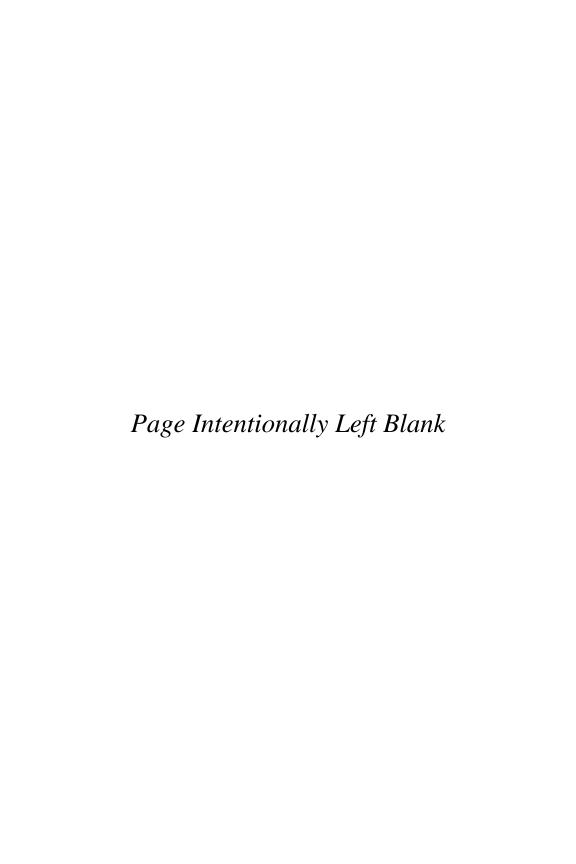
Deleuze

on Music, Painting, and the Arts

Ronald Bogue

Deleuze on Music, Painting, and the Arts



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RONALD BOGUE



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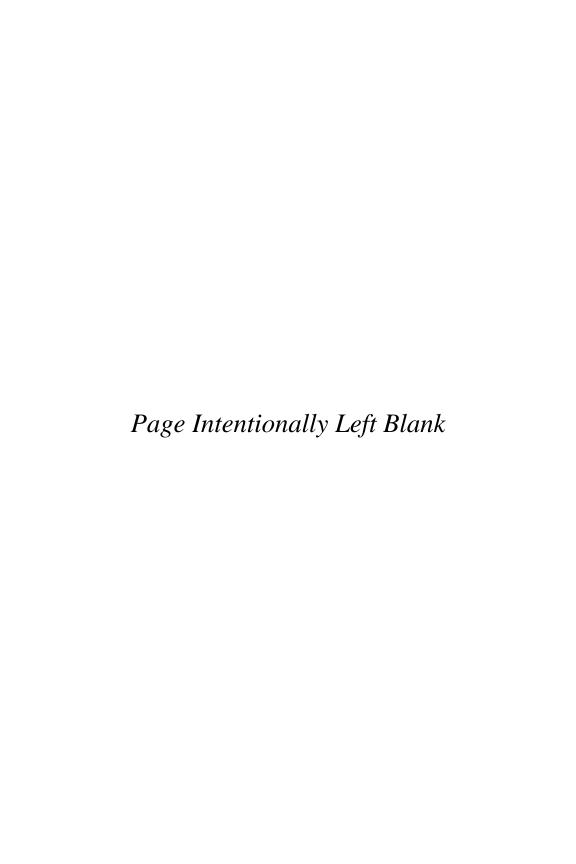
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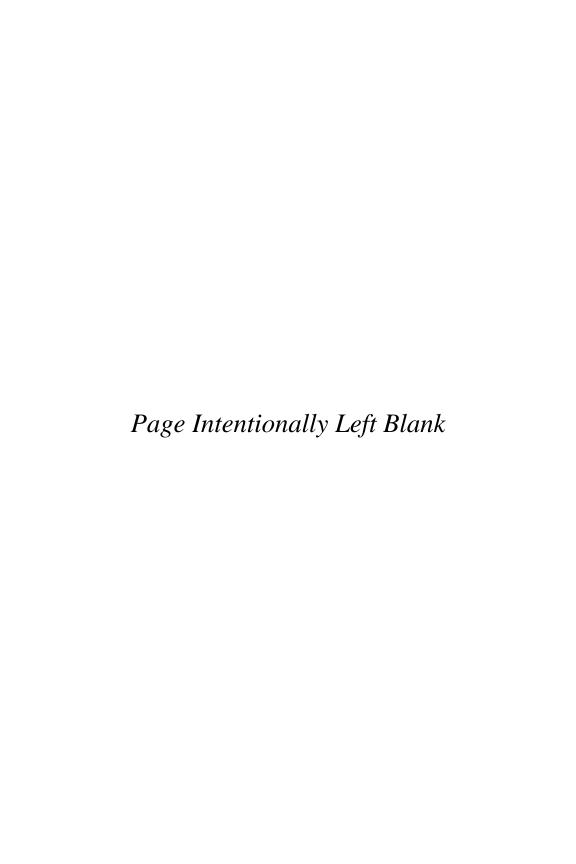
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Abbreviations

