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Authors: Jason Skeet

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Reading the Road: Using Deleuze to Explore Kenneth White's 'Struggle for Subjectivity'

Jason Skeet

During the 1970s, Kenneth White undertook a *doctorat d'État* at the Université Paris VII (where he was working as a lecturer) under the supervision of Michel Gresset.[1] Gresset suggested Gilles Deleuze as a member of the thesis's jury. White at this point was familiar with Deleuze's work, while Gresset was certain that Deleuze was aware of White's. What they admired in each other's work, I would suggest, was a shared need to move outside established literary and philosophical terrain, part of a wider problem, as White puts it, of how to escape from the 'Motorway of Western civilization, laid down and directed by Platonic idealism, Aristotelian classification, Christianity, Renaissance humanism, Cartesianism and Hegelian historicism, to mention only a few major stages in its progression'.[2]

In White's essay about his contact with Deleuze, *Dialogue Avec Deleuze,* he describes their first meeting and stresses how Deleuze's apartment gave 'a certain impression of confinement [*une certaine impression d'enfermement*]',[3] an intimation of the criticisms of Deleuze's work White goes on to make. Looking into the differences between White's work and Deleuze's, as well as points of convergence that can be found between the poetry and the philosophy (despite White's criticisms of Deleuze) is the concern for the first section to this essay. The focus will be on their conceptions of the figure of the nomad. In his preface to *Handbook for the Diamond Country* White evokes Heidegger and the idea of the 'road that is most necessary for our thought'; White then states that his poetry can be thought of as a 'few signs arising from one body-mind's attempt to follow that road'.[4] In order to read this road, to follow the lines and movements of a 'struggle for subjectivity', which, as Deleuze explains,

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[1] White lectured at the University of Paris VII between 1969–1980. In 1983 he took up a newly founded chair of Twentieth-Century Poetics at the Sorbonne.

[2] Kenneth White, *The Wanderer and his Charts: Exploring the Fields of Vagrant Thought and Vagabond Beauty* (Edinburgh, 2004), 9–10.

[3] Kenneth White, *Dialogue avec Deleuze: Politique, philosophie, géopoétique* (Paris, 2007), 14.

[4] Kenneth White, *Handbook for the Diamond Country: Collected Shorter Poems 1960–1990* (Edinburgh, 1990), 13.

involves 'the right to difference, variation and metamorphosis',[5] the second and third sections of the essay explore a schizoanalytic reading that forges further routes into and out of the poetry – this is what schizoanalysis does as it seeks to extend the text[6] – in order to examine closely examples of the two principal forms White's poetry adopts: the 'short diamond-poem and the longish walk-poem'.[7]

The problem of the nomad

White does acknowledge Deleuze in a favourable light: 'there is no pietism of the soil or homeland mystique' in his work according to White.[8] Yet, White notes that Deleuze developed his book on Nietzsche into the collaboration with Guattari in *A Thousand Plateaus,* and for White this is done 'all too frenetically, as in a futuristic delirium'.[9] Moreover, the 'headlong precipitation' of Deleuze and Guattari's *lignes de fuite* is contrasted with White's own preference for a 'geometrical projection (or a migratory movement)' that he associates with the figure of the intellectual nomad.[10] White adds:

> to put it in another way, musical this time, there comes a moment in jazz improvisation when it becomes too 'free', when it passes over that fine crest between the sensuous and the abstract which I take to be the acme. All this has something to do also with the complex dialectics of territory and deterritorialization.[11]

White sees Deleuze and Guattari as championing deterritorialization, comparing this to freeform Jazz; this is, however, a mischaracterization.

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[5] Gilles Deleuze, Foucault (London, 1999), 87.

[6] For more on schizoanalysis and poetry see: Jason Skeet, 'Applied Schizoanalysis: Towards a Deleuzian Poetics', *Word and Text*, VII (2017), 86–102.

[7] Kenneth White, Coast to Coast: Interviews and Conversations 1985–1995 (Glasgow, 1996), 66. While White's poetry is the focus of this essay, the interconnectedness of his writing must be acknowledged. I also refer to his essays and what he calls 'way books'.

[8] Kenneth White, 'Geopoetics – A Philosophical Approach', The International Institute of Geopoetics, https://www.institut-geopoetique.org/en/founding-texts/139-geopoetics-a-philosophical-approach [accessed 18 October 2020], para. 8 of 12.

[9] 'Geopoetics – A Philosophical Approach', para. 8 of 12.

[10] Kenneth White, 'Working in the Outer Reaches', *Journal of Irish and Scottish Studies*, 5.1 (2011), 11.

[11] 'Working in the Outer Reaches', 11.

There are in fact numerous warnings in their work about the dangers of deterritorialization:

> And it would be wrong to think that it is sufficient, in the end, to take the line of flight or rupture. First, one must trace it out, know where and how to trace it out. And then it has its own danger, which is perhaps the worst of all. It is not just that lines of flight, the most steeply sloping, risk being barred segmentarized, drawn into black holes. They have yet another special risk: that of turning into lines of abolition, of destruction, of others and of oneself.[12]

A further tension is suggested by White's depiction of the 'confinement' of Deleuze's apartment, which hints at White's opposition to an overly intellectual complexity in favour of the openness, simplicity and clarity of what he terms 'white world'. Entering this world is to become 'a real beginner', in contrast to the emphasis Deleuze and Guattari put on being in the middle of things. These tensions can be examined further via a focus on differing conceptions of the nomad; as White indicates: 'when Deleuze and Guattari establish their definition of nomadic thought, I already feel completely elsewhere'.[13]

The thesis White submitted in 1979 was titled *Le Nomadisme Intellectuel* and comprises two parts (as was the requirement for the *doctorat d'État*).[14] The first part, written in French with the title 'Portrait du nomade intellectuel', contains chapters on Thomas Hardy's *Jude the Obscure*, John Cowper Powys, Hugh MacDiarmid, Victor Segalen and a final chapter about White's own poetry. The second part, 'Poetry and the tribe', is in English and examines the work of five American poets: Whitman, Jeffers, Williams, Ginsberg, and Snyder. According to White, this second part of the thesis with its 'figures moving in what I regarded as "nomadic space" of America, outside the closed ideological context of the United States, can be considered as a concrete example, in a given territory, of the intellectual nomadism presented more

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[12] Gilles Deleuze and Claire Parnet, *Dialogues II*, (London, 2006), 105.

