "Interlewd", "Interloo"- also function as the spaces of stratified enunciation.<sup>164</sup> Macrae claims that Brophy’s interludes attribute “to the reader (at least co-)creative responsibility for actualising the narrator.”<sup>165</sup> This not only “playfully reverses the situation of the reader imagining the character, but also identifies the role of the reader as that of the interlocutor, the force by which the “I” of the character-narrator is brought into being.”<sup>166</sup> Such dynamics of enunciation though unidirectional (from the narrator to the reader) are nevertheless stratified into at least four layers: that of the narrator, that of the character, that of the interlocutor, and that of the text. Thus, a collective enunciation brings “together machinic elements of every kind: human, semiotic, technical, [...]”<sup>167</sup> The narrator by a direct address to a semiotically outlined reader technically becomes a character in the novel. In this sense, “the transversal, [locates the reader] within the encoding and decoding process, while at the same time disarticulating this process [...]”<sup>168</sup> Such disarticulation traversing the levels of the character, the narrator, the interlocutor resurfaces within the stratum of the text. The text,

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<sup>161</sup> Brophy 134.

<sup>162</sup> Brophy 135.

<sup>163</sup> Maack, “Concordia discors.”

<sup>164</sup> Brophy 69, 83, 99, 112.

<sup>165</sup> Such actualization is first done “through [Brophy’s] earliest beloved soft toy, [then as a projection] of an internal psychological ‘other’” and finally through overtly metaleptical “you.” See Andrea Macrae *Discourse Diexis in Metafiction. The Language of Metanarration, Metalepsis, and Misnarration* (New York, London: Routledge, 2019), 130.

<sup>166</sup> Macrae, *Discourse Diexis*, 130. Such a point is specifically evident in “I click my fingers, bite my castanet thumb at you. Got you. That’s what I think you do, hypocrite (let me alienate you) lecteur/interlocutor.” See Brophy, *In Transit*, 18.

<sup>167</sup> Félix Guattari, “The Place of the Signifier in the Institution,” *The Guattari Reader*, ed. Gary Genosko (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1996) 152.

<sup>168</sup> Armand, *Technē* 78

hence, comes to justify that stratification per se does not presuppose a foreclosure as long as the strata remain transversal, (i.e., operative on the recursion of subsumption).

To summarize, Guattari's definition of a subjugated group produces a fully determined territory and leaves no space to what many theorists see as the essential temporal frame of the avant-garde, (i.e., 'Now' as the moment of becoming). Such a moment of becoming is, in essence, transversal as a textual machine that is "sitting on, engaging in a sit-in on the present tense" that can only be reflected upon recursively.<sup>169</sup> Although Deleuze rejects the notion of the eternal return as a synthesis, calling for a new principle "of the reproduction of diversity as such, of the repetition of difference," the reading and interpretation of the eternal recurrence, though inseparable from the notion of the return, is temporal in contrast to the a-temporality of the return itself.<sup>170</sup> In other words, the moment of becoming is transversal and non-reducible "to a narrative thread or linearity" as much as to "a determination of presence."<sup>171</sup>

Bürger himself in his response to the criticism of his theory notes that the avant-garde as a nonspecific term distinguished from the historical avant-garde marks "a point in the continuum of time, in other words, the Now, designating the newest art of modernity" calling "the institution of art into question" while the historical avant-garde as part of modernism "respond[s] to the developmental stage of autonomous art epitomized by aestheticism."<sup>172</sup> Jean-Francois Lyotard also reflects on such temporality but within the aesthetics of the sublime. He claims that the avant-garde deals with indeterminacy in the arts, which, nevertheless, does not preclude the productive performativity of the Now (indeterminate in itself) when "the task of having to bear witness to the indeterminate carries away, one after another, the barriers set up by the writings of theorists and by the manifestos of the painters themselves."<sup>173</sup> What is noted by both critics is the transversal nature of the avant-garde that becomes fixed in the present. The Now is essentially transversal beyond the reality of the sign since, at its own moment, it may carry the

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<sup>169</sup> Brophy 129. This represents the issue of a Nietzschean eternal return and whether it can be desirable: "Do you desire this once more and innumerable times more [that] everything unutterably small or great in your life will have to return to you, all in the same succession and sequence?" See Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, trans. Walter Kaufman (New York: Vintage Books, 1974) 273-274.

<sup>170</sup> Gilles Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson (London, New York: Continuum, 2002), 46.

<sup>171</sup> Armand, *Technē* 103.

<sup>172</sup> Peter Bürger, "Avant-Garde and Neo-Avant-Garde: An Attempt to Answer Certain Critics of Theory of the Avant-Garde," *New Literary History* 41 (2010): 696.

<sup>173</sup> Jean Francois Lyotard, "The Sublime and the Avant-garde," in *The Inhuman: Reflections on Time*, trans. Geoffrey Bennington and Rachel Bowlby (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991), 103.

potential of enunciation, which according to Baudrillard, “we [then] consume in either anticipatory or retrospective mode,” turning it into discourse.<sup>174</sup>

Hence, the moment of the Now underlying the avant-garde as a nonspecific term proceeds in two directions: those of stratification and subsumption. If these are activated one after another in a linear fashion, the avant-garde produces “its own system of hierarchizing structures [...] and become[s] open to a world beyond its own immediate interests,” with the commodification effect, as one of the outcomes of such openness.<sup>175</sup> If subsumption and stratification function based on the principle of complementary operations, the avant-garde in itself becomes a stratified entity with an attendant multiplicity of its movements and schools, but subsumption within it “generates opportunities for moving beyond [their] subjective territory, defying society’s modalities of indoctrination, socialization and regulation [...]”<sup>176</sup> It is from this perspective that the critical potential of the avant-garde is unlocked with the complementary operations of subsumption and stratification.

### 3.3. Subsumption of Recursive Assemblages

In his essay *Force and Signification*, Derrida speaking of structuralist criticism notes that “within structure there is not only form, relation, and configuration.”<sup>177</sup> The focus on the form, according to Derrida, however, appears “when one no longer has the force to understand force from within itself. That is, to create.”<sup>178</sup> The force, Derrida speaks about, refers to the power of signification to overflow itself beyond “signalization” towards “the play of meaning” and to represent “the moment of the attempt-to-write.”<sup>179</sup> This attempt-to-write is an enunciative moment that also transforms reading into a performative act of using force and thus partaking in the act of signification. Literary criticism, according to Derrida, is therefore always a structuralist undertaking since the very condition of its possibility, its separation from force even in its occasional avenging on force: structural analysis is “possible only after a certain defeat of force and within the movement of diminished ardor.”<sup>180</sup> Such a possibility is essentially “a reflection

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<sup>174</sup> Jean Baudrillard, *The Consumer Society: Myths and Structures*, trans. Sage Publications 1998 (London: Sage, 1998), 33.

<sup>175</sup> Guattari, “Transversality” 107.

<sup>176</sup> Adam Bryx & Bryan Reynolds, “Go Fractalactic! A Brief Guide through Subjectivity in the Philosophy of Félix Guattari and Transversal Poetics,” *Deleuze Studies* 6.2 (2012): 293.

<sup>177</sup> Jacques Derrida, “Force and Signification,” *Writing and Difference* 5.

<sup>178</sup> Derrida, “Force and Signification” 5.

<sup>179</sup> Derrida, “Force and Signification” 12.

<sup>180</sup> Derrida, “Force and Signification” 5.

of the accomplished, the constituted, the constructed,” which according to Derrida, allows the meaning to be rethought as form, as a structure, and as the unity of form and meaning.<sup>181</sup> What such a reflection foregrounds is the point of structure’s own fragility; it is “neither construction nor ruin but lability.”<sup>182</sup>

The point of this excursus to Derrida’s essay is to foreground that within any edifice the relation between its segments or strata is as an essential element as its segments or strata themselves. This further suggests that stratification per se is neither viable nor vital in isolation without that element of mediative nature coexisting alongside strata and allowing stratification to reproduce. Such elements function on the level of potentiality and possibility; when it is dormant, stratification remains a possibility, once it is activated various types of units ensue, the most common of which is a hierarchy. For the production of the latter, stratification has to activate its subordinating potential; for overcoming any hierarchized, totalizing formations subsumption has to take place. Subsumption, conceivable only in relation to stratification, can be seen to account for what Derrida terms the ‘lability of the structure’ and what Guattari terms ‘abstract machines.’ Substantially revising the notion of transversality in *The Machinic Unconscious* with the notion of deterritorialization, Guattari posits the notion of an abstract machine to account for machinic systems of signification known as schizoanalysis. The notion of abstract machines, it can be argued, allows for the critical theorization of the principle of subsumption.