All translations from Deleuze, Guattari, and Deleuze-Guattari are my own. For works that have appeared in English translation, citations include page numbers of the original French edition followed by the page numbers of the corresponding passages in the English translation.

- AO Deleuze and Guattari. *L'Anti-Oedipe: Capitalisme et schizophrénie I.* Paris: Minuit, 1972. Trans. Robert Hurley, Mark Seem, and Helen R. Lane under the title *Anti-Oedipus* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1977).
- CC Deleuze. Critique et clinique. Paris: Minuit, 1993. Trans. Daniel W. Smith and Michael A. Greco under the title Essays Critical and Clinical (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997).
- CH Guattari. *Chaosmose*. Paris: Galilée, 1992. Trans. Paul Bains and Julian Pefanis under the title *Chaosmosis* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995).
- DR Deleuze, *Différence et répétition*. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1968. Trans. Paul Patton under the title *Difference and Repetition* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994).
- FB Deleuze. *Francis Bacon: Logique de la sensation.* Vol 1. Paris: Editions de la différence, 1981.

- IM Deleuze. Cinéma 1: L'Image-mouvement. Paris: Minuit, 1983.
 Trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam under the title
 Cinema 1: The Movement-Image (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986).
- IT Deleuze. *Cinéma 2: L'Image-temps*. Paris, Minuit, 1985. Trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Robert Galeta under the title *Cinema 2: The Time-Image* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989).
- LP Deleuze. *Le Pli: Leibniz et le baroque*. Paris: Minuit, 1988. Trans. Tom Conley under the title *The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993).
- LS Deleuze. *Logique du sens*. Paris: Minuit, 1969. Trans. Mark Lester, with Charles Stivale, ed. Constantin V. Boundas under the title *The Logic of Sense* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990).
- MP Deleuze and Guattari. *Mille plateaux: Capitalisme et schizophrénie, II.* Paris: Minuit, 1980. Trans. Brian Massumi under the title *A Thousand Plateaus* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987).
- PP Deleuze. *Pourparlers*. Paris: Minuit, 1990. Trans. Martin Joughin under the title *Negotiations* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995).
- PT Guattari. Psychoanalyse et transversalité. Paris: Maspero, 1972.
- QP Deleuze and Guattari. *Qu'est-ce que la philosophie?* Paris: Minuit, 1991. Trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Graham Burchell under the title *What Is Philosophy?* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994).
- S Deleuze. Spinoza: Philosophie pratique. 2nd ed. Paris: Minuit, 1981. Trans. Robert Hurley under the title Spinoza: Practical Philosophy (San Francisco: City Lights, 1988).
- TE Guattari. *Les trois écologies*. Paris: Galilée, 1989. Trans. Ian Pindar and Paul Sutton under the title *Three Ecologies* (London: Athlone, 2000).