[13] *Dialogue avec Deleuze*, 20; my translation. Pierre Jamet has also compared their conceptions of nomadism. However, in contrast to the assessment that I put forward, Jamet finds 'no proximity' between White and Deleuze. See Pierre Jamet, 'L'altercation entre Gilles Deleuze et Kenneth White', *Philosophique*, 9 (2006), 145–153. For a response to Jamet's article see Michèle Duclos, 'Kenneth White et Gilles Deleuze, *Philosophique*, 11 (2008), 97–103.

[14] White's thesis is kept in the archive of his work held at the Institute for Contemporary Publishing Archives (IMEC), Abbaye d'Ardenne, Saint-Germain la Blanche-Herbe, France.

generally and abstractly in the first volume'.[15] At White's defence of his thesis Deleuze posed a question to White about his use of the term 'tribe', specifically concerning how it connects to a concept of nomadic space. White's answer involved an explanation of the composite term 'Celtism-Orientalism' and its appearance, for him, in the work of certain writers.[16] However, the issue would resurface on the pages of *A Thousand Plateaus* and, from White's perspective, contributed to a substantial misconception about his work, a 'secret antagonism that suddenly in the early eighties, took huge and grotesque proportions', particularly amongst a leftist milieu in France.[17] White insists that this antagonism was attributable to the reference in *A Thousand Plateaus* to his *doctorat d'État* thesis*:* 'I had become a public enemy: hideous fascist, racist Celt, cult guru, and so on. The latent hostility in the intellectual and literary scenes had found the arguments, a justification'.[18]

In *A Thousand Plateaus* Deleuze and Guattari write:

> Kenneth White recently stressed this dissymmetrical complementarity between a race-tribe (the Celts, those who feel they are Celts) and a milieu-space (the Orient, the Gobi Desert…). White demonstrates that this strange composite, the marriage of the Celt and the Orient, inspires a properly nomad thought that sweeps up English literature and constitutes American literature.[19]

Up to this point, Deleuze and Guattari ally White's formulations with their own concept of 'nomad thought', which they oppose to a 'classical image of thought' that functions according to two principles: the attribution of thought to a universalised thinking subject possessing an interiority, and the positing of an all-encompassing exterior ground or horizon of being. According to Deleuze and Guattari, these two principles combine with, and give support

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[15] *Dialogue avec Deleuze*, 12; my translation.

[16] *Dialogue avec Deleuze*, 16–17; my translation. In his essay on Deleuze, White refers to the use of 'tribe' by 'certain American poets in the 60s to designate a scattered movement of dissidents and the marginalized' (21; my translation). The term also recalls Mallarmé's line 'Donner un sens plus pur aux mots de la tribu' (from the poem 'Le tombeau d'Edgar Poe'). See also Michael André Bernstein's *The Tale of the Tribe: Ezra Pound and the Modern Verse Epic* (Princeton, 1980) for a discussion of Pound's use of Mallarmé's 'tribe'.

[17] *Dialogue avec Deleuze*, 33; my translation.

[18] *Dialogue avec Deleuze*, 33; my translation.

[19] Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (London, 1988), 379.

to, a State apparatus: first, 'the State gives thought a form of interiority, and thought gives that interiority a form of universality';[20] second, by seeking to establish the ground on which thought can be said to occur because 'ever since philosophy assigned itself the role of ground it has been giving the established powers its blessing'.[21] White's discussion of Anglo-American writers would seem to exemplify, for Deleuze and Guattari, how nomad thought, in contrast to the classical image of thought, associates itself with an 'oppressed, bastard, lower, anarchical, nomadic, and irremediably minor race'[22] rather than with a universal subject, and in turn operates within a smooth space with neither horizon nor ground. However, these opposing characteristics that Deleuze and Guattari put forward – smoothness of the nomadic versus the striated and sedentary quality of the State apparatus – are tendencies that interact and are apt to fold into each other. They are not fixed binary terms: rather, we have to grasp the ways in which these terms converge and diverge with each other, with how, for example, nomadic thought is suppressed by the State, but at the same time how such containment involves a necessary interaction between the two, liable to transform both sides. Such interaction may not always bode well, however, as Deleuze and Guattari continue in relation to White's thesis:

> We immediately see the dangers, the profound ambiguities accompanying in this enterprise, as if each effort and each creation faced a possible infamy. For what can be done to prevent the theme of a race from turning into a racism, a dominant and all-encompassing fascism, or into a sect and a folklore, microfascisms? And what can be done to prevent the oriental pole from becoming a phantasy that reactivates all the fascisms in a different way, and also all the folklores, yoga, Zen, and karate?[23]

White's essay on Deleuze is in part a response to this passage in *A Thousand Plateaus* (he quotes it at length). White insists that 'the word "race" is not in my vocabulary nor my categories of thought' and that his concern is with a Celtic 'intellectual current and poetic'[24] he argues has crossed European culture since the wandering monks of the fifth to seventh-centuries and which can then be followed to America with Jack Kerouac. White is also clear about his opposition