For Guattari “abstract machines traverse various levels of reality and establish and demolish stratifications.”<sup>183</sup> Herein, the demolition of stratifications implies the stereotypical understanding of stratification as hierarchy; nevertheless, without stratification, even in such an understanding, abstract machines will not function.<sup>184</sup> Tracing this proposition to both Kant and Hegel, it is possible to see the approach to subsumption as a mediative relationship between the particular and the universal. However, moving further away from the philosophical conceptualization of subsumption, Guattari nevertheless makes an implicit but rigorous distinction between subsumption as “transformational matter” and subordination that functions like a “coding system stacked from the outside on the existing stratifications”:

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<sup>181</sup> Derrida, “Force and Signification” 5.

<sup>182</sup> Derrida, “Force and Signification” 6.

<sup>183</sup> Guattari, *The Machinic Unconscious* 11.

<sup>184</sup> This can be seen when Guattari claims that the consistency of abstract machines is negotiated “on the basis of quanta of possibilities” linked to “assemblages which are in constant interaction and incessantly engaged in processes of deterritorialization and singularization causing them to be decentralized in comparison to one another [...]” The notion of abstract machines aims at disputing the idea of abstract universals: “since there is no general assemblage that overhangs [assemblages of concrete enunciations], every time we encounter a universal enunciation, it will be necessary to determine the particular nature of its enunciative assemblage and analyze the operation of power that leads it to lay claim to such a universality.” See Guattari, *The Machinic Unconscious* 11-12.

It is always the same juggling act: through the promotion of a transcendent order founded upon the allegedly universal nature of the signifying articulations of certain enunciations - the Cogito, mathematical and scientific laws, etc... - one endeavors to guarantee certain types of formations of power, simultaneously consolidating the social status and the imaginary security of its pundits and scribes in the fields of ideology and science.<sup>185</sup>

Herein, Guattari's distinction runs not only along the essential difference in the operations of subsumption and subordination but also along the external field - that of the margin and the outside. Power, thus, becomes the result of territorialized assemblages and signification of the center (i.e., of the hierarchy), while stratification in its de-territorialized sense is the result of the transformational matter of subsumption along the margins. This represents the clear-cut distinction between stratification and hierarchy, subsumption, and subordination.

The notion of subsumption, along similar lines in Deligny's framework, is derived from his concept of a network. Deligny writes that "when space becomes a concentration camp, the formation of a network creates a kind of outside that allows the human to survive."<sup>186</sup> Such an outside further becomes the space of "where the part of human that would be resistant to what functions "in the symbolic" takes place."<sup>187</sup> In other words, subsumption mediates resistant strata against the overall topos. Through the notion of subsumption, speaking of the center as an unproductive and totalizing stratum becomes no longer viable because subsumption embraces topos as a whole by means locating. "To locate," for Deligny is "a term without a subject and without an object, without anything that would be nameable."<sup>188</sup> With the abolition of naming, center, and margin, inside and outside (in addition to becoming lost for signification) also becomes deterritorialized. Stratification, hence, still persists in the de-nameable layers of topos but hierarchy no longer stands a chance. It is from this perspective that subsumption and stratification should be viewed as contingent on each other.

If, for Guattari, the conceptualization of abstract machines is the result of the evolution of his clinical experience towards the development of a critical and theoretical framework, contextualizing Deligny's notion of a network necessitates the juxtaposition of his actual professional experience to Foucault's notion of asylum. While Foucault deals with the production of abnormal people in the context of the management of life, focusing on the individual to be corrected as the one who is not adequate to normative health, education, and

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<sup>185</sup> Guattari, *The Machinic Unconscious* 14-16.

<sup>186</sup> Deligny 36.

<sup>187</sup> Deligny 206.

<sup>188</sup> Locating is used specifically in his clinical practice with autistic children most of whom "remain resistant to [names] and do not utter them." See Deligny 41.



justice systems, for Deligny “networks are woven outside the grip of the abusive society.”<sup>189</sup> Based on the construction of an idea of human normality, the power for Foucault stipulates practices and policies for dealing with the deviation via different disciplinary domains. However, the notion of normality and the binary of madness and reason as the derivative of normativity are in themselves the result of subsumptive dynamics. This is what Derrida reflects upon when he questions Foucault’s positioning of the history of madness as an archeology of silence. What is obviously at stake is the paradigm of unreason that both Foucault’s attempt at writing the history of madness and Deligny’s attempt to abandon, if not to abolish, such history are based on. The appeal to this paradigm, be that archeology or history, is in itself an organized language and repetition of signs borrowed from the discourses these paradigms seek to upset.<sup>190</sup> Such borrowing may certainly be seen as a loop; after all, even Deligny’s attempt to transcend Foucault’s project of the history of madness lands back upon the notion of mapping bound to the topos as much as Foucault resorts to the notion of archeology. Moreover, within Deligny’s project of tracing the wanderings of autistic children there is still ‘a scribe’ creating a map of these wanderings. Yet, when Derrida writes that “order can be denounced within order” by means of those very tools it furnishes for its own sustenance, it suggests the positive feedback of subsumption processes rather than a loop.<sup>191</sup>

Derrida also notes that the total disengagement from the language of history when speaking about madness would be possible only by not mentioning the silence predetermined within the language order or by following the madman to exile.<sup>192</sup> In other words, any subversive endeavor is conceivable only within the predetermined space sought to be subverted. This allows for an accounting of the position of language in Deligny’s, Brophy’s, and Guattari’s works. Guattari’s notion of transversality as developed in the early stages of his institutional therapeutics project is also initially bound to unwinding the silence resulting from the rejection of the spoken word. What Guattari implies here is that the silence of the catatonic is in itself an outcome of the ideal of ‘consuming-machines’ with which the individual tends to associate himself. Guattari thus sets out for an attempt “to make a small dent in the process of reducing the spoken word to a written system” though the institutional experiment of group therapy setting out “a kind of grid of correspondence between the meanderings of meanings and ideas

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<sup>189</sup> Deligny 41.

<sup>190</sup> Derrida, “Cogito and the History of Madness” 35.

<sup>191</sup> Derrida, “Cogito and the History of Madness” 35.

<sup>192</sup> Derrida, “Cogito and the History of Madness” 36.

among psychotics, especially schizophrenics[...].”<sup>193</sup> Deligny, despite the search for anti-pedagogy, not only ‘transcribes’ the wanderings of autistic children but also recursively accounts for the transcribing project through textual metaphors, such as web, trace, and attempt. Brophy envisages the possibility of language leprosy through the fictional representation of the character and through the chain of references to generic conventions of detective and pornographic novels. The narrator’s address to the reader attempting to break away from the fiction are nevertheless the addresses of a character in the novel. In other words, any form of rupture, be that autism, madness, or schizophrenia, despite being treated as a diagnosis, should not be seen as what Derrida terms a ‘Trojan horse’ against reason or its history, which will eventually limit the scope of the positive feedback of such a rupture.<sup>194</sup> The point of this rupture is rather to formulate the possibility underlying questioning of the notions of history and reason. Hence, it is not the revolution and transformation that is to be expected, but the opening of the possibilities of critique and of the critique of possibilities.

While Nietzsche posits madness as “the eruption of arbitrariness in feeling, seeing, and hearing, the enjoyment of the mind’s lack of discipline, the joy in human unreason, [and] the non-arbitrary character of judgements,”<sup>195</sup> Derrida places madness at a “zero point at which determined meaning and nonmeaning come together in their common origin.”<sup>196</sup> Reversing Nietzsche’s claim of madness as a rupture “with something to be said in favour of [provided that] it never wants to become a rule” and constantly resurfacing against “the law of agreement” and “the discipline of the mind,”<sup>197</sup> Derrida notes that “the Cogito escapes madness only because at its own moment, under its own authority, it is valid *even if I am mad* [and] the certainty thus attained need not be sheltered from an imprisoned madness, for it is attained and ascertained within madness itself.”<sup>198</sup> In a similar vein, this signifies the moment of breaking down the network: once there is an overburdening of a network with its reason for being, “the network takes on fantastic proportions [and becomes] a society, in other words, an organized power.”<sup>199</sup> However, the destruction of one network is precisely the topos of another.