In some twenty-five books written between 1953 and 1993, the French philosopher Gilles Deleuze enunciated a body of thought that touched on a dizzying number of subjects, ranging from embryology, ethology, mathematics, and physics to economics, anthropology, linguistics, and metallurgy. Among the areas to which he most frequently turned were the arts, especially in the fifteen years preceding his death in 1995. He wrote books on Proust (1964, revised and expanded in 1970 and 1976), on the nineteenth-century novelist Leopold Sacher-Masoch (1967), and on Kafka (1975), as well as a final collection of literary essays titled Essays Critical and Clinical (1993), and references to literature abound in The Logic of Sense (1969), Difference and Repetition (1969), Anti-Oedipus (1972), and A Thousand Plateaus (1980). In Cinema 1: The Movement-Image (1983) and Cinema 2: The Time-Image (1985), he developed an elaborate taxonomy of cinematic images and signs that drew examples from hundreds of films representative of all eras and major tendencies of world cinema. The arts of music and painting he addressed in A Thousand Plateaus, and in Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation (1981) he sketched the outlines of a general theory and history of painting in the course of a close examination of Bacon's art.

Although literature and cinema are the arts of which Deleuze speaks at greatest length, music and painting hold a special place in his

thought. When commenting on the differing domains of the various arts, he often focuses on music and painting, and he frequently characterizes the capacities and limitations of music and painting by contrasting the two arts. When he considers the relationship among philosophy, science, and the arts in the concluding chapters of What Is Philosophy? (1991), the discussion is dominated by concepts and examples specific to music and painting. In music Deleuze finds the key to an understanding of art's relation to the natural world. Through reflection on the elements connecting human music and birdsong, he develops a general theory of animal behavior and evolutionary biology as forms of thematic rhythmic patterning, ultimately extending the musical model to describe the interactions of the natural world as an extended symphony of contrapuntal refrains. Deleuze regards painting as the paradigmatic art of sensation, and hence as the medium that most fully discloses the inner dimension of aesthetic experience. The most carnal of the arts, painting engages the body in a "becoming-other," while disembodying sensation and reincarnating it in a world of apersonal affects and percepts. In What Is Philosophy? Deleuze delimits the realm of the arts primarily through the concepts of sensation and the refrain, and in large part his general theory of the arts may be seen as a logical development of his theories of painting and music, painting suggesting art's function as a force that transforms inner and outer experience, and music revealing art's position within the creative processes of the natural world. My primary aim in this book, therefore, is to elucidate Deleuze's thought on music and painting and situate it within his account of the aesthetic enterprise as a whole.

Although Deleuze refers to his work at one point as a "constructionism" (PP 201; 147) and at another as a kind of "vitalism" (PP 196; 143), his thought is perhaps best characterized as a philosophy of creation. Deleuze often describes philosophy as the invention of concepts, an activity he parallels to the creative activity of the artist. As the painter works with color or the composer with sounds, so the philosopher invents in the medium of concepts. In this sense Deleuze's philosophy is a "constructionism," a process of constructing in concepts. But philosophical construction is related as well to spheres of creation much broader even than the arts themselves. In *What Is Philosophy?*, the sciences, the arts and philosophy are all said to constitute "forms of thought or creation" (QP 196; 208), and those creative modes of thought are re-