[20] *A Thousand Plateaus*, 375.
[21] *A Thousand Plateaus*, 376.
[22] Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *What is Philosophy?* (London,1994), 109.
[23] *A Thousand Plateaus*, 379.
[24] *Dialogue avec Deleuze*, 21; my translation.

to identity constructed on nationalistic or racial grounds: his self-designation as a 'transcendental Scot' indicates 'somebody who knows what he owes to Scottish tradition and to Scottish energies, but who's out to use these energies in an evolutionary way, thus transcending the convenient and couthy models of what Scottishness means'.[25] Moreover, White insists that his conception of the nomadic intellectual was arrived at before encountering Deleuze, and his conception in any case has a 'different genealogy'[26] to Deleuze's, developed through Thoreau, Emerson, Whitman, and Melville.

We can go further into these antagonisms by taking a closer look at White's conception of 'the tribe'. According to White, Deleuze and Guattari's reference to his work is a 'distorted mirror [*un miroir déformé*]'.[27] He draws attention to a specific misquotation. White's conception is of *the* tribe, intended to give a name to a search for a new cultural context that is not identifiable with any particular social group. Discussing Snyder's poetry, for example, White comments that 'the urge is to move away from the 'crazed, hooked nations' and their cultural discordance, towards cultural, and personal integrity: the search for a new (lost, and refound) ground of living and thinking. And with this ground, a rediscovered 'sharpness', acuteness of lived life, civilized life having taken the edge off natural alertness and perception.'[28] The idea of *the* tribe, then, is intended to mark this simultaneous movement back into the pre-industrial and forward to the post-industrial, reflecting also a cartographical practice, in this case a remapping of the social along other lines, outside the fictions of nation and state, so that the definite article indicates that this can be a shared space articulating the possibility for community. For White, Deleuze and Guattari's omission of 'the' in their reference to his thesis indicates that they had failed to appreciate the full range of associations his term sets into play. What matters for this emerging socio-cultural space marked by *the* tribe is not that which is held in common by its membership, but its borders:

> the border between nation and nation
> is hardly interesting after all
> (unless the limit of your ambition
> is to write yet another historical novel)

[25] *Coast to Coast,* 99.
[26] *Dialogue avec Deleuze*, 9; my translation.
[27] *Dialogue avec Deleuze*, 20; my translation.
[28] Kenneth White, *The Tribal Dharma. An Essay on the Work of Gary Snyder* (Carmarthen: Unicorn Bookshop, 1975), 12.

what matters
is the border
between human and inhuman
between one field of knowledge and another
between spirit and matter[29]

For White, borders are important because it is 'when you get to the edge, there's next to nothing'.[30] What can then happen in the confrontation with this 'nothing' is described by White as 'not knowing where you are, who you are, in order to get into the nowhere, the no-who-where, and let the essential images come'.[31] This echoes Deleuze and Guattari's concept of 'becoming imperceptible': 'to make ourselves unrecognizable in turn. To render imperceptible, not ourselves, but what makes us act, feel, and think'[32] – we can see, then, a significant shared concern between the poetry and philosophy.

The connection White makes between Celt and Orient becomes a facet of the 'energy-field'. From one perspective, this field encompasses a specific range of cultural and historical dimensions: he claims, for example, that this Celtic-Oriental composite is traceable to the nomadic tribes of the Eurasian steppe, 'where Celt rubbed shoulders with Cimmerian and Scyth, sharing the same great, unroaded, uncoded space, and the same perception of fast movement'.[33] From another perspective, the field of energy comprises a psycho-social dimension within which an individual can plug into 'live thought' and which is 'erratic and erotic in its nature, full of tentative exploration and existential energy'[34] White's intellectual wandering in this field has encompassed the need to move 'out of the nightmare of history into the China of the mind!'[35] by exploring Eastern literature, while in another direction White moves back across time since 'the end of an old song can mean the beginning of a new map. And that can sometimes mean going back beyond the old into the very old, and out into uncharted territory'.[36] He sees in shamanic practices that developed after the ice age a cultural trajectory leading up to his own project, the desire for 'a freshness of the world such as those

[29] Kenneth White, *Open World: The Collected Poems 1960–2000* (Edinburgh, 2003), 37.
[30] Kenneth White, *Travels in the Drifting Dawn* (Harmondsworth, 1990), 144.
[31] *Travels in the Drifting Dawn*, 134.
[32] *A Thousand Plateaus,* 3.
[33] *The Wanderer and his Charts*, 5.
[34] *The Wanderer and his Charts*, vii.
[35] *Travels in the Drifting Dawn*, 124
[36] Kenneth White, *House of Tides: Letters from Brittany and Other Lands of the West* (Edinburgh, 2000), 181.

men, those Finn-men, knew when they moved over an earth from which the ice had just recently receded'.[37] There is also for White a mapping out from the genesis of modernism within Romanticism and which reveals another flight line: 'it's the kind of pilgrimage that began with peregrinations of the Romantic Self (Byron's *Childe Harold*, and so on) that goes through several phases: heroic, narcissistic, nihilistic, before it opens outs, here and there, into a new nomadism'.[38] With the conception of the intellectual nomad (according to White, it was Spengler who first gave voice to this figure), White sees an opening out of the mind to the world, a process of de-compartmentalization, through which the nomad can join 'a whole stream of continental drift and world-change, but without losing any of its local mind'.[39] White's nomad thus moves simultaneously within and across local and global levels, as well as between cultural critique and cultural transformation.