A network, like madness, is an eruption of arbitrariness whereby it is only an assemblage of “wandering trajectories” which are not “about doing or making [and are] devoid of anything that would serve the purpose.”<sup>200</sup> Therefore, Deligny’s project is, in a certain sense, an institution

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<sup>193</sup> Guattari, “Transversality” 106.

<sup>194</sup> Derrida, “Cogito and the History of Madness” 36.

<sup>195</sup> Nietzsche, *The Gay Science* 140.

<sup>196</sup> Derrida, “Cogito and the History of Madness” 56.

<sup>197</sup> Nietzsche, *The Gay Science* 141.

<sup>198</sup> Derrida, “Cogito and the History of Madness” 55.

<sup>199</sup> Deligny 42.

<sup>200</sup> Deligny 38, 41.

on ground zero but not with zero-degree signification. Designed specifically for autistic children, the project of “the trajectories whose traces [...] inscribed in a network have not been wanted” has the risk of “being accused of depriving [autistic children] of the privilege of the thought-out project.”<sup>201</sup> Similar to Nietzsche who posits madness as human unreason, (i.e., along with an a priori recognition of reason as the starting point of signification within the binary), Deligny posits a thought-out project at such a point. Autistic children certainly have the right to such a project, Deligny claims, “but what can they do with this right, if not live the disarray of extravagating, which literally means to wander off the path?”<sup>202</sup> In other words, autism, in its critical reading, if such reading can to any degree be afforded in relation to the diagnosis in a clinical sense, is not only “an escape from the semiological triangle denotation-representation-signification” but is also the space of deterritorialization where Guattari’s notion of transversality can function both productively and transformatively based on subsumption: event if autism is dealt with within institutional confinement and is certainly institutionalizable as a clinical diagnosis, for the autistic patient it remains a topos of the network. Thus, Deligny’s notion of asylum embodies a different thinking of communality where the presence does not necessarily result in the production of communal units of psychological or educational discourses. So far, then, subsumption in its critical sense can be delineated in terms of its transformative potential, deterritorializing effect, and the possibility of ground zero institution within the non-existent zero-degree signification.

Similar “ambivalent dynamics consisting in simultaneously stating and undermining a referential frame” are observable in Brigid Brophy’s *In Transit*.<sup>203</sup> Brophy’s text, commonly seen as a feminist writing seeking linguistic and stylistic space beyond that of the established gender discourse, defies placement into any rigid literary framework. On the one hand, it aligns with contemporary theories of parody of Linda Hutcheon and Margaret Rose and, at the same time, represents a baroque style defined by Brophy as the space where “[a]mbiguity and puns are its raw material.”<sup>204</sup> Postmodernist theorists reflect on the creatively critical potential of parody noting that being “an inscription of the past in the present,” allows for the incorporation of “a variety of interventionist social agendas” and at the same time feature a “creative expansion of it

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<sup>201</sup> Deligny 50.

<sup>202</sup> Deligny 50.

<sup>203</sup> Justine Gonneaud, “Baroque Parody in Brigid Brophy’s *In Transit*,” *Polysèmes* (2020).

<sup>204</sup> Brigid Brophy, *Baroque- 'n'-Roll and Other Essays*. (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1987), 149 as qtd. by Gonneaud, “Baroque Parody in Brigid Brophy’s *In Transit*.”

into something new.”<sup>205</sup> Thus, in the chapter when an airport employee named Baroco, who decides to blow up the model of the airport kept in the control tower, sits in the Lounge among dispersed revolutionaries of the failed lesbian revolt and his skin color attracts their attention, merely one sentence succeeds in “lay[ing] bare the rules, both social, literary and linguistic.”<sup>206</sup>

The color of his skin was not a disability, they said, now that the one-familyness of all humanity had been proclaimed, and neither did it matter if he could not speak a European language, since the languages of pattern-imperialism were obsolete; what counted now was communication; and communication could be routed through pop-music, where the words were inaudible anyway, or through television, which was becoming increasingly deverbilized as its practitioners acquired the techniques of instant image impact.<sup>207</sup>

This sentence is illustrative of the creative blending of layers of social discourses of post-colonialism, commodity culture, society of the spectacle as well as gender and language framed political discourses; in such a discursive manipulation it represents a palimpsestic stratification, “a modern or ‘surrealist’ baroque” created by experimenting with styles, genres, and art forms “jarringly superimposed” over each other.<sup>208</sup> In her interview with Leslie Dock, Brophy states that “mythology is a denial of imagination, which [...] one has to counter” and by placing several myths within the space of one sentence, Brophy attacks the very exclusive essence of a myth that naturally has to stand alone as a stratum but is never devoid of place in a variety of hierarchies.<sup>209</sup> Thus, Baroco is no longer a colonial subject because of the information and communication age, which intertwines one myth with others in a cause-effect relationship, an endeavor that defies the very nature of myth, further subsuming it under the mythology of liberation.

In *The Machinic Unconscious* (1979), Guattari attacks semantic and pragmatic fields of language as “dependent on syntactic and phonological machines,” claiming that such treatment does not account for the fact that “deviants and subject-groups manage to invent words, break syntaxes, inflect significations, produce new connotations, and generate linguistic alterations parallel with other levels of social transformations.”<sup>210</sup> In *Anti-Oedipus* (1972), such generative alterations constitute the system of a-temporal autopoiesis and reinvention, within the machine defined as “a system of *interruptions* or breaks.”<sup>211</sup> Enunciation, as “the active kernel of

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<sup>205</sup> Gonneaud, “Baroque Parody in Brigid Brophy’s *In Transit*.”

<sup>206</sup> Gonneaud, “Baroque Parody in Brigid Brophy’s *In Transit*.”

<sup>207</sup> Brigid Brophy, *In Transit. an Heroi-Cyclic Novel* (London: Macdonald, 1969), 196.

<sup>208</sup> Gonneaud, “Baroque Parody in Brigid Brophy’s *In Transit*.”

<sup>209</sup> Leslie Dock, Brigid Brophy. “An Interview with Brigid Brophy,” *Contemporary Literature* 17.2 (1976): 159.

<sup>210</sup> Guattari, *The Machinic Unconscious* 25.

<sup>211</sup> Deleuze & Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus* 38. Herein the authors claim that “in desiring-machines everything functions at the same time, but amid hiatuses and ruptures, breakdowns and failures, stalling and short circuits, distances and fragmentations, within a sum that never succeeds in bringing its various parts together so as to form a whole. That is

linguistic and semiotic creativity,”<sup>212</sup> is thus a break within language “whose boundaries never cease to extend.”<sup>213</sup> The machinic system permitting such an enunciation is eventually a machine of incessant transversality and productive subsumption. This machine has the power to “corrode the linguistic edifice from the inside” launching schizoanalysis as “a pragmatics of the unconscious” based on “an abstract machinic phylum traversing language, representation, and the diverse actual and virtual levels of reality.”<sup>214</sup> In other words, enunciation is itself an ongoing subsumption of enunciation within the edifice of language and stratification of such enunciations as breaks within language-based discourses. For example, such phylum traversing representation in Brophy’s novel brings forth language leprosy produced by the textual machine when enunciations are stacked on each other without any relation to a totalizing universal of a generic convention.

When enunciation is only considered on an individual plane, it still sustains signifying semiotics through the link to the Symbolic, which Guattari distinguishes from a-signifying semiotics.<sup>215</sup> Herein, Guattari speaks of the duplicitous subjectivity of the signifying semiotics which “on its unconscious side [...] participates in a process of semiotic deterritorialization which ‘works’ the linguistic machines and prepares to transform them into a-signifying semiotic machines, while, on its conscious side, it rests on reterritorializations of significance and interpretance.”<sup>216</sup> Subjectivity, if a such notion is ever existent, thus becomes itself a machinic break from within. Both signifying and a-signifying semiotics have to be not only present as strata but also engage in interaction with each other. Similar dynamics should be observed in regard to two types of subjectivity previously outlined in relation to transversality - subjugated groups and group subjects. Distinguishable along the lines of “subjectivity whose work is to speak and subjectivity which is lost to view in the otherness of society,” the issue at hand is not for one to completely replace the other, which in itself is the result of subordination and

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because the breaks in the process are productive, and are reassemblies in and of themselves. Disjunctions, by the very fact that they are disjunctions, are inclusive. Even consumptions are transitions, processes of becoming, and returns.” See Deleuze & Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus* 42.