garded as inseparable from the creative processes of the natural world. As molecules bond, embryos divide, or birds grow and sing, so painters paint, philosophers conceptualize, and scientists postulate, experiment, and theorize. Genuine conceptual thought engages a "power of nonorganic life" (PP 196; 143) that passes through all things, and in this sense Deleuze's philosophy is a kind of "vitalism" as well as a kind of "constructionism." It is not surprising, then, that aesthetic concerns inevitably lead Deleuze to discuss political, social, and physico-biological questions, since the formation of artworks is but a dimension of human creation in general, which in turn is indissociable from the ongoing creative processes of the natural world. Nor is it surprising that whenever Deleuze examines any one of the arts, he invariably does so from the vantage of the artist rather than the audience. Each art he defines by its problems, by the challenges faced by the creator in the task of making something new; questions of reception remain for him of secondary concern. His guides to the arts are the artists themselves, more so than the critics, and his effort is always to confront the artworks, heed the words the creators use to talk about their creations, and then invent concepts adequate to, yet distinct from, the art under consideration.

Deleuze approaches the arts in a systematic fashion, but he does not propose a unified "system of the arts," for each art has its own problems and potential for development. Deleuze identifies music's object as the "deterritorialization of the refrain," and part I of this book is devoted to an exploration of that proposition. Roughly put, Deleuze's contention is that the refrain is any rhythmic motif that may help structure an organism's milieu, territory, or social field, and that composers encounter and transform refrains when they create music. Chapter 1 details the workings of refrains in nature, especially as they relate to territorial animals such as birds, and then examines the compositional practices of Olivier Messiaen, who perhaps more than any other composer makes a systematic use of birdsong in his music. Messiaen's exploitations of birdsong are shown to be paradigmatic instances of the process of "becoming-animal" whereby composers deterritorialize refrains. What Messiaen calls "rhythmic characters," "added values," and "nonretrogradable rhythms" are then considered as exemplary techniques of temporal deterritorialization, techniques that function as musical analogues of the unorthodox, nonchronometric time that Deleuze associates with becoming and the event.

Chapter 2 extends this analysis to consider other composers, as well as Deleuze's conception of the history of Western art music from Classicism to the present. Messiaen's appropriation of birdsong is unusual among composers, but Deleuze sees in this practice a general process of "becoming-other" that all musicians enter into when they create something genuinely new. "Becoming-other" may take the form of a "becoming-animal," but also a "becoming-woman," a "becomingchild," or a "becoming-molecular," and in certain vocal practices from the Renaissance to the twentieth century Deleuze discovers a general deterritorialization of the voice that engages all these becomings. Becoming-other always provides a "transverse" connection between conventional musical components, and the history of music for Deleuze is a history of such transverse becomings. In delineating the broad periods of Classical, Romantic, and Modern music, Deleuze relates specifically musical developments of form to three dimensions of the territorial refrain, showing how each may be regarded as a transverse becomingother. The Classical attention to closed structures he associates with the emergence of biological milieus; the Romantic interest in organic form he relates to the conversion of milieus into territories; and the Modern concern for open structures he links to the opening of territories to a cosmic line of flight.

In chapter 3, the relation between nature and music is again examined, in this instance from the perspective of what might be called a musical ethology, biology, and ecology. If music may be seen as a natural activity, Deleuze argues, nature may be regarded as a kind of cosmic music. The behavior of animals is structured by rhythmic patterns, each of which functions as a motif that combines with other motifs to constitute a milieu, a territory, or a social domain. This behavioral network of motifs is inseparable from the biological formation of individual organisms, and the genesis of organisms itself may be treated as the unfolding of a motif. The birth, growth, maturation, and eventual death of each organism is a continuous process, and that ongoing process of self-formation is best conceived of as the expression in time of a kind of developmental melody. Each organism's inner developmental melody unfolds in interaction with the motifs of its environment, and when viewed from the perspective of evolutionary biology, the emergence of organisms and environments may be taken as the creative coevolution of melodies and motifs over an extended period of time. Nature, finally,

proves to be a composer whose grand composition is itself, and the human art of music emerges within this composition as but a highly specialized expression of a *natura musicans*.