White's conception of the nomad differs from that of Deleuze and Guattari in *A Thousand Plateaus,* although there are points of convergence that White, in his *Dialogue avec Deleuze,* does not recognize. Deleuze and Guattari begin their portrait of the nomad by emphasizing how this figure operates in an in-between space: the nomad is not equated with a migrant who moves from one place to another. For a nomad, a point is reached only for it to be left: 'although the points determine paths, they are strictly subordinated to the paths they determine'.[40] These nomadic paths do not divide a territory but distribute the nomad(s) in an open space, a space that is 'indefinite and noncommunicating'.[41] They further contrast the smooth space of the nomad with the sedentary in terms of '"traits" that are effaced and displaced with the trajectory'[42] or path: that is, as rising and falling intensities.

Significantly, in comparison with White's conception of the nomadic intellectual, Deleuze and Guattari insist the nomad is not defined in terms of movement but, rather, in terms of how it retains attachment to open space. In what sounds like a Zen koan, they state how 'the nomad moves, but while seated, and he is only seated while moving'.[43] With the nomad there can be no reterritorialization after or upon something since it is 'deterritorialization

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[37] Kenneth White, *On Scottish Ground: Selected Essays* (Edinburgh: Polygon, 1998), 48. White pays no attention here to the gender specificity of this claim.

[38] *House of Tides*, 146.

[39] *The Wanderer and his Charts*, 6.

[40] *A Thousand Plateaus*, 380.

[41] *A Thousand Plateaus*, 380.

[42] *A Thousand Plateaus*, 381.

[43] *A Thousand Plateaus*, 381.

that constitutes the relation to the earth, to such a degree that the nomad reterritorializes on deterritorialization itself'.[44] A distinction is made between speed and movement, one that correlates with a contrast between the intensive and extensive: the 'absolute character' of speed versus the 'relative character' of movement. Intensity is then conceived as how a body occupies a '*smooth space in the manner of a vortex*'.[45] This notion of intensity as a vortex suggests a swirling and spiralling interaction between outside and inside.

What counts for Deleuze and Guattari is the difference between speeds, rather than actual ground covered, but as an intensive difference or difference in itself rather than difference conceived in relation to something else. A speed is intensive because it cannot be divided without changing in nature: cut your speed and you move in an entirely different way. Moreover, Deleuze and Guattari emphasize that intensity is not a matter of moving fast: 'the slowest of movements, or the last to occur or arrive, is not the least intense'.[46] In comparison with Deleuze and Guattari, White would seem to emphasize density over intensity, which he also claims is more sustainable: 'I'll continue to travel a step at a time, believing that the 'paradise' comes out of the most ordinary reality, and out of 'normal' states. Less spectacular maybe, but more lasting; less intense, but with a greater density'.[47] However, the concept of intensity that Deleuze and Guattari offer is not necessarily at odds with what White is saying here. Intensity, for Deleuze and Guattari, is not associated with extremes of behaviour or action. Intensity is understood as the virtual difference in itself that becomes actualized: indeed, and by way of an example, this could be a matter of density, of traveling a 'step at a time' and of a peculiar, singular intensive slowness in the manner White describes and discoverable in the most ordinary of events. Furthermore, such movement can also contribute to a constructionist practice, a cartographical piecing together in which the separate elements are irreducible to one another. The construction of a field of immanence, or what Deleuze and Guattari also term a plane of consistency, is what then matters. This is a process of taking diverse elements and fitting them together piece-by-piece, echoing White's 'one step at a time'. Additionally, and providing a further amplification of White's project, Deleuze and Guattari write of this construction process that 'one piece of which may be Chinese, another American, another medieval, another petty perverse, but

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[44] *A Thousand Plateaus*, 381.

[45] *A Thousand Plateaus*, 381; emphasis in original.

[46] *A Thousand Plateaus*, 172.

[47] *Travels in the Drifting Dawn*, 69.

all in a movement of generalized deterritorialization in which each person takes or makes what she or he can, according to tastes she or he will have succeeded from abstracting from a Self [*Moi*]'.[48]

Like White, Deleuze and Guattari are also concerned with the nomad's relation to the outside. However, according to them, deterritorialization constitutes the nomad's relation with the Earth, an unmediated relation with both sides in reciprocal presupposition, since the Earth deterritorializes itself in order to provide the nomad with a territory and a trajectory, and vice versa, by the nomad's deterritorializing the Earth is produced as territory. This then raises the issue of ground (the idea of ground and grounding is a significant theme in White's writing), since Deleuze and Guattari argue that this deterritorialization makes the Earth become ground or support, rather than a land: that is, a support for a site-specific and localizable phenomenon. This would then resonate with White's demonstration that the nomad operates between local and global dimensions. Moreover, the nature of White's search for ground might then be seen as an attempt to ground thought on movement and deterritorialization.

There is, however, one last point of divergence to consider between White's and Deleuze and Guattari's conceptions of the nomad: the status White gives to travel, a prominence Deleuze and Guattari do not go along with. White insists that 'you have to go out',[49] and this is to be taken literally. His is a programme for transformation summarized as: 'gather and control the energy (wakened by movement) of the complete being (the full psychic spectrum), and place it in the midst of naked elements ('nature'), and from there on, I think, you're really on to something substantial'.[50] For White, this physical journey is fused with a 'sight-seeing that can be done within' and which is 'the highest form of travelling, while it is a poor sort of journey that is dependent upon outside things'.[51] White insists that 'it is not enough to "talk"'.[52] Thus, White finds the concept of geophilosophy in *What is Philosophy?* 'disappointing' since

> Deleuze declares that it was Nietzsche who founded "geo-philosophy" when he set about "determining the national characteristics of French, English and German thought". If that is what Nietzschean thought

[48] *A Thousand Plateaus,* 157.