<sup>212</sup> Félix Guattari, “Ritornellos and Existential Affects,” *The Guattari Reader*, ed. Gary Genosko (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1996), 164.

<sup>213</sup> Guattari, *The Machinic Unconscious* 26

<sup>214</sup> Guattari, *The Machinic Unconscious* 26-27

<sup>215</sup> The difference between the signifying and a-signifying semiotics can be as follows: While “the signifying machine [is] based on the system of representation, that is, on a production of semiotic redundancy constituting a world of quasi-objects, icons, analogon, and schema, acting as substitutes for intensities and real multiplicities,” a-signifying semiotics uses the same tools “as an instrument of semiotic deterritorialization allowing semiotic fluxes to establish new connections with the most deterritorialized material flux.” See Guattari, “The Place of the Signifier in the Institution” 150-151.

<sup>216</sup> Guattari, “The Place of the Signifier in the Institution” 151.

can result in a totalizing hierarchy, but rather to allow both strata interact through the relation of subsumption.<sup>217</sup> The subjugated subjectivity is, certainly, the space of transference as of “a rigid mechanism [...] interiorizing bourgeois repression by the repetitive, archaic and artificial re-emergence of [...] reactionary group phantasies.”<sup>218</sup> It is the space of the binaries, but without it, the very linguistic machine that needs to be corroded ceases to exist, and along with it the notions of ruptures and breaks.

Linking this to Lacan, Guattari implies that to delineate an individuum as a single unit of subjectivity while within the Symbolic order, it is by default a product of the desire of others, a means to confine the subject to the pursuit of symbolic desires instead of bringing awareness of the latter. Thus, ‘duplicitous’ subjectivity can undergo a dramatic change once within a-signifying semiotics, a space of ‘a collective assemblage of enunciation’:

[T]he world of mental representation [...] loses, then, its function of centering and of semiotic overcoding. Signs "work" things prior to representation. Signs and things combine with one another independently of the subjective "hold" that the agents of individuated enunciation claim to have over them. A collective assemblage of enunciation [then] substitutes for it a collective saying [...] that brings together machinic elements of every kind: human, semiotic, technical, scientific, etc. The illusion of an enunciation specific to the human subject vanishes, revealing that it was only an effect adjacent to statements produced and manipulated by politico-economic systems.<sup>219</sup>

Brophy uses metafiction, parody, pun, mise-en-abyme to altogether subsume those into the singularity of the text and at the same time represent the strata of ‘machinic elements of every kind. None of the strata is assigned a central role or value, but functions on a par with each other precluding the subjective hold. The narrator’s identity “though notoriously ephemeral, does have one explicit anchoring [of] its Irish heritage of an orphan” but the use of the ‘syntactic and phonological machinery’ of language allows the narrator and the author to function, to some extent, as an institution that Guattari envisioned as the space of transversality.<sup>220</sup> Karen R. Lawrence characterizes Brophy’s text as an example of Roland Barthes’ ‘writerly’ prose that reflects the principle of transversality.<sup>221</sup> Barthes himself notes that subjectivity and, in particular, the ‘I’ “ which approaches the text is already itself a plurality of other texts, of codes, which are infinite [and] subjectivity is a plenary image, with which I may be thought to encumber the text, but whose deceptive plenitude is merely the wake of all the codes which

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<sup>217</sup> Guattari, “Transversality” 107.

<sup>218</sup> Guattari, “Transversality” 111.

<sup>219</sup> Guattari, “The Place of the Signifier in the Institution” 151-152.

<sup>220</sup> Vichnar, “The Fearless Iconoclast.”

<sup>221</sup> Lawrence, *Penelope Voyages* 207.

constitute me, so that my subjectivity has ultimately the generality of stereotypes.”<sup>222</sup> In the similar vein, the ‘I’ of the writer is simply the voice of the language: “the discourse, or better, the language speaks: nothing more.”<sup>223</sup> Herein, the singularity of the the ‘I’ being a random occurrence of “the subject” is juxtaposed to the totality “of all the codes which constitute the I.” Obviously, this juxtaposition cannot presuppose the relation of equality and even if such totality is textually constructed, it is still confined within the singularity of the ‘I’.

But the issue here is whether it can be considered an aporia at all. Since notions of complementary operations of subsumption and stratification are bound to machinic assemblages, such operations necessarily activate both the center and the margin, decoding, and encoding, consequently, singularity and totality. From this perspective, while Barthes’s structuralist perspective on the subjectivity of the reader/writer essentially deals with its textual implications and Guattari’s take on subjectivity establishes the connection between psychoanalysis and social praxis, Brophy’s textual dynamics in the space of subjectivity is an institution-in-flux: on the one hand, an institution and, therefore, a construct by a variety of discourses and, on the other hand, the space of deterritorialization/deinstitutionalization.

Last but not least, the issue of a-temporality as a foundation for stratification also becomes transparent once subsumption enters the picture. Abstract machines, according to Guattari, “cling not to a single universal time but to trans-spatial and trans-temporal plane of consistency” and with time becoming machinic, causalities, as well as totalizing affirmations, are bound to malfunction.<sup>224</sup> While the past and the future are by default discursive and, hence, affirmative and totalizing, the present is the moment subsumed under both of them. Also, subsumption as a transformative matter is bound to machinic time since the notion of subsumption is operative only momentarily at that very moment of transformation:

The present is no longer a mother-form around which are gathered and differentiated the future (present) and the past (present). What is marked [...] between the future (desire) and the present (fulfillment), between the past (remembrance) and the present (perpetration), between the capacity and the act, etc., is only a series of temporal differences without any central present,

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<sup>222</sup> Roland Barthes, *S/Z*. trans. Richard Miller (Blackwell, 1974) 10.

<sup>223</sup> Barthes 41.

<sup>224</sup> Guattari, *The Machinic Unconscious* 11.

without a present of which the past and future would be but modifications. Can we then go on speaking about time, tenses, and temporal differences?<sup>225</sup>

Such moment in its singularity is linked to randomness and recurrence but not circularity, what Deleuze terms “the being of becoming.”<sup>226</sup> These temporal dynamics of recurrence but not circularity is a feature of subsumption since “whereas the thrown dice affirm chance once and for all, the dice which fall back necessarily affirm the number or the destiny which brings the dice back. It is in this sense that the second moment of the game is also the two moments together or the player who equals the whole. The eternal return is the second moment, the result of the dicethrow, [...]. But it is also the return of the first moment, the repetition of the dicethrow.”<sup>227</sup>

Such a temporal feature of subsumption can be seen to resolve the aporia between singularity and totality because “by affirming chance we affirm the relation of *all* forces [while]. all of chance all [is affirmed] in the thought of the eternal return.”<sup>228</sup> Such a feature appears in Deligny’s notions of an *attempt*, later called a *raft*, and the notion of “*nearby presences*.” While an *attempt* is posited between initiative and disturbance to provide for the existence outside of institutionalization devices, *nearby presences* in Deligny’s project are members of the staff who trace and map the movement of autistic children across the terrain. Within such maps “openings are preserved, a condition of incompleteness, imperfection, and fragility is affirmed.”<sup>229</sup> These mechanisms of semiotization can be also linked to Deligny’s notion of tracing instruments. For Deligny, there is a considerable difference between drawing and tracing. “A tracing depicts or represents nothing whatsoever”, even if “artwork is nothing more than a trace of a gesture,” this gesture is reiterated by the hands of not only autistic but also mute children once they are provided with pencils.<sup>230</sup> Once pencils, which are also “instruments for writing,” are taken away, children “found themselves unharnessed [... and] didn’t balk at the chance to dip their fingers in the graphite dust” to continue an activity.<sup>231</sup> Semiotization by subsumption thus becomes free from the rule directing creativity of the pencil in the hands of the ‘I’.

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<sup>225</sup> Jacques Derrida, *Dissemination*, trans. Barbara Johnson (London: The Athlone Press, 1981) 210.

<sup>226</sup> “The dice throw affirms becoming and it affirms the being of becoming. It is not a matter of several dice throws which, because of their number, finally reproduce the same combination. On the contrary, it is a matter of a single dicethrow which, due to the number of the combination produced, comes to reproduce itself as such. It is not that a large number of throws produce the repetition of a combination but rather the number of the combination which produces the repetition of the dice throw.” See Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, trans. High Tomlinson (London, New York: Continuum, 2002) 25-26.