In part II, I turn from the problems and objectives of music to those of the art of painting. If music's problem is to deterritorialize the refrain, painting's is to deterritorialize the "face-landscape" and "harness forces." The "face-landscape" forms part of a visual "gridding" that Deleuze labels "faciality"; chapter 4 is dedicated to an explication of this elusive concept. The human face Deleuze sees as an important constituent of every social configuration of language practices and power relations, and as composers deterritorialize refrains, so painters deterritorialize the facialized "grids" whereby bodies and landscapes are structured by the gaze. In every society, discursive and nondiscursive power relations are organized according to a "regime of signs," within which the face functions as an active visual component. A general "visibility," or mode of organizing the visible, emerges from each regime of signs, extending from the face to bodies and finally to the world at large. When painters engage the visible world, they confront an already facialized realm of conventional facial expressions, gestures, postures, and landscapes, all of which reinforce dominant power relations. The task of painters is to disrupt the patterns of faciality and disengage the forces that are regulated and controlled by the prevailing regime of signs. When painters succeed in this task, they capture and render visible the invisible metamorphic forces that play through faces, bodies, and landscapes, thereby inducing transverse becomings that allow the emergence of something new.

Chapters 5 and 6 examine this capture of forces as Deleuze details it in his study of Francis Bacon. Deleuze makes extensive use of Henri Maldiney's analyses of rhythm and color in Cézanne, and in *Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation* Deleuze develops something like an asubjective phenomenology of painting, first charting the rhythmic interplay of forces in the figures, contours, and fields of Bacon's canvases, then showing how color functions as the generative element of all his paintings. Bacon says that he tries to render the "brutality of fact" in his art by painting images that bypass the brain and work directly on the nerves. Deleuze sees in this project an effort to escape visual clichés and engage the domain of "sensation," in which metamorphic forces of becoming blur distinctions between inside and outside and create zones

of indiscernibility between external entities. Bacon paints recognizable figures and objects, but he deforms the "good forms" of conventional representation by first introducing random chaotic strokes, smudges, and blotches into his works, and then using those marks as a diagram for the development of his compositions. Through these deformations he manages to engage the forces of becoming that escape commonsense perception and conventional representation. The contorted faces, malleable limbs, and mottled flesh of his human figures register internal forces of mutation and external forces of compression. Forces of coupling pass between pairs of figures, and a force of separation issues from the monochrome field in which the figures float. And in the midst of this complex play of forces, a strange "body without organs" emerges, one whose surfaces form an affective topological space and whose rhythms are those of an intensive, nonpulsed time.

Every painter repeats the history of painting, Deleuze claims, and in Bacon's deployment of "shallow depth," metamorphic figures, vibrating color fields, and "tactile" broken tones Deleuze sees traces of a history of space-color relations that extends from Egyptian art through Graeco-Roman and Byzantine art to the colorism of Cézanne and van Gogh. This history of color, as manifest in Bacon, forms the subject of the final chapter of part II. Adopting Alois Riegl's distinction between optic and haptic (or tactile) space, Deleuze approaches painting in terms of the relationship between the hand and the eye. In much of Western art, the hand is subordinate to the eye, seeing and touching reinforcing one another in constructing a rational, perspectival space. In Egyptian art, the emphasis is reversed, the hand dominating the eye, the flattened space and planar figures revealing a sort of "seeing by touching." But in both traditions, eye and hand have only a relative autonomy. In Byzantine art, by contrast, the eye is liberated from the hand, the figures and ground both emerging from the diastolic and systolic rhythms of color and light. Another means of liberating eye and hand is evident in Gothic art, the zigzag line of Gothic ornamentation revealing a haptic force that escapes the control of the eye. The contrast of optic Byzantine color and haptic Gothic line might suggest that eye and hand are opposed as color to line, but Deleuze finds an alternative to the Byzantine use of color in certain haptic practices of colorists like Delacroix, Cézanne, and van Gogh. Color need not be a purely optical element, Deleuze claims, but may be rendered a tactile medium through an exploitation of hue over value. And

in Bacon's use of broken tones and complementary hues Deleuze finds a haptic colorism, one that puts the hand in the eye and renders color the generative medium of a tactile space of sensation.

