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# On nonhuman machinic love

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## I. Introduction

The new planetary consciousness will have to rethink machinism. We frequently continue to oppose the machine to the human spirit. Certain philosophies hold that modern technology has blocked access to our ontological foundations, to primordial being. And what if, on the contrary, a revival of spirit and human values could be attendant upon a new alliance with machines?  
(Guattari & Genosko, 1996, 267)

This transversal and transdisciplinary thought-experiment aims to explore the following: 1) in and through specific fragments of literature to explicate upon the complicated notion of the Body without Organs (BwO); 2) to present a reconsideration of the idea of love in Deleuze and Guattari's philosophy; and 3) through several instances of science fiction to map out an ontology and ecosophy of machinic desire or eros. The examples of construable science fiction which have been chosen are Tong Enzheng's *The Death of the World's First Robot*, and Félix Guattari's film screenplay *A Love of UIQ*. These have been chosen as they explore in own way the possibility of

inhuman or nonhuman forms of love. We shall also reflect on the possibility and nature of the neologism – the machine without organs (MwO) – that is to say, a sense of robot or machinic love beyond the collapsed or exhausted body without organs. The MwO is invoked to question the limits of explanation of the BwO in the post-human milieu. The focus on the MwO connects with Tong Enzheng's fourth law of robotics: A robot may not fall in love.

## II. The Death of the World's First Robot

Using a short, modern science fiction story which draws on a rich tradition in Chinese literature, let us think about how to move from making ourselves a BwO to making a machine without organs (MwO). Drawing on Deleuze and Guattari's philosophy, we shall examine the short story *The Death of the World's First Robot* (*Shiie shang di yi ge jiqiren zhi si*, 世界上第一个机器人之死) by Tong Enzheng (童恩正, 1935–1997). The BwO/MwO distinction will serve as a literary device to reinterpret the social, cultural and textual meaning of this piece of modern Chinese science fiction. We shall first undertake a comparative analysis of Tong Enzheng's short text to note its differences with the original drawn from the Daoist classic, the *Liezi* (列子, compiled in the 4th century).

### Synopsis

In the spring of 930 B.C. King Zhou Muwang (周穆王) and his entourage travelled to Yanshan in the mountainous western territories.

Accompanied also by his favorite concubine Chengji, the king entered the city of Liuquan. Bored to death, Chengji pleads with the king to make arrangements for evening entertainment. There is scant choice but a craftsman called Yan is asked for. After dinner in the great hall of Liuquan, Master Yan enters with what appears to be a handsome young man. The artisan tells the king: "This is a robot I've made, capable of singing and dancing. I've brought it here especially for Your Majesty to entertain you this evening." The intelligent and expressive robot is spellbinding as it can do a myriad of things – speak, sing and dance to name but a few. In the *Liezi*, it is Master Yan who demonstrates such a repertoire. The story reads: "When the craftsman touched its cheek, it sang in tune; when he clasped its hand, it danced in rhythm; it did innumerable tricks, whatever it pleased you to ask." Listless after the long journey, Chengji suddenly is enchanted. In the presence of such a good-looking young man, the flirtatious young woman perks up and contrives to seduce, unbeknownst to her, the robot, who knows little of the real world and has never experienced the female sex's "magical power of tantalization." The robot's heart is now filled the "entirely alien emotion" of love. The king, who soon realizes this, becomes insanely jealous, and orders the beheading of both Master Yan and the robot. The artisan protests his innocence and explains that the robot is really what it is. The curious king relents after Yan, with a few tools at hand, derobes the robot and dismantles the body. All those present can see that the robot's internal organs are what they are, that is to say, distinct machine parts. On the outside, the robot possesses muscles, bones, limbs, joints, skin, teeth and hair – yet they are all artificial – all extracted organs without a body. As we shall see

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it is desire itself that is evacuated from the machine's functionality.

The king plays with the individual machine parts, sometimes preventing the robot from speaking, sometimes from seeing, sometimes from moving. On this point, the *Liezi* reads: "The King tried taking out its heart, and the mouth could not speak; he tried taking out its liver, and the eyes could not see; he tried taking out its kidneys, and the feet could not walk." The innards were made of leather, wood, glue and lacquer, the body parts - a liver, a heart, lungs, a spleen, a kidney, intestines and a stomach - colored white, black, red and blue. All artificial but the body is replete, a body-in-itself or as Tong Enzheng says "without missing a single organ." The king is astounded and praises the artisan: "Your superb craftsmanship really excels nature." The disappointed, man-hunting Chengji curses her luck and leaves. The wonderstruck king decides to take Yan and the robot back to the capital of Haojing to show off his new plaything. After a sumptuous banquet, the robot begins his performance again yet with eyes only for his beloved Chengji. He dances magnificently with intricate, graceful, seductive steps. But the finicky Chengji does not return his overtures leaving the robot bewildered. Embittered, his body pulverized by these new impersonal sensations and affects, the robot dances its last movements and ends downcast. At the end of this short story, Tong Enzheng writes: "With the crack of something breaking in his chest, the robot fell down to the ground and never moved again." The robot is perplexed by the question: What does it mean to love? Despite his dance, Yan's robot cannot seize Chengji from the courtly existence she is enclosed within. There is no promise of posthuman, heavenly nuptials, no "multiplicities of multiplicities," as Deleuze and Guattari say, no

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delirious dissolution of corporeal boundaries (technological or digital), no embrace of the nonhuman other which would move the robot towards forming a new body without organs.

The crack of something breaking in the chest needs to be explained further. Robotic desire when it is not compromised by molar formations of sexuality, class, nation, genus, taxonomy or courtly is transgressive of the formal constitution of the BwO. Its dance knows nothing of the division of the sexes; the BwO is indifferent to nature or species. Robotic desire makes love with humans, with flowers and fauna, with other machines, with gods, with cosmic rays. In its joyous mode, it is transgressive of codes, becoming asexual, even transsexual and multispecies. The robot's dance is trans-subjective: it dances to please humans but becomes otherwise in the process. Its virtuality takes on unprecedented dimensions. Its *life* extends beyond machinic determination and exceeds the realm of the artefactual. In its hybrid state – in its becoming – in its inaugural love throws – it risks and suffers the trauma of eros. The robot performs to co-create an "atmosphere," a "world," re-organizing space and time. The robot exceeds the BwO's organic-artefactual divide, exploding notions of consciousness and intentionality, unpicking the ontological processes that organize the organism. This nonorganic matter is an active participant in a new form of ontogenesis or machinic development. It alters the world of the human, and brings forth another. This is what Guattari calls the "ecology of the virtual." It operates on the level of the infra-bodily and infra-human. There is a machinic refiguring of notions of personhood, life, and the human. This is Guattari's generalized ecology of inorganic life and artefactual personhood. To understand the dