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John Rajchman, Interview
Riverside Dve, NY, February 10, 2003
Simone Brott

What do you think is the Deleuze/Architecture connection, and what was the role of Semiotext(e), Zone and your part in it?

Semiotext(e) has an important role in introducing the ideas of Deleuze in a climate that was dominated by literary theory, and so it's not an accident that it happens in a french department. And the early issues of Semiotext(e) didn't have that many architectural things, but it was Mario Gandelsonas in fact talking about semiotics and so forth. He was interested in Kristeva, and still this idea of architecture as language, that kind of model. So on the fringes of that there could be a deleuzian thing, but that was more his focus. So it was really within literary studies and they were one of the many university sources for french philosophy coming to america in general. So you had Yale dominated by Paul de man and this kind of deconstructivism and Sylvère wanted to introduce something else—which was Deleuze.

And we invited Deleuze—the only time I think he came to New York was for the Schizoculture conference in 1975 in which he read his paper “Rhizome” – now the introduction to Mille Plateaux. Foucault came Lyotard came and it was sort of an attempt to have another kind of theoretical problem, let's say, so I think that's the early Semiotext(e)-Deleuze. So at Columbia, besides Sylvère, Sylvère had his students, the people that would found zone including Jonathan Crary and Sanford Kwinter and Michel Feher who studied with Deleuze, wanted to found this new kind of publishing project. You know it's those people that participated. Even me. I was editor of zone for a day, they say, because I went to the initial meeting, but since I'd already done Semiotext(e) I thought it would be more interesting for them to do it rather than me.

And that group, I think if you compare the general thing that Zone takes from Deleuze to Sylvère: first of all Sylvère had a tendency to have an anti-theoretical stance. He saw Deleuze as a challenge to theory altogether. The Zone people I think that they, you know, saw Deleuze as a kind of theory, a practice of theory, a way of doing it a new way of doing it that was more interesting. And second, Sylvère was much more involved with the kind of battle of Deleuze with other figures like Derrida, Lacan or something like that. Why Deleuze was better, let's say, than somebody else. But for this younger or second generation, those battles, they had already made their minds up about them, so there's much less of it in Zone—very little about psychoanalysis or the attempt on the part of Deleuze to transform psychoanalysis. Almost all of the work by that group, Jonathan Crary, etc.—while Freud figures in them he doesn't predominate or determine the field at all. That's just not a struggle they were interested in. They weren't derrido-textualists, they weren't ..and yet they wanted to have some kind of theory, and the larger problems of space and time and so forth and also a kind of focus on scientists and technoscientists is what they found interesting in Deleuze and emphasised in the things they chose to focus on in Deleuze.

So I see them as pulling Deleuze into this other direction and Jonathan very early on was interested in the problem of cities. I remember in the very first meeting he talked about the problem of cities. And in the first issue of zone, they have critical regionalism, they even have Frampton, Rem Koolhaas and peter Eisenman answering questions about the city. So that's the first time, so that in their all their work, their personal interests, there was a direct connection with architecture.

You know Deleuze's own essay called "Mediators"¹ is a kind of theoretical model for that. You have different resonances among different people for that. It was Published in french in *L'Autre journal* in 1985 and it gets translated into *Zone*. They're the ones that did that essay. It's the essay that's now published in *Negotiations*. In french it's "Intercesseurs" (intercedors/intercessors) – mediators to my mind not the best translation. So you had this—Deleuze I think was very interested in that in those years .

Well Deleuze, for example, I remember when he published *Le Pli*, it's when I wrote something about this which I sent him on the fold. So he said: 'this is very funny, because in reaction to this book there's two groups that I never expected to respond: surfers and architects.' So, I think, the Deleuze architecture connection—maybe another fact about—it is not or for a long time wasn't strongly represented in France. So it's really the english speaking people who helped to sort of foster this and, therefore, Deleuze who wrote not so much directly about architecture, you know, was surprised and interested at this phenomenon that had emerged.