<sup>227</sup> Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy* 27-28.

<sup>228</sup> Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy* 44.

<sup>229</sup> Mendes & Castro 343-355.

<sup>230</sup> Deligny 145.

<sup>231</sup> Deligny 146.



As a matter of summary, subsumption operative as transformational matter is inherently bound to stratification with the latter being the space of the potentialities launched by the former. Its trans-temporal nature allows it to bridge the gap between the notions of being and becoming, with the latter being significant for the theorization of the avant-garde's conceptualization of Now as a 'being of becoming.' What is more, the principle of complementary operations of subsumption and stratification can address the difference between the notions of institution and institutionalization to propose that the avant-garde as an institution can be a viable mechanism of critique.

## **Chapter 4: The Avant-garde as an Institution-in-Flux**

### **4.1. Institution as a Space of Subsumption and Stratification**

One of the fundamental aspects in which the clinical projects of Guattari and Deligny and the textual dynamics of Brophy's novel intersect with the theory of the avant-garde is the concept of the institution and institutionalization. The concept of the institution of art in Peter Bürger's theory functions as a signifier of both the avant-garde and art's doomsday. In general, the social and economic powers attributed to the institution of art have traditionally been associated with the system of appropriation and, hence, the annihilation of any critical potential at its root. Herein, it may be relevant to suggest that such claims blur the distinction between the notion of an institution and institutionalization.

With Marx as a reference point, Peter Bürger uses the notion of art as an institution with reference to "the productive and distributive apparatus and also to the ideas about art that prevail at a given time and that determine the reception of works. The avant-garde turns against both-the distribution apparatus on which the work of art depends, and the status of art in bourgeois society as defined by the concept of autonomy."<sup>232</sup> This implicit difference between the two notions in Bürger's statement can further be illustrated by the notion of the machinic as a condition of the avant-garde whereby "mechanization has come to signal a condition at the very core of cultural experience and cultural production."<sup>233</sup> Such a condition is linked "to a certain performativity; to performance of operations, above all sign-operations, and the recursive nature

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<sup>232</sup> Bürger, *The Theory* 22.

<sup>233</sup> Louis Armand, "Avant-Garde Machines, Experimental Systems," *Avant-Post: The Avant-Garde Under "Post-Conditions*, ed. Louis Armand (Prague: Litteraria Pragensia, 2006) 194.

of the relation between such performances and what is called a “program.”<sup>234</sup> By this analogy, an institution can be associated with performance while institutionalization -with the notion of the program. Thus, the issue of the avant-garde’s either becoming or being an institution becomes a matter of its performance within and against the program, definable by a variety of notions some of which are the culture industry, commodification, or institutionalization. The program in its universality represents a topos within and against which the avant-garde is expected to perform. Then, with Marx’s postulate that “self-criticism presupposes that the social formation or social subsystem to which that criticism directs itself have fully evolved its own, unique characteristics” as applied by Bürger to art allows the observer to see that Guattari’s approach to the institution’s revolutionary potential was not meant as the project of sustaining and strengthening yet another bureaucratic hierarchy.<sup>235</sup>

Using Guattari’s perspective, it then becomes viable to suggest that the revolutionary potential of the avant-garde should not be thought of in terms of the attempts at its de-institutionalization because “mediated by the logic of the commodity, the institution is not merely some type of obnoxious, manipulative, egotistical entity imposed upon the world – it is the world, [...] the real-as-spectacle.”<sup>236</sup> As such, this world is the only topos where a counter-institutional drive is viable. While “at the heart of this plea for the de-institutionalization of society, one could say, [has always been] a multilayered aversion to the spatialisation of otherness,” deinstitutionalizing the avant-garde is an a priori recognition of its status within arts as that of the other.<sup>237</sup> Thus, either in the general or the specific, social or artistic contexts, the avant-garde project has balanced between the margin (Artaud) and “ a formal apotheosis” (*Aspen, Tel Quel*; Fluxus, the Oulipo).<sup>238</sup> Deligny’s project at the Cévennes is also an example of an attempt of re-invention of an institution on those very narrow margins. Also, “the more ‘experimental’ vein of this tendency operated within the framework of the culture industry only to the extent that its artifacts were readily expropriated to the marketplace, whose gravitational pull had increasingly narrowed the margin, not by virtue of a strictly economic power but

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<sup>234</sup> Armand, “Avant-Garde Machines” 194, 200.

<sup>235</sup> Bürger, *The Theory* 23. Guattari also notes similar dynamics in distinction of group and individual subject: “Would it then be an abuse to speak of the subject at the level of a class or a state? One might object that it is not something that is as transparent to itself as the subject is supposed to be. Self-consciousness is certainly a guarantee of being conscious, but not of being a subject when there is a meaning to being a subject, in other words, in the register of the other established by speech. In social terms, things may be more certain. A group, party or caste that claims to be the subject of history, called on to perform historic mission, may only be, in fact, an institutional object moved by external circumstances, the conjunction of forces in presence, etc. In terms of social subjectivity nothing is a foregone conclusion.” See Guattari, “Reflections on Institutional Psychotherapy for Philosophers” 132.

<sup>236</sup> Louis Armand, “Ground Zero Warholing,” *The Organ Grinder’s Monkey* 152.

<sup>237</sup> Masschelein & Verstraete, “Living in the presence of others” 1195.

<sup>238</sup> Armand, “Avant la Lettre” 14.

because of the radical contiguity of the commodity form.”<sup>239</sup> Likewise, Bürger’s *Theory of the Avant-garde* “shows that the avant-garde’s attack on the institution “art” in bourgeois society not only was designed to destroy this institution, but permitted its existence and significance to become visible and perceivable in the first place.”<sup>240</sup> Thus, neither rupture nor revolution can be interpreted in a straightforward sense, though there is always a risk of taking them literally. Their critical definition runs along the lines proposed by Guattari: the point of any revolutionary or breakthrough undertaking is the “creative rumblings” arising from within of the institution rather than revolution with a capital R since “any master plan [always remains] entirely abstract” while “subject revolutionary groups make a special point of linking, or trying to link, their organization options very closely to their revolutionary program.”<sup>241</sup> While a revolutionary group, that very vanguardist party (or institution) defined by Gray at the beginning of this thesis, represents only one of the social strata, its organizational options (the topos of institutionalization) subsumes the former but is also in itself the product of subsumption and stratification. Hence, subsumption and stratification define the project of the avant-garde without any discursive foreclosure, positing it as an institution with certain measurable indicators of performance against the topos of institutionalization as a wider discursive conception of society, culture, ideology, and the like.

The notions of subsumption and stratification reveal and subsequently destabilize the mythmaking processes at work in the theory of the avant-garde. If Guattari’s perception of the institution as the space of transversality may be seen in terms of sustaining that very structure he seeks to destabilize, the notion of the avant-garde as an institution explores and destabilizes the mechanisms of institutionalization. If, for Guattari, questioning established hierarchies that produce subjugated groups is not possible from the outside but only from within the institution, then, for the avant-garde, the institution also becomes that very topos where its critical project can be sustained.

Such an argument can be based on several premises. On the one hand, the institution itself is the space of stratification with certain parameters such as the scope, the singularity of strata, and the space of potentialities. All these are simultaneously the parameters of any change, rupture, or revolution unless all the latter are imbued with some literal or utopian sense verging on the quest for ground zero. Herein, even the

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<sup>239</sup> Armand, “Avant la Lettre” 14.

<sup>240</sup> Jochen Schulte-Sasse, “Foreword: Theory of Modernism versus Theory of the Avant-Garde,” Peter Bürger *The Theory*, xxxvi.

<sup>241</sup> Guattari, “The Group and the Person” 214, 215.

notion of the return to ground zero is hardly applicable since such a zero degree within the discursive boundaries of the eternal recurrence is already not the initial zero it was, but a new stratum among others. Coming back to Deleuze, “the eternal return is the second moment, [...] but it is also the return of the first moment, [its] repetition.”<sup>242</sup>

On the other hand, the positioning of the avant-garde within the institution of art reveals how the avant-garde theory itself suffers from a certain effect of alienation or mania of exclusion - those very features of the vanguardism on its ideological and political scales. Hence, what essentially matters is not a revolution and a transformation in a productivist sense but rather a revolutionary and transformational dynamism within the system. The concept of ‘dynamism’ stripped of its ‘revolutionary’ epithet is proposed for several reasons.