[49] Kenneth White, *Across the Territories: Travels From Orkney to Rangiroa (*Edinburgh, 2004), 51.

[50] *Travels in the Drifting Dawn*, 69.

[51] *Travels in the Drifting Dawn,* 146.

[52] *Dialogue avec Deleuze,* 27; my translation.

> finally boils down to in Deleuze's mind, it is a pity. If that were all Nietzsche ever did, I would be less interested in him than I am. But the Nietzsche that interests me is the one who walked on the plateau of the Engadine, or along the bay of Genoa, far away from national characteristics, far outside national frameworks.[53]

In contrast, Deleuze and Guattari are alert to the illusions of the traveller, who may journey far and wide yet cannot jettison their philosophical and cultural baggage: 'it is certainly not enough to travel to escape phantasy, and it is certainly not by invoking a past, real or mythical, that one avoids racism'.[54] In relation to White's stress on the tribe and borders, Deleuze and Guattari argue that 'the race-tribe exists only at the level of an oppressed race, and in the name of the oppression it suffers',[55] defined not in terms of purity or essence but as a mongrel impurity bestowed on it by the majoritarian or dominant culture. The Celtic-Oriental assemblage that White posits is not then something to be rediscovered so much as created as on-going process, the construction of a smooth space so that a tribe can then populate this space. Thought has a 'double becoming':[56] in the marriage of Celt and Orient each side might be made to double on each other, a demonstration of how, we can add, thinking need not be attributable to a subject or understood as a representation of an object. The challenge for a nomadic thought is thus formulated: 'to place thought in an immediate relation with the outside, with the forces of the outside, in short to make thought a war machine'.[57]

Despite differences between White's work and Deleuze's, we can look further into how White's 'struggle for subjectivity' is extendable through an encounter with Deleuze's thought. In White's terms, the radical practice he is after is a movement outwards, an active reception of the folding of the outside in, affects that are registered on the body/mind: 'what I call art now is nothing made / but the pure pathology of my body and mind'.[58] For White the focus is also on how to undertake this struggle, which is reflected in a poetic cartography of becoming. We might, then, see the philosophy and poetry as two sides that can be folded into each other, that can be connected and which amplify each other. With this in mind, let's go into the two principal

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[53] 'Geopoetics – A Philosophical Approach', para. 8 of 12.
[54] *A Thousand Plateaus*, 379.
[55] *A Thousand Plateaus,* 379.
[56] *A Thousand Plateaus,* 380.
[57] *A Thousand Plateaus*, 377.
[58] *Open World*, 109.

poetic forms found in White's poetry: the 'diamond-poem' and the longer 'walk-poem'.

The 'diamond-poem'

White's poetry is populated with diverse historical and cultural figures: his figure of the nomadic intellectual is a composite of Eastern and Western influences so that the medieval wandering Scottish monk and the Chinese T'ang era poet both provide models for White's idea of nomadic thought. According to Deleuze, the role of specific figures operating as conceptual 'mediators' is essential to creativity. Deleuze maintains that finding such mediators is vital since 'creation's all about mediators'; these mediators can be 'real or imaginary, animate or inanimate' and with whom a reciprocal relationship is formed so that 'I need my mediators to express myself, and they'd never express themselves without me'.[59] Intriguingly, for both Deleuze and White, Nietzsche has fulfilled a mediator role. It is through Nietzsche that Deleuze explores a specific engagement with the problem of subjectivity; the book on Nietzsche finds, in its concluding analysis, an affirmation of multiplicity, becoming and chance. For White, Nietzsche is an essential point of departure. For example, in an essay on what he calls the 'life-technique' of John Cowper Powys, White regards Powys in Nietzschean terms, as a thinker striving for a spiritual solitude in which the body is reduced to its 'skeletal bones' so that 'it is only after this reduction, this askesis, that the real work can begin'.[60] For White, Nietzsche's intellectual nomadism also marks a conjunction of East and West, as in the poem 'Reading Nietzsche on the River Clyde':

A room in a poor district
at the top of a staircase
a hundred steps high
in a steep and narrow street

Sono contento' he would say

Genoa: energy and clarity
a gay hard-living people
the mountains and the sea

[59] Gilles Deleuze, *Negotiations 1972–1990* (New York, 1990), 125.

[60] Kenneth White, *The Life-Technique of John Cowper Powys* (Swansea: 1978), 24–25; emphasis in original.

> 'There are many dawns'
> he had read in the Vedas
> 'that have not yet shed their light'.[61]

In addition to the multiple figures populating White's poetry and essays, non-human elements compose any encounter with the outside, repeated elements of which include the coast and its geological formations, animals (especially birds), and various plants and flowers. Together with the multiple human mediators, these elements form the traits and lines of the poem-map, and the diamond-poems are then 'the expression of particular moments and movements' reduced to their essential and primal essence.[62] A recurring aspect of the writing connecting these different motifs in White's work is the survey of the littoral as a space between human and non-human, a border or threshold. This fascination is termed by White his 'Postmodern Atlantic Studies'.[63] For White, the postmodern is defined as a renewal of cultural possibilities: 'if techno-economic civilization is culturally rundown, it has, by encircling the globe, re-introduced, beyond national divisions and identities, the question of a *world*'.[64] The interest in the Atlantic for White is an enormity of physical space enabling a movement 'outside the norm' and with what White characterizes as 'wind-and-wave philosophy'.[65] The coast is a place for 'live thought, a point of departure for migratory ideas'.[66] White explains this interest further:

> First of all, I take "seaboard" to be particularly significant space. We are close there to the beginnings of life, we cannot but be aware there of primordial rhythms (tidal, meteorological). In that space, too, we have one foot, as it were, in humanity (inhabited, inscribed, coded space), the other, in the non-human cosmos (chaos-cosmos, chaosmos) – and I think it is vitally important to keep that dialogue alive.[67]

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[61] *Open World*, 11.