Also, for example, I did a thing at one point with Paul Virilio and Jean Hubert(?) in La Tourette in France for an audience of architects—very early architecture-architecture thing— and the french students came up and said: 'We're following all this in english.' Maybe that's another factor. Anyway, so I don't think the phenomenon of Deleuze in architecture was started by this *Zone* phenomenon. On the other hand, it's already a possibility, whereas the peter Eisenman and architecture discourse was much more dominated by Derrida...[all this is obscured]... I don't see it as _____

My own role in this, I was always interested in Deleuze as a philosopher and though I wrote about Foucault and Lacan, I would often just read Deleuze and would use it to think about other things. Only by complicated circumstances did I formulate the project to work directly on Deleuze. There were a number of different motivations. One of them was very little attention had been paid to Deleuze which made it very free to do with it what you want. As opposed to Foucault: very soon there was a Foucault industry, everyone wanted to own Foucault and it became very closed down. You couldn't use the name, only the ideas. [...] I decided that Deleuze is not very well done on its own. So it turns out that Deleuze and I both wrote Foucault books that were published at around the same time. We had a mutual philosophical friend _____Deleuze's assistant who came

¹ "Mediators" Interview with Gilles Deleuze published in *L'Autre journal* 8 (October 1985): 10-22. [Translated as "Mediators" in *Negotiations* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995): 121-134.] and Deleuze, Gilles. "Mediators" in *Incorporations*, Jonathan Crary and Sanford Kwinter, eds. (New York: Zone Books, 1992)

to me and said Deleuze likes your Foucault book and he wants to meet you and he wants to know what you're working on now. So I said, tell him that I'm thinking of writing on him. Deleuze said I don't like people who write about me, I don't like people who write *sur*. But in your case as long as writing about me you satisfy two criteria: one that you are accurate and two that I will be unable to recognise myself in the result.

I thought to myself while I'm writing this book I should_____. The book ended up being the book on Deleuze. It was a long time and went through different versions and stages but I got a call from Peter Eisenman inviting me to the ANY conferences. So I said it sounded really interesting but I didn't know much about architecture. He led me to believe that was no problem at all. Since then many books by and about Peter Eisenman, so since I was working on this Deleuze project and reading this material I said to myself Deleuze could have a really interesting impact in these debates in architecture because part of what had happened to this derridean stuff within architecture had led to this very—this loss of a sense of reality; drawings were just as real as buildings...What was interesting about Deleuze when he had smooth and striated space and all that apparatus was he was really giving an account that could speak to the way architecture actually worked so my initial contribution to the ANY conferences...[...] Since Peter Eisenman finally had a problem with Derrida, they found in Deleuze something interesting, and this, in my point of view, is how the two things came together.

What was interesting for me was, first, Deleuze himself had written very extensively about cinema, I find his book on Francis Bacon about painting very interesting. A book he'd written all of a sudden about literature – but here was an area where he says a few things about architecture, baroque architecture in *Le Pli*—but his concept of Baroque architecture is so strange that though it was like that...you could actually try to do things that aren't already determined by Deleuze himself. If you wrote on cinema you could read his cinema book and react to that.

For me architecture provided the occasion in which practitioners in the domain could relate to a philosophical model in which you could have this kind of arrangement...dimension.

Initially it wasn't so much that Deleuze was good at architecture or that there was some connection between the two but that architecture appeared as its own development in which they could absorb Deleuze in their own interesting way whereas the Cinema and Art History worlds couldn't do that because they were more literary, still working with these other models. I was really interested in Deleuze as a philosopher and also as an interesting way of doing philosophy in an academic context and so I wanted to extract for my own purposes a model and architecture happened to provide an opportunity to do this. It was a moment that passed.

When is this?

This is around 1990.

The 90s is a period where this takes place and in a way I couldn't understand...I received invitations to talk in architectural schools. There was a moment in which Jessie Reiser, Greg Lynn + Koolhaas were interested in this. In everyone's case there's a different story on how they come across this. Maybe I'm wrong but that's my story. Then I was invited to actually write something about a project by Peter Eisenman, the literature on folding architecture.

On the AD monograph?

Yeah. Another feature of this: in the early 90s, Bernard Cache, so I asked Deleuze about Cache but he says this is my student. The manuscript² wasn't published in France so I talked to Deleuze. The architecture people didn't want to hear about Deleuze and Deleuze didn't want to hear about the architecture people so the manuscript remained unpublished [in France] in the early 90s. So I said there's now a big interest in this kind of thing in english speaking countries so I met Cache and said give me the manuscript if you don't mind. I'll see whether they want to publish it here. So I gave the manuscript to Zone and to ANY and it was finally published. It's a book that is now in english with the title *Earth Moves*.³ in french *Terres Meuble*.

So he couldn't publish it in France?

Now I think it's been published in France.

Funny that it went back to its home.

Yeah the premise of the ANY conferences was this kind of globalisation so that helped spread this in a way. So eventually it came back to France.

I still don't understand the zone-architecture thing, why they chose the city and architecture as a theme? Was architecture already talked about in Sylvère's seminar or was it just Feher, he was already into architecture?

Feher was working on a book on cultural history and that led him into the Foucault debate about sexuality...and what was called the New Historicists. I'm not sure that the cities stuff came through him.