With institution(s) in the spotlight, dynamism accounts for subsumption and stratification as an auto-poetic de-mystification of the avant-garde and represents, in Guattari’s terms, “institutional therapeutics,” the counter-institutional therapy for the institution: changing “the data accepted by the super-ego into a new kind of acceptance of ‘initiative,’ rendering pointless the blind social demand for a particular kind of castrating procedure to the exclusion of anything else.”<sup>243</sup> This dynamism, vis-a-vis transversality, accounts for the subsumption and stratification that underlie avant-gardist temporality, the Now and being of becoming. The avant-garde is subsumed by linear historicity and historiography but sustains its singularity under the moment of ‘becoming’ deterritorialized as Now. In comparison to the past as a clearly demarcated territory, Now represents indeterminacy which Lyotard associates with itself as an occurrence and event.<sup>244</sup> Far from being void or nothingness, it is rather the synthesis of a “here-now-event” where the avant-garde does not “only tend to recapture the meaning of its own enterprise [...but also identify the mechanisms of such meaning-making along with] the effects of global society, accompanied by a social critique that can be articulated with other currents of thought and struggles.”<sup>245</sup> Thus, the concern of the theorists with the inevitable institutionalization of the avant-garde has no ground because the avant-garde’s being an institution does not preclude its critical and transversal potential due to the capacity of the institution to stratify and subsume and to be stratified and subsumed. It can further be suggested that severing the avant-garde from the auspices of the institutional status may actually deprive it of its access to the object of critique and its transversal nature since to keep itself as such the avant-garde should be accessible and accessed from within.

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<sup>242</sup> Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy* 28.

<sup>243</sup> Guattari, “Transversality” 106.

<sup>244</sup> Lyotard, “The Sublime” 93.

<sup>245</sup> Guattari, “Reflections on Institutional Psychotherapy for Philosophers” 127.

Moreover, the separation of the avant-garde from the institutional processes may attribute a subjugate subjectivity to the former creating a binary of the institution of art versus the de-institutionalized avant-garde. The examples of such separation are the binaries of Avant-Garde and Kitsch, auratic and post-auratic art, or simply convention and novelty. These binaries function similarly to the Freudian ‘analyst-analysand’ relationship, which “requires the institutional subject to repeat the relation to the superego – holding him or her hostage to the past – and install[ing] the analyst as a gatekeeper and overseer to normalisation.”<sup>246</sup> By analogy, the binaries within which the avant-garde tends to be placed irrevocably subjugate it to a passive definition from outside of itself. Externalizing these and, at the same time, demanding that the avant-garde maintain its status of perpetual revolution, innovation, social critique, and integration into the praxis of life is an impasse. Neither Kitsch nor the culture industry are the products of themselves, which is to say that the notion of Kitsch is the result of a negative definitional process of the avant-garde. Such definitional processes become the “mechanisms of self-preservation, magically protect[ing the subjugated groups, and the avant-garde] from possibility of the dialectical enrichment.”<sup>247</sup> However, once the avant-garde is seen as a stratified space where collectivity (of Kitsch and high art, post-auratic art, and the culture industry) blends with the singularity of the specific notion of the avant-garde (such as the historical avant-garde), subsumption and stratification “accept the meaning of their praxis [...] having to bring about their own death” in creation and reproduction of new strata.”<sup>248</sup>

Subsumption and stratification are different from the verticality of a pyramidal structure and the horizontality of the space where subjects “fit in as best as they can with the situation in which they find themselves.”<sup>249</sup> The dimensions of verticality and horizontality in the space of an institution engage in “maximum communication among different levels [and] different meanings” to produce the indices of productivity imposed by institutionalization from the outside, but it is subsumption and stratification that replace such productivism with the measurable “coefficients of transversality.”<sup>250</sup>

Guattari claims that the unconscious that tended to isolate an individual (or a patient) “can achieve a collective mode of expression” modifying the super-ego through a

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<sup>246</sup> Eng, “Deterritorialising Transversality” 454.

<sup>247</sup> Guattari, “Transversality” 119.

<sup>248</sup> Guattari, “Transversality” 119.

<sup>249</sup> Guattari, “Transversality” 112.

<sup>250</sup> Guattari, “Transversality” 113.

newly emergent mode of language.<sup>251</sup> Such attribution of positive agency to the unconscious and productivity to collective language may operate, however, only within the discourse of subversion as “the trope of an ongoing reinvention.”<sup>252</sup> While every such act of reinvention “in the first instance [...] is always visited upon aesthetic forms by those forces of normalization that seek to expropriate and exploit them,” subversion becoming “the destruction of this destruction” is in itself based on the processes of subsumption and stratification aiming at “a refusal of a fictional status.”<sup>253</sup> In other words, an “emergent new language” can stand for subsumption and stratification, the super-ego – for an institution, and a “collective mode of expression” – for the complementary operations of subsumption and stratification within an institution of the avant-garde.

Bürger’s reference to the museum as “the provocation [that] no longer provokes [but rather speaks for the fact] that [the] artist certainly does not denounce the art market but adapts to it” can thus be said to miss out on the critical distinction of an institution and institutionalization.<sup>254</sup> This could particularly be substantiated by Duchamp’s *Fountain* ready-made exhibit signed R.Mutt and submitted for an exhibition of the Society of Independent Artists in 1917: whether it would have made into Alfred Stieglitz’s studio to be photographed had it not been submitted for the exhibition (i.e., had it not attempted to enter the space of the institution), will remain an unresolvable question. Thus, deregulation is not merely the utopian exit from the confinements of the system but is essentially bound to a medium be that language or otherwise. Communication paths posit transversality as opposite to “the structures that generate pyramidal hierarchization and sterile ways of transmitting messages.”<sup>255</sup> In the context of the avant-garde, it recuperates its negation and self-negation, making “an institutional avant-garde [into] a contradiction of the terms.”<sup>256</sup> It is in this sense that the avant-garde can only exist in the perpetual state of its own death, institutional or otherwise. Therefore, even if an institution is closely linked to the processes of institutionalization, it is not necessarily limited to such processes only but rather represents the matrix of versatile strata and subsumption as the mechanism of activation of these strata to work in the self-negating mode as “the subjunctive in grammar: it operates in a tropic movement that does not seek resolution, is without object-correlative and remains [a] productive anachronism.”<sup>257</sup>

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<sup>251</sup> Guattari, “Transversality” 116.

<sup>252</sup> Louis Armand, “Guerrilla Bathes at Noon,” *The Organ Grinder’s Monkey* 95.

<sup>253</sup> Armand, “Guerrilla Bathes at Noon” 95.

<sup>254</sup> Bürger, *The Theory* 52.

<sup>255</sup> Guattari, “Transversality” 118.

<sup>256</sup> Armand, “Guerrilla Bathes at Noon” 103.

<sup>257</sup> Armand, “Guerrilla Bathes at Noon” 110.

Several significant implications thus arise. While, for Guattari, the sources of subjectivation are posed along external/internal or passive/active lines, the notion of individual subjectivity becomes an aporia: the individual, thus defined by and within the socius as the space of the super-ego, is linked to external forces but is nevertheless endowed with illusory individual dimensions. This not only reiterates the mechanisms of the super-ego and subsequent anxieties but also defines the institution in its merely negative conceptualization for the illusory comfort of the subjugated entity. In contrast, “a de-individuated subject, considered as a group or collective assemblage of heterogeneous components freed from abstract determinations [...], is understood through critical analyses of the organizational textures of actual groups.”<sup>258</sup> Thus, it may seem that group subjectivity, in conjunction with institution(s), is the means to discard subjugated subjectivity. However, this is not the case. The case is this: that a-horizontality and a-verticality of transversality deconstruct the pyramidal nature of power relations ensuing from posing an individual against the socium and the avant-garde out of its institutional context. Thus, transversality inherently bound to language and communication is a means to access group subjectivity and the institutional unconscious, and, along with the latter, engage the institution in the dynamism of creative rumblings. That, in turn, suggests that there is no zero degree of signification and that Brigid Brophy’s *In Transit* can be seen in the context of the avant-gardist writing without ground zero signification.