[62] Kenneth White, *Ideas of Order at Cape Wrath* (Aberdeen, 2013), 138.

[63] Kenneth White, *On the Atlantic Edge* (Dingwall, 2006), 44.

[64] *On the Atlantic Edge,* 47; emphasis in original. White's source for this conception of postmodernity is Arnold Toynbee's A Study of History.

[65] *On the Atlantic Edge*, 45.

[66] *House of Tides*, 185.

[67] Kenneth White, 'The Atlantic Shore — A letter on the Origins of Geopoetics', *The International Institute of Geopoetics*, http://institut-geopoetique.org/en/founding-texts/110-the-atlantic-shore-a-letter-on-the-origins-of-geopoetics [accessed 15

There is a logic of fragmentation at work: this is reflected in poem titles – 'Road Fragment',[68] 'Fragment of a Red Sea Journal',[69] 'November Evening Note'[70] – that indicate incompletion, which is then explored though the poetry itself as 'Last Page of a Notebook' shows:

> A bird yell
> emptied my skull
>
> ricks of hay
> lined the fields
>
> a fishing smack
> lay at quiet anchor –
>
> it was Kyle of Tongue
> on a blue morning.[71]

Each stanza comprises two lines that together form a declarative clause, or, as White prefers, 'indicative phrase'.[72] In the first three stanzas, the first lines contain noun phrases whilst the second lines start with verbs. Indefinite articles in these stanzas then contrast with the final stanza in which the pronoun 'it' and the preposition 'on' specify place and time. This contrast between the final stanza and the rest of the poem indicates a break in the flow of linguistic energy created up to that point by the poem but it also functions as a suggestion of a continuation elsewhere or in another time. In 'Breton Spring', which also uses the two-line stanza structure, this flow/break is further demonstrated, so that the final stanza likewise marks a movement in contrast with the rest of the poem; it is the only stanza with punctuation, a full stop marking the end to the poem, whilst the movement out of the garden to the 'rumour of the sea' is an extension that suggests continuation:

> Saturday morning
> Aprilean light

November 2015] (para. 1 of 30).

[68] *Open World*, 102.

[69] *Open World*, 330.

[70] Kenneth White, *Longitudes and Latitudes* (Aberdeen, 2013), 117.

[71] *Open World,* 123.

[72] *Coast to Coast,* 67.

daffodils dancing
among the birches

a robin redbreast
perched on a cactus

magpies building
big high nests

a parliament of sparrows
in the white-flowering cherrytree

over the valleys
the rumour of the sea.[73]

White's preference for linguistic concision and simplicity, both lexical usage and syntactical construction, places an emphasis on nouns and verbs which takes language away from descriptive function – there is, therefore, a restricted employment of metaphor in his work — so that the writer, as White puts it, is entering a 'field of energy' and through this 'making something out of it'.[74] Taking the reader into this field can be thought of as anti-lyrical, as a determination to make poetry work as something more than self-expression. White's use of the present participle in his poetry adds to the sense of a poem as an event in the present (and in the presence of the reader), whilst omission of punctuation and lack of traditional metrical patterns enables rhythm to develop as a 'loose, open pattern', as White describes it.[75]

In following White's cartographical practice (and extending this through Deleuze), the distinction Deleuze and Guattari draw between *following* and *reproducing* is significant, recognizing as it does the different relations with the Earth thereby engendered: reproduction focuses on a reterritorialization around a point of view or a particular domain, whereas following enables deterritorialization to occur, a process irreducible to a given subject or object. Whilst Deleuze and Guattari present this distinction, they qualify the difference

[73] *Longitudes and Latitudes*, 122.
[74] *Ideas of Order at Cape Wrath*, 68.
[75] *Coast to Coast,* 67.

by stating that neither is better than the other.[76] For White, in contrast, what is paramount is 'writing the road', the focus on following and on an expanding movement.[77] As he confirms: 'I'm concerned with a deictic and kinetic use of language as against a mimetic one'.[78] Yet, when discussing his concept of geopoetics, White adopts paired terms that evoke a comparable dynamic of following and reproducing outlined by Deleuze and Guattari: according to White, there is 'the dialectic of errancy and residency, going along with charting and cartography'.[79] Citing Coleridge, White appeals to what can be thought of as a poetics of immanence, indicating how this poetics comprises two movements, 'the one which tends to expand infinitely, while the other strives to apprehend or *find* itself in this infinity'.[80] Both movements are twinned components of cartographical practice, according to White, and, it can therefore be added, of writing and reading 'the road'.

A feature of this expanding movement outward found in the diamond-poems is a procedure of listing that establishes a series to develop, often stressed through numbered stanzas as in 'Autumn at Gwenved', that echo a Deleuzian conception of the world as converging and diverging series which can be folded 'inside' the mind in a process of becoming-world and that is also the making of a world:[81]

1.
Early October:
in the morning mist
Korean chrysanthemums.

2.
A crow
skimming over the sea-rocks?
the shadow of a gull.

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[76] *A Thousand Plateaus*, 372.
[77] This is the title of an essay in *The Wanderer and His Charts*.
[78] *Coast to Coast*, 66.
[79] *On the Atlantic Edge*, 108.
[80] *On the Atlantic Edge*, 108; emphasis in original. The reference is to Coleridge's *Biographia Literaria*.
[81] Gwenved means 'white land' in Celtic and is the name of White's house in Brittany.