First Jonathan Crary was interested in cities—his own research—a tradition of Art History which was always interested in the City, so that's a part of Zone...and Brian,⁴ and other people, the translator of Deleuze...but it happened sort of internationally as well. Countries particularly interested in Deleuze were Australia, and in Brazil—very strong—and one of the interesting things about that Brazilian itinerary of Deleuze is that

² *Terre Meuble*

³ Cache, Bernard. *Earth Moves : The Furnishing of Territories*. Translated by Anne Boyman. Edited by Michael Speaks, *Writing Architecture Series*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, c1995.

⁴ Brian Massumi

the problem of subjectivity for them from the beginning was very important. And Brazil is one of the few countries where Schizoanalysis is a real thing...it really exists.

Guattari's La Borde clinic, is that not real?

Yes it's real. I went there once myself

As a patient or as a doctor?

As a visitor. I was also in Paris a lot. As I said I wrote a thesis on Lacan. I knew very much the lacanian milieu. Felix Guattari was one within the lacanian milieu who, for me, wanted to push psychoanalysis in the militant direction. I was friendly with him at the time. He took me to La Borde.

When is this?

In the late seventies. I had the fullbright to study with Lacan. I met many people at this time, they had this Italian experimental radio project going...there were lots of activities going on. I remember going to his house which was two blocks from La Borde. He became much more depressive as he got older. I remember I invited him to this architecture thing in the architecture department. He travelled a lot to Japan and Brazil.

In Brazil, I'm now on a journal there that has a Deleuzian spin, subjectivity is in the title. The Zone people, for me, didn't think the problem of psychoanalysis was very important. They were very fascinated in science, this biophysical dimension of Deleuze. It's not wrong or uninteresting only Guattari was involved as an actual therapist, therefore when he went to Brazil he started talking about this problem of subjectivity. And Brazil is this incredible machine for producing new subjectivity so...Of course there was Zone's participation with the body.

Your question of Deleuze's politics—Is it political?—Interesting question. The lecture Felix gave when he came to New York was on singularizing space. It was at Columbia, just an event sponsored by the architecture school. Deleuze did not travel. First of all there was his health which then turned in to a principle. He said he didn't travel. Derrida came here. Deleuze never. Deleuze, unlike Derrida, has a strong interest in American matters, on the superiority of American literature. He like Peirce, he likes pragmatism, English philosophy, he loves American literature. That was the thing about him. There was that element about Deleuze, that he didn't travel.

He sings praise to America in "Rhizome."

Yeah he came here. Since there was this sort of interest in it here. By invitation he came... and he was interested in the singularization of space. Other people like Jennifer Bloomer spoke.

If you look in *D* you'll find it. Stan Allen and Greg Lynn had one issue.

Was Bernard Cache was involved in this?

No, Bernard Cache would have had nothing to do with it if I hadn't published his manuscript...[...]

Deleuze was in a radical campus that refused what was called the progressivity of knowledge. They weren't preparing to becoming canonical philosophers or to have that career. That's where he had this idea that philosophy has this way of addressing non-philosophers who have a way of understanding philosophy better than philosophers. And he came up with this model. A lot of different people came to listen to Deleuze; Bernard Cache studied under Deleuze for a while. He ended up getting employed by the french government developing software and out of the academic loop entirely. I sort of provided a favorable opinion of him. He was working on his own, then this architectural saga. He worked with another guy.

Mark Goulthorpe who was connected with an australian group, Mark Burry was one of them. Then they had a falling out over a legal matter—ironically—intellectual property.

Exactly, issues. Of course I knew nothing about this at the time...the software side of this was more significant than the philosophy...

The software side of this completely dominates the architecture academy and people who design “deleuzian” architecture at Columbia have never read Deleuze and don't know that it started with Deleuze, reading Deleuze – but it's a line of flight that's self replicated to the point that its lost its origin –

It's true.

I'm reading Baudrillard from early Semiotext(e)

Another fact about Semiotext(e) is Sylvère combined Deleuze with Baudrillard. In France that was a total incompatibility.

Really? It's similar.

Baudrillard wrote a book called *Against Foucault*,⁵ *Oublier Foucault*, which they thought was a bit much.

A Great title.

⁵ Jean Baudrillard. *Forget Foucault & Forget Baudrillard: An Interview with Sylvère Lotringer*. New York, N.Y: Semiotext(e), c1987.

Deleuze hated Baudrillard. Baudrillard was a very different figure, much closer to architecture. He was part of this urban group in France which becomes more and more disappointed but that's very different...

But they all share the theories of war Baudrillard, Virilio and Deleuze and they're the same type of Marxists.