#### **4.2. The Avant-garde without Degree Zero Signification**

Signification is potentially infinite while every act of signification limits such infinitude into finite, singular, material formation. Associated with “the promotion of a transcendent order founded upon the allegedly universal nature of the signifying articulations of certain enunciations,” signification is always stratification and subordination.<sup>259</sup> The disarticulation of such symbiosis is the aim of abstract machines, the conceptual apparatus which singularizes every instance of “a universal enunciation” at the same time analysing “the operation of power

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<sup>258</sup> Gary Genosko, *Félix Guattari. A Critical Introduction* (London, New York: Pluto Press, 2009), 50. Guattari also claims that “The goal is to bring about the acceptance of new data, rather than interminable castration [institutional] anxiety precipitated by every super-ego figurehead [the institution, itself], [...] by establishing new demands and setting up innovative points of reference within existing attachment to institutions.” See Genosko, *Guattari* 49.

<sup>259</sup> Guattari, *The Machinic Unconscious* 14.

that leads it to lay claim to such universality.”<sup>260</sup> These functions of singularizing and analyzing coincide with the operations of stratification and subsumption.

On the one hand, abstract machines activate the potential of self-negation within the edifice of signification: “connections [arise] at the point where abstract mechanizations and concrete, dated, and situated assemblages enable a connection to their deterritorialization.”<sup>261</sup> However, there is a certain point of reference referred to as “axiomatic” which “returns to the assemblage more deterritorialized in order to solve the impasse of the previous systems of enunciation and unite the stratifications of the machinic assemblages that correspond to them. Such a law does not imply a pre-established order, a necessary harmony, or a systemic universal of anything.”<sup>262</sup> Thus, signification is also recursive. These suggest that signification, in its reference to the axiomatic, operates the various strata of meaning-making units and, in the case of deterritorializing connections, functions on the mechanism of subsumption. Stratification operates with “an assemblage of components irreducible to formal description” and further deterritorializing such an assemblage.<sup>263</sup> Since all of these are a matter of recurrence rather than repetition and circularity, in order for signification to take place, subsumption and stratification have to function in a complementary manner.

This can further be connected to schizoanalysis, the re-examination of “a certain traditional conception of the unity and autonomy of language.”<sup>264</sup> As a mechanism, schizoanalysis oscillates between two poles: the performances of tracings and the competencies of the maps. While the former refers to the “repetitive nature of libidinal investments [...] from which other transformational operations are possible,” the latter stands for “a line of flight capable of exploding the strata and generating new semiotic connections.”<sup>265</sup> The notion of schizoanalysis as an approach to signification consolidates not only Guattari’s own framework on transversality and deterritorialization but also Deligny’s framework of networks and tracings as much as the notion of linguistic leprosy in Brigid Brophy’s *In Transit*.

Such a consolidation foregrounds that there is “a sort of technology of the reevaluation of the dominant significations” but no such notion as signification with ground zero.<sup>266</sup> Brigid Brophy’s *In transit* textually employs such a technology.

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<sup>260</sup> Guattari, *The Machinic Unconscious* 12.

<sup>261</sup> Guattari, *The Machinic Unconscious* 15.

<sup>262</sup> Guattari, *The Machinic Unconscious* 15.

<sup>263</sup> Guattari, *The Machinic Unconscious* 16.

<sup>264</sup> Guattari, *The Machinic Unconscious* 27.

<sup>265</sup> Guattari, *The Machinic Unconscious* 179.

<sup>266</sup> Guattari, *The Machinic Unconscious* 181.



The novel represents both the recurrence and the incessant leap beyond language within the moment of the linguistic leprosy in an attempt to transcend language as a function of the Symbolic but also as an integrated entity of and within the latter. The binary is an essential attribute of the consciousness split in the mirror stage for identification with the Symbolic, and when the one fails to enter that space and master its language, they are thus confined to the domain of psychosis, a state of exclusion from the Symbolic and therefore a language leprosy; along with these, psychosis is also a leap beyond reintegration into the Symbolic. If a psychotic lacks access to the latter, the narrator of Brophy's novel, though unexpectedly overtaken by language leprosy in the beginning, nevertheless rejects the Symbolic throughout the novel. Such rejection is seen in the narrator turning into an author (with the switch from first to third-person narration) and taking up various generic conventions – of a TV show, pornographic novel, detective fiction, and opera - not to attack but to integrate them into the re-construction of oneself as a stratified but deterritorialized institution of both the critic and the product of that culture. Brophy's text becomes "the performance of tracings" and at the same time reveals "the competencies of maps."<sup>267</sup>

This posits the narrator/character/author/novel/text as an institution capable of its own self-negation and *In Transit*, as much as the work of its precursor published in *transitions*, "emphasizes materiality of the word as an agent."<sup>268</sup> If the intermediality of Joycean 'technopoetics' results in "re-situating the medium of the book within the new communicative environment [wherein] both writing and speech become subsumed into entirely new relationships with other sensory input and media," the intermediality of Brophy's enunciation is collective in its assemblage and exploration of the various strata of the institutional functions of different discourses.<sup>269</sup>

In a similar vein, the avant-garde's self-critique is viable only within its institutionalized status, subsuming under the collective assemblage of enunciation the various strata of the institutional functions that need to be attacked, revolutionized, and transformed. Since, as Horkheimer and Adorno claim, "the whole world is passed through the filter of the culture industry" and "each single manifestation of the culture industry inescapably reproduces human beings as what the whole has made them", deinstitutionalising the avant-garde would imply its separation from its object and exiting

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<sup>267</sup> Guattari, *The Machinic Unconscious* 179.

<sup>268</sup> Vichnar, "The Fearless Iconoclast."

<sup>269</sup> David Vichnar, "Introduction," *Subtexts. Essays on Fiction* (Prague: Litteraria Pragensia, 2015) 7.

the whole world of “the culture industry” that sustains it.<sup>270</sup> Brophy posits similar effects of subsumption and stratification in

And out of that egg, ego too am re-hatched.

It no longer matters a damn of course whether ‘I’ is masc. or fem. or whether ‘you’ is sing. or plur.

[...]

We all went round together, a whole bunch of us, not exactly friends maybe but it was our crowd, our lot, and there were all the songs we all knew and the turns of the phrase we all used and the many shared jokes, so shared you didn’t need to put your tongue to the entire anecdote but just a catchphrase of a payoff line would do to set us all laughing. Suddenly I was the only one left who knew the songs and idioms, which had become of antiquarian interest.<sup>271</sup>

Karen R. Lawrence reads the above passage as the patricide of Brophy’s precursor but notes that “the narrative’s own ancestry is problematic, suggesting that even the metaphor of parentage, with its secure roles for male and female, does not suffice to represent the foster, mixed, and transcultural ancestry of the sex changing narrative.”<sup>272</sup> However, this passage can also be alternatively read as the text’s own status as an institution of enunciation: “the revolution of the word isn’t a destruction of language, but the subversion of mimetic ideology that conceals its own fictionality and promotes itself as the sole of conduit of the real.”<sup>273</sup> In Brophy’s text, it is achieved in two ways. First, to incorporate the reader into the space of the novel’s enunciation, the reader is addressed as “a print-oriented bastard,” which foregrounds “the physical textuality of the discourse” launching the subsumption dynamic: ‘Pat’ subsumes ‘the reader,’ the latter - fiction, the latter - language, and the latter - the author.<sup>274</sup> The text recursively lands on the ‘I’ previously claimed to be free from being “masc. or fem.”<sup>275</sup> In other words, the text functions like an autopoietic machine “generating recursively [...] the same network of discourses by which [it is] produced.”<sup>276</sup> Hence, “within the tribute paid to the master, the difference inserted within continuity is the metafictional attitude of the narrator, [...] pointing to [the text’s] artificiality [Joycean included], to the conventions it follows and to the underlying writing processes.”<sup>277</sup>

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<sup>270</sup> Max Horkheimer, Theodor W. Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment. Philosophical Fragments*, ed. Gunzelin Schmid Noerr, trans. Edmund Jephcott (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002) 99-100.

<sup>271</sup> Brophy, *In Transit*, 228-229.

<sup>272</sup> Lawrence, “In Transit: from James Joyce to Brigid Brophy” 45.

<sup>273</sup> Armand, “Guerrilla Bathes at Noon” 97.

<sup>274</sup> Macrae, *Discourse Diexis*, 74. Therefore, “I conceive I can read as well as be read like a book [and] I desire You to locute me.” See Brophy, *In Transit*, 230

<sup>275</sup> Brophy, *In Transit*, 228.

<sup>276</sup> Armand, *Technē* 82.

<sup>277</sup> Gonneaud, “Baroque Parody in Brigid Brophy’s *In Transit*.”