3.
On the frost of the garden
the paw-prints of the cat
on his way to the woods.

4.
This evening over Gwenved
at the setting of the sun
every gull is a rosy gull.

5.
All the stillness
of that autumn morning
was on the wings of the dragonfly.[82]

The 'walk-poem'

In the 'Author's Note' to *The Bird Path,* White indicates that the term 'longer poems' is 'no more than a useful working term' employed to indicate 'a sustained tonality'.[83] This 'sustained tonality' takes various forms across White's oeuvre. The arrangement of poems in White's various volumes of collected poetry suggest linkages that can be made across the different forms of his literary output. In *The Bird Path*, poems are arranged into sections that reflect geographic and poetic interests: 'The Cold Wind of Dawn', 'Walking the Coast', 'North Roads, South Roads', 'Out of Asia; Pyrenean Meditations', 'The Atlantic Movement', 'The House at the Head of the Tide'. Elements of these section titles are repeated in various book titles and further echoed in the titles of the sections of other poetry collections. White's early collection *The Most Difficult Area* has three sections which focus on the poetic — 'Prose of the White-Haired Seagulls', 'The Most Difficult Area', 'Signs and Situations'[84] — whilst *Handbook for the Diamond Country* emphasizes the geographical interest, organized into three sections: 'Scotland Poems', 'Open World Poems', 'Brittany Poems'.[85]

These connections threading across White's work attest to the primary focus he gives to contact with the world. This contact is not a case of finding

[82] *Open World*, 454.
[83] Kenneth White, *The Bird Path: Collected Longer Poems 1964–1988* (Edinburgh, 1989), 8.
[84] Kenneth White, *The Most Difficult Area* (London, 1968).
[85] Kenneth White, *Handbook for the Diamond: Country Collected Shorter Poems* 1960–1990 (Edinburgh, 1990).

ourselves in the world. We do not discover in it a reflection of an inner psychic structuring but rather it is the world that discovers or makes itself in us. Nature is a process of production. In *Anti-Oedipus,* Deleuze and Guattari insist that a schizophrenic out for a walk provides a 'better model' for understanding the production of subjectivity than a neurotic on the psychoanalyst's couch.[86] The walk as a poetic form is explored by White in his long poem 'Walking the Coast'.

'Walking the Coast' comprises fifty-three sections or 'waves' as White calls them. Each section is numbered and there is no fixed left-hand margin. The poem begins with the problem of selection:

> to select
> the features of real significance
> so as to make
> of the welter
> a world that will last [87]

Attention has to be given to patterns that build 'new harmonic wholes', which is a construction proceeding hand-in-hand with writing since 'There is only poetry', as this first section concludes.[88] The poem becomes a process of discovering patterns, their powers of affect and how these patterns function at a deeper abstract level as a diagram of the different foldings of the outside.

Some of these patterns are to be discovered as lines that pass between different times so that memory is a process of becoming, memory existing virtually alongside the present. The past as memory is another element to be folded into the present's production of subjectivity. White recollects in the second section of the poem 'living as a boy on the shore'.[89] This memory is an event in the present, as the use of the present participle indicates, and which is drawn attention to with a line break as White remembers

> the clou –
> ding and clamouring of gulls [90]

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[86] Giles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (London, 2004), 2.

[87] *Open World*, 127.

[88] *Open World*, 127.

[89] *Open World*, 128.

[90] *Open World*, 128

Deleuze and Guattari discuss memory as a process of becoming so that memories form 'blocks' or lines of becoming at a molecular level: "'a" child co-exists with us, in a zone of proximity or a block of becoming, on a line of deterritorialization that carries us both off – as opposed to the child we once were, whom we remember or phantasize, the molar child whose future is the adult'.[91] Singular events in the past exist into the present, growing and accumulating layers of meaning. Later in the poem White remembers his room in Paris and its window from which he viewed the Eiffel Tower 'pointing the obscurity / I breathed in';[92] in the next section of the poem he describes the walls of his room in Glasgow, the fourth bare wall with 'nothing at all / that's the wall I went through / before I arrived here'.[93] The walk-poem is a temporal as well as spatial peregrination.

The nature of the relationships between the different sections of the poem, constructing linkages across space and time, is indicated by White in section thirty-one of the poem and what he describes as his 'aim'.[94] Using a quotation taken from the introduction by Nobuyuki Yuasa to the seventeenth-century Japanese poet Matsuo Bashō's *The Narrow Road to the Deep North and Other Travel Sketches,* White writes that poetry can produce 'a kind of kaleidoscopic beauty / with infinite variety / revealed to the reader / in a slowly evolving movement'.[95] This is a description of a diagram: resonances and harmonics, patterns and rhythms that form variegated and transversal connections which are like light refracting through crystal. This kaleidoscope is relatable to Deleuze's crystalline conception of time explored in his books on cinema. The crystal is a time machine enjoining the coalescence of actual time — the production of ordered sequences — with virtual openings into the past and future. As Felicity Colman observes, the crystal is a 'geological and mathematical term that Deleuze employs for its structural habits of forming through aggregates open (prism) and/or closed (cube) crystallographic forms, some of which require other forms to complete them, some of which can be complete in themselves'.[96] Both the walk-poem as a kaleidoscopic diagram and the image of time as a crystal entail non-linear dynamics, incommensurable points in space and coexisting layers of time, connections that are rhizomatic.

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[91] *A Thousand Plateaus*, 294.

[92] *Open World*, 152.

[93] *Open World,* 153.

[94] *Open World*, 157.

[95] *Open World*, 157.

[96] Felicity J. Colman, 'Cinema: Movement-Image-Recognition-Time' in Charles J. Stivale (ed.), *Gilles Deleuze: Key Concepts* (Chesham, 2005), 145.

According to Yuasa, Bashō's use of certain linking techniques connects his verses 'with a fine thread of imaginative harmony'.[97] The shifting patterns and rhythms of 'Walking the Coast' likewise give rise to linkages between the sections of the poem, whilst each section functions as a self-contained poem within the larger framework of the long poem. Reading is an active construction of connections, to discover the poem's patterns and harmonies. This connection building, a discovery of relations between parts that never coalesce into a fixed whole, creates, as Yuasa describes Bashō's poetry, 'unity through variety'.[98] In White's poem, these patterns arise through repetitions of words, the echoing effects between its various mediators – these include the painters Kokoschka and Kandinsky, the medieval mathematician Michael Scot, the seventeenth-century writer and translator of Rabelais Thomas Urquhart, Gaelic poets and the Japanese hermit Hakuyu – the recurrence of motifs including wind, birds, rock, and crystal, as well as the various uses of quotations, so that patterns engender relations that can continue to shift with new readings. Patterns are discovered, not imposed, and which are, according to the poem, essential 'to keep life alive'.[99]

These patterns in the poem are what Deleuze and Guattari term affects: that is, a passage or duration that is 'transitive, and not indicative or representative', [the affect is] 'a lived duration that involves the difference between two states'.[100] In other words, the affect is an event. On this basis, I would argue that the relations discovered between sections of White's walk-poem can be thought of as events, as a process of finding 'the essential in the random', as the poem puts it.[101] This requires a receptiveness: 'what we must learn is / how to receive it / into ours'.[102] In *Foucault*, Deleuze describes how an aspect of the fold of subjectivity is the gap between what is seen and what is said. A production of subjectivity occurs in this gap and makes the two sides touch. The pattern building in White's poem is one way, then, the two sides of the fold can make contact. The receptivity required for this diagramming is extendable into other poems and across White's entire output, as he states in the 'Author's Note' to an early collection *Wild Coal,* each poem must be seen as part of a

[97] Nobuyuki Yuasa, 'Introduction' in Matsuo Bashō, *The Narrow Road to the Deep North and Other Travel Sketches* (Harmondsworth, 1966), 43. Yuasa indicates the linking techniques used by Bashō to connect poems in a series: 'aroma (nioi), echo (hibiki), countenance (omokage), colour (utsuri) and rank (kurai) of the preceding poem.

[98] Yuasa, 38.

[99] *Open World*, 127.

[100] Gilles Deleuze, *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy* (San Francisco, 1988), 49.

[101] *Open World*, 169.

[102] *Open World*, 141.

'synoptic whole and it is in movement, connected'.[103] This movement includes the way the infinite can be accessed directly, so we see from the perspective of the infinite, as White shows too in 'Walking the Coast':

> the loveliness is everywhere
> even
> in the ugliest
> and most hostile environment
> the loveliness is everywhere
> at the turning of a corner
> in the eyes
> and on the lips
> of a stranger [104]

The capacity for being affected is what matters. Although Deleuze and Guattari warn against reintroducing transcendence by positing the void as ultimate truth, the need for openness to the infinite is recognized in their thinking. This is what might be thought of as their Spinozism. In fact, Deleuze pairs Spinoza with Nietzsche, proclaiming that the latter continues the line of thought created by the former. Spinoza is concerned with how to make thought free, how to make it 'vital', in order to fashion a life 'beyond good and evil':[105] Spinoza's tripartite condemnation of consciousness, values and sad passions are picked up by Nietzsche. With Spinoza, we find a special kind of philosophical practice: how the struggle for subjectivity requires certain ground-work, a preparation that makes a becoming-world possible, so as to share in 'a power identical to Life'.[106] Spinoza searches for something that can be called power, and which has a twofold meaning: this power is 'the manner in which an existing being is filled with immanence (the Eternal Return as the capacity of something or someone to return eternally)'[107] and 'a movement beyond the infinitely perfect as a property, towards the absolutely infinite as Nature'.[108] In *Foucault*, Deleuze discusses this movement in Melville's work as the search for a 'central chamber' bringing with it the fear that all that will

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[103] Kenneth White, 'Author's Note' in *Wild Coal* (Paris: Club des Etudiants d'Anglais, Sorbonne, 1963).

[104] *Open World,* 141.

[105] *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy*, 4.

[106] *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy*, 12.

[107] Gilles Deleuze, *Essays Critical and Clinical* (Minneapolis, 1997), 137.

[108] *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy,* 44.

be found is an immense and terrible void; Melville's accomplishment is to trace a 'terrible line' of molecular becoming that leads to the central chamber 'which one need no longer fear is empty since one fills it with oneself'.[109] White's poetry is a comparable attempt at becoming imperceptible, which is so crucial to the on-going production of subjectivity and which requires a making strange of not only the world but also of the self in contact with the infinite. Yet, what White's work shows as well is how a struggle for subjectivity must involve a practice – in other words, it is 'not enough to talk', as Deleuze also acknowledges:

> Are we to become the professionals who give talks on these topics? Are we to wish only that those who have been struck down do not abuse themselves too much? Are we to take up collections and create special journal issues? Or should we go a short way further to see for ourselves, be a little alcoholic, a little crazy, a little suicidal, a little of a guerrilla – just enough to extend the crack, but not enough to deepen it irremediably? Wherever we turn, everything seems dismal. Indeed, how are we to stay at the surface without staying on the shore? How do we save ourselves by saving the surface and every surface organization, including language and life? How is this politics, this full guerrilla warfare to be attained?[110]

[109] *Foucault*, 100–1.

[110] Gilles Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense* (London, 2004), 179.