At several points in his work Deleuze makes passing observations about the relationship of the arts to one another and to philosophy, but only in What Is Philosophy? does he address this topic directly. In chapter 7 I offer a speculative reading of the difficult closing sections of What Is Philosophy?, as well as an assessment of what Deleuze sees as the relative powers of the individual arts and their affinities with philosophy. The key to Deleuze's theory of the arts I find in the biological model of the embryo, whose generative unfolding traces a musical refrain within a painterly domain of sensation. Philosophy and the arts arise within the natural world, and each engages a creative virtual force that informs all processes of connection and growth. Philosophy extracts that virtual force from bodies, whereas the arts embody it in matter that renders palpable the "being of sensation." In painting, the materiality of art is most easily discerned. In music, art's continuity with the processes of natural creation is most clearly revealed. But in both, artistic invention is fundamentally an engagement with the apersonal becoming-other of sensation.

Deleuze is a profound and original analyst of the arts, I believe, but there are formidable obstacles to a ready assimilation of his thought. He is an inveterate neologizer and inventor of concepts, whose works at times read like one extended definition of terms. His arguments are often dense, and they always entail a thought that proceeds by means of paradox. Although carefully structured and gracefully crafted, his chapters frequently challenge readers' abilities to follow the arabesques of the general line of reasoning. He is scrupulous in his citation of sources, but his texts often require a thorough familiarity with the cited works in order to be completely intelligible. He offers copious analogies and examples to illustrate his points, yet seldom does he engage in prolonged discussions of any one analogy or example. Finally, he advocates and practices an unorthodox "nomadic thought," whereby concepts are at times modified and transformed from work to work, and even from section to section of the same work.

To help overcome these obstacles, I have attempted a *reading* of Deleuze, in several senses of the term. First, I have focused much of my analysis on the explication of difficult passages. Broad overviews are use-

ful, but moving from the general to the specific can be especially perilous in interpreting Deleuze. He is most fascinating and most demanding in the subtle twists and turns of his arguments, and often the most resistant sentence or paragraph proves the key to understanding an entire section of a work. As part of this explication of difficult passages, I have ventured as well to trace the filaments that interconnect dense textual nodes and articulate the logic that informs the development of individual concepts. I have also attempted a "reading along with" Deleuze, investigating his sources and indicating the ways in which he appropriates other writers' terms, analyses, and illustrations for his own purposes. Often Deleuze's seemingly arcane remarks are simply highly allusive, and once one is familiar with his sources, his arguments become relatively straightforward. My reading of Deleuze has required as well an effort to tease out the implications of the analogies and examples he offers to explain various abstract concepts. Some of the most exhilarating and intriguing moments in Deleuze's writings begin with the phrase "it's as if ...," and with careful elaboration of the hints supplied in his passing illustrations many opaque notions become considerably more transparent. Finally, I have proposed a reading of Deleuzian concepts that discriminates shifts in usage from context to context and suggests the possible rationale behind those shifts.

Deleuze is first and foremost a philosopher, and he repeatedly insists that philosophy has its own problems and methods that must be distinguished from those of other disciplines and practices. Yet he also asserts that philosophy has need of a "nonphilosophical comprehension of philosophy itself" (PP 223; 164), and that nonphilosophical comprehension he associates with the arts. For this reason I have felt justified in addressing several audiences in this book, not merely philosophers but also practitioners and students of the various arts. I have tried to clarify without simplifying the complexities of Deleuze's philosophical arguments, but so as to make them comprehensible to nonphilosophers. I have also endeavored to ask what practical consequences Deleuze's various concepts might have for the analysis of actual works of art. Finally, although Deleuze views each art as relatively autonomous, his treatments of music and painting are mutually illuminating, and there is much that a painter might gain from the musical concept of the refrain, or a composer from the notion of faciality. I therefore have tried to make discussions of each of the arts accessible to nonspecialists. I hope that readers will bear these

facts in mind and have patience when rudimentary concepts from their area of expertise are glossed or when familiar debates are rehearsed.

This book is the third of a trilogy on Deleuze and the arts, the others being *Deleuze on Literature* and *Deleuze on Cinema*. Though each is designed as a separate work, they do form a single project. In all three I have addressed myself to as broad an audience as possible, with the aim of making Deleuze's thought accessible to anyone interested in the relationship between philosophy and the arts. Deleuze's writings on the arts are mutually enriching and illuminating, and readers interested in his studies of music and painting should find his works on literature and cinema equally rewarding. Should this book prove useful, readers may wish to consult the other two volumes of this project as well.

Many excellent studies of Deleuze have appeared both in French and in English over the last several years. I have learned a great deal from many of them, but I have foregone extended commentary on any of these works, citing only those texts that help clarify a particular point in Deleuze's arguments. I have found especially useful the important essays of Bensmaïa, Boundas, and Smith, as well as the books of Alliez, Ansell Pearson, Buchanan, Buydens, Colebrook, Colombat, Goodchild, Hardt, Holland, Kennedy, Lambert, Massumi, May, Olkowski, Patton, Rajchman, Rodowick, Stivale, and Zourabichvili. All these works will be of great assistance to anyone negotiating the difficulties of Deleuze's texts.

I must add one final methodological comment. Anyone who writes on Deleuze faces a peculiar problem for which there is no simple solution. Four of his most important works were written in collaboration with Félix Guattari, a major theorist in his own right whose contributions to their cowritten works are significant. The Deleuze-Guattari texts have a style of their own that is unlike anything written by Deleuze or Guattari alone. Yet determining which idea is Deleuze's and which Guattari's is impossible, so thoroughly are their thoughts and styles combined. When they resume their individual projects after a given collaborative venture, each treats the coauthored work as his own, freely expanding on that work's concepts and extending them into new areas of investigation. I see no choice but to treat Deleuze's books and the Deleuze-Guattari volumes as constituents of a single body of work. Were I to focus my attention on Guattari, I would likewise regard his works and the Deleuze-Guattari books as components of a single Guattari

oeuvre. Hence, though I frequently speak of "Deleuze's thought" while citing Deleuze-Guattari texts, by no means am I discounting the essential role Guattari has played in the creation of those works, nor am I ignoring the important influence Guattari has clearly exercised on the formation of Deleuze's philosophy.

Many have assisted me in this project, which has extended over a number of years. The University of Georgia Research Foundation and the University of Georgia Center for Humanities and Arts provided generous support through grants that allowed time for research and writing.¹ Ian Buchanan, Constantin Boundas, Paul Patton, and Charles Stivale offered welcome encouragement at various stages of the process. I am especially grateful to Jerry Herron and Mihai Spariosu for their friendship and support, and to Florin Berindeanu for his helpful comments on the manuscript. I have gained a great deal from students in my Deleuze seminars over the years, especially Michael Baltasi, Ravinder Kaur Banerjee, Andrew Brown, Balance Chow, Hyung-chul Chung, Letitia Guran, Paulo Oneto, Wei Qin, Astra Taylor, and Maria Chungmin Tu. But my greatest debt is to my family, for their encouragement, understanding, and support throughout the process.

^{1.} An abridged version of chapter 1 appeared as "Rhizomusicosmology," in *SubStance* 66 (1991): 85–101 © 1991 University of Wisconsin Press. An abridged version of chapter 3 appeared under the title "Art and Territory" in *South Atlantic Quarterly*, v. 96, n. 3 (Summer 1997): 465–82 © 1997 Duke University Press. I am grateful to the University of Wisconsin Press and the Duke University Press for permission to reprint these essays.

Part I

MUSIC