The sense of artificiality is achieved through the transformation of the transit lounge to function as yet another ready-made.

Indoors, the Transit Lounge, without any physical change being wrought, suddenly sprang into a new, temporary existence as an art gallery, like a pattern leaping into 3-D when viewed from a new standpoint.

What had been litter became exhibits. Detritus, trash, turned into works.

[...]

These changes happened because the close circuit television had announced:

ART IS NOT MADE BUT READYMADE.<sup>278</sup>

In addition to ‘discarding’ its literary precursor into the exhibition of the ready-mades, the novel’s journey through a TV show, opera libretto, pornographic novel, detective thriller, and “the associative link connecting these overblown burlesque slapstick scenes” produces the effect similar to *Fountain* by Duchamp.<sup>279</sup> Bürger categorizes Duchamp’s ready-mades as avant-garde manifestations rather than works of art: “not from the form-content totality of the individual object Duchamp signs can one infer the meaning, but only from the contrast between the mass-produced object on the one hand, and signature and art exhibit on the other.”<sup>280</sup> If that is agreeably so, it becomes hardly possible to blame the avant-garde for not becoming a form of social praxis. In Bürger’s argument, the overall project of the avant-garde as the radical questioning of the “very principle of art” originates as an external critique from the phenomena ‘manifesting’ themselves in the sphere of experience not from the sphere of art itself, thus contradicting an initially proclaimed self-reflexive moment.<sup>281</sup> Moreover, it is Duchamp’s treatment of art exhibition space that makes *Fountain* a work of art: an object with an authorial signature submitted for that space explicitly follows the code of signifying semiotics. However, what Duchamp also does by positing a ready-made as a product of creativity, and a signature as the arbitrary sign mis-signifying the author, is using the available code to launch a-signifying semiotics. This becomes even more evident in the identity of Rose Selavy, a subject-construct, an artwork, and its utmost disarticulation.

Such disarticulation, similar to the predicament of Brophy’s narrator, grounds signification within one of the discursive systems of power (i.e., that of sex) to begin to

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<sup>278</sup> Brophy, *In Transit* 207.

<sup>279</sup> Vichnar, “The Fearless Iconoclast.”

<sup>280</sup> Bürger, *The Theory* 52.

<sup>281</sup> Bürger, *The Theory* 52.

overwrite it until “the revolution [achieves] resolution by coming to full revolution.”<sup>282</sup> The achievement of such a ‘resolution’ reflects the totality of the developmental process of art, which according to Bürger, becomes possible “only in the stage of self-criticism” and isolation of art as an institution.<sup>283</sup> Resolution requires a moment of entropy, a moment of the art’s and avant-garde’s own death as yet one more stratum within complementary operations of subsumption and stratification with which revolutionary dynamism resumes, recurs, signifies, and, at the same time, disarticulates such signification.

Therefore, it can be proposed that Brophy’s layered and mise-en-abyme narrative culminates in the moment of entropy to be overcome. While the novel’s metafictional techniques breach “the [...] ontologically separate realm of the reader [...], leaving the reader no longer anonymous [but] exposed as an unfeeling consumer of print, [...] graphological deviance in the narration [serves] as an implicit and indirect means of foregrounding the medium and the craftedness of the discourse.”<sup>284</sup> The text as the medium thus becomes “a kind of mechanical-textual apparatus [...] in its signifying function.”<sup>285</sup> Positing such an apparatus into the hands of the “consumer of print” Brophy’s text embraces and deterritorializes “affirmative culture.”<sup>286</sup> In other words, in addition to ‘exhibiting’ Joyce in the Transit Lounge Art Gallery, Brophy disarticulates the ontological distance not only between herself and a literary icon but also between herself and her reader, thereby, precluding her work, and any work whatsoever, from assuming value. Brophy’s metafictional effects produce and commodify her text from within.

Based on the proposition that “given the avant-gardiste intention to do away with art as a sphere that is separate from the praxis of life, it is logical to eliminate the antithesis between producer and recipient,” Bürger claims that “the abolition of autonomous art by [its] integrat[ion] into the praxis of life [...] has not occurred, and presumably cannot occur, [...] unless it be as a false sublation of autonomous art.”<sup>287</sup> He exemplifies the latter by pulp fiction or commodity aesthetics whose aim, albeit practical, is to impose a certain mode of consumer behavior. However, Brophy’s novel as an institution in the context of institutionalization incorporating the commodifying tools of TV shows, detective fiction, or pornographic novels foregrounds that such notions as signification or rupture do not have a degree zero.

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<sup>282</sup> Brophy, *In Transit* 228.

<sup>283</sup> Bürger, *The Theory* 22.

<sup>284</sup> Macrae, *Discourse Diexis*, 74,76.

<sup>285</sup> Armand, *Technē* 48

<sup>286</sup> Herbert Marcuse, *Negations: Essays in Critical Theor.*, Trans. Jeremy J. Shapiro (London: Mayfly, 2009), 70.

<sup>287</sup> Bürger, *The Theory* 53.

## Chapter 5. Conclusion

This present thesis has looked into the terminological scope of the terms of subsumption and stratification intending to address the conceptual apparatus of the avant-garde in terms of certain foreclosures. Such foreclosures have been concerned with the rhetoric of revolutionary transformation traditionally associated both with vanguardism in a politico-ideological sense and with the avant-garde as an aesthetic project of critique. Having traced the evolution of the notions of subsumption and stratification through the works of Kant, Hegel, and Marx, it has been highlighted that the critical potential of these concepts is mostly lost by understanding them in terms of the production of hierarchies by means of displacing subsumption with subordination.

As a matter of unlocking the critical potential of subsumption and stratification in regard to the avant-garde, the theoretical framework developed by Félix Guattari and Fernand Deligny developed as a result of their clinical experience with psychotic and autistic patients, respectively, was used to foreground how subsumption and stratification are inherent in the notions of transversality, group subjectivity, assemblage of enunciation, signification, schizoanalysis, tracing, and mapping. With the notion of complementary operations of subsumption and stratification, it may also be suggested that the opposition to Guattari's notion of group subjectivity, by Lacan for example, may be due to Lacan's emphasis of the univocal Symbolic order operative on a trans-individual plane beyond the access of the individual and thus passivizing the desire that Guattari sees as a space of productive flows. By the analysis of the nature of temporality and recursion essential to subsumption and stratification, it was argued that their understanding of the production of hierarchies is mostly due to their conception as isolated processes.

Thus, the proposition was made that in order to address the theoretical foreclosures associated with the notion of the avant-garde, the latter should be viewed in the light of the complementary operations of subsumption and stratification. Since the avant-garde is discursively delineated in terms of its temporality as a moment of Now, recursion as its own subsumption under commodity fetish and the culture industry, and self-negation as its project of social transformation, the complementary operations of subsumption and stratification allow for the accounting of the avant-garde's vitality, despite proclamations of its death, and posit such vitality as the being of becoming.

Félix Guattari's notion of de-territorialization, which substantially amended the conceptualization of transversality, developed between the 1950s and 1960s with an accompanying framework of group subjectivity and schizoanalysis, was juxtaposed to Deligny's notions of networks and tracing. As a result, it was argued that, to address the avant-garde as the state of being of becoming, the notion of the institution should necessarily be seen as distinct from the notion of institutionalization. Such a distinction allows for abstract machines to produce a-signifying semiotics on the basis of subsumption of the original strata of signifying and hierarchical systems of signification. Since Deligny's maps tracing the movements of autistic children were not completed products but rather works in progress, it was argued that such maps could stand for the possibility of the institution at ground zero within the system of signification that is by default deprived of the notion of a zero degree. In other words, Deligny's project was not "the object of the exercise but the exercise of tracing and mapping itself."<sup>288</sup>

As a result, the institution's degree of openness or 'coefficient of transversality', as Guattari calls it, is within the institution's own potential. While institutions with a low coefficient of transversality produce and re-produce pre-established identities, those with the high coefficient of transversality incessantly stratify and subsume such identities initially determined for them as identical to that of the institution's.<sup>289</sup> The principle of complementary operations of subsumption and stratification thus precludes the formation of binaries and, instead, opens lines of flight for the institution even from within institutionalization. Therefore, Deligny's 'lines of flight' and Brophy's 'language leprosy' are in themselves the avant-gardist experiments to disarticulate institutionalization.

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<sup>288</sup> Milton 287.

<sup>289</sup> Eng, "Deterritorialising Transversality" 454.

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