That's a question that for me is more complicated. It is true, the connection between Virilio and Baudrillard. Virilio was going to be an architect. Essentially he was going to be an architect and then this problem of war, information and the politics of '68 came to bear and he thought that was much more important to do.

Fascinating.

He knows very much about architecture culture. And maybe that's something he shares with Baudrillard. But Deleuze is interested also in the problem of cities. Deleuze and Foucault have a lot to do with structuralism and till earlier, because Marx that is married to all their intellectual friends: first to phenomenology, then with Althusser to structuralism – so of course Marx is a very interesting philosopher and a very rich one to be able to make all these connections. Negri is another complicated case. Of course he was in Italy associated with Tafuri because the group around Tafuri, the Italians all had an important role in reading french thought to architecture and Foucault in particular.

Who else was in the group around Tafuri?

Well, Georges Teyssot who I think helped introduce Foucault and Foucault had a big impact intellectually and politically in Italy on a very specific source. All the work about micropolitics got translated and it had a big role in their debate—than is much less true than, say, here. I think in Foucault they found the model of politics that no one else was working on. And that got translated into an Italian politics. That was the context they all had debates about that within. Details of that you'd have to ask somebody who really knows about all that. Negri therefore came out of that. Of course Negri was arrested then and went to France, supported by, among other people, Deleuze—and Deleuze's introduction to Negri's book, on Spinoza, that was written when he was in prison is a very interesting statement of Deleuze's own sense of political philosophy. I don't know when they published Negri's book which is called the savage anomaly or the wild anomaly⁶, I don't know what it's called for some reason they didn't publish the—it's a really interesting book on Spinoza in which the idea of multitude – which later plays a big role in the Empire book in which its developed – that's where it comes from.

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⁶ Negri, Antonio. *L'anomalia Selvaggia : Saggio Su Potere E Potenza in Baruch Spinoza*. Milano: Feltrinelli, 1981. [and] Negri, Antonio. *The Savage Anomaly : The Power of Spinoza's Metaphysics and Politics*. Translated by Michael Hardt. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, c1991.

The idea of multitude comes out of that. And What's interesting if you get L'Anomalie Sauvage there is Deleuze's introduction in french. I don't know when they republish Deleuze's collected work, I'm sure it will figure in that. But for some reason Semiotext(e) never did it and it never made it into english. But in that, all the Spinoza scholars—among which, Deleuze is one of the great Spinoza scholars – but also all the other french very distinguished french Spinoza scholars—wrote prefaces to the book, part of the purpose which was to help Negri in his political situation. Because they were, in effect, saying: we french Spinoza scholars think this is very serious work. So that helped him, Negri, in his situation in France. But at the same time that it's an interesting book I think that there's a real engagement with those scholars, among other things, and Deleuze's preface to that which traces a tradition which goes from machiavelli to Spinoza, machiavelli to Marx tradition that's involved with multitude and materiality contrasted with a contractual model – because Deleuze always hated the contractual model of society – more represented in Kant and Hegel.

A model for?

The political model of society itself. There he talks about Hobbes. And that's a kind of Italian marxo-materialism that has a connection to Deleuze, that later would be exploited in *Empire*. Negri writes this book in the same period which now is for many people after the fact. I once talked to Negri himself at a seminar about Sylvère's seminar. He went back to Italy which involved him being detained because he was in France. He's now just getting out of it. He's founded a new journal. Guattari, himself, during the same period—

When?—

Let's say the 70s. in 72 and the period 72-79 between *Anti-Oedipus* and *Mille Plateaux*. *Mille Plateaux* was received poorly. The political climate had changed – postmodernism was being ushered in – a different mood in France, politically, that made MP unacceptable. Deleuze thought it was his most radical book but it was seen as this kind of postmarxist...

This was seen as still rooted in the post '68 context?

Exactly. ...

And Negri and Baudrillard were friends?

Yes and Negri And Guattari founded this thing called “Le Serfi” (75-76) which was a research group. That research group had lots on the topic of cities. And for one of them they invited Félix and Foucault and Deleuze and to all come on the topic of cities. And Félix said the city is a _____ Foucault talked about _____.

When is this?

Like 75/76.

So there was already this discussion of the City.

Absolutely. In Foucault there is already a lot about architecture and the city and Paul Rabinow – space and architecture and there was kind of a debate around that. So they were involved with that. Their discussion of architecture and cities from my sense of intellectual history is very different from the Baudrillard-Debord situationists. That's the earlier Lefebvre, Marxism kind based on reification—abstract space is modernist and therefore bad. This energy—this discussion came from more poststructuralist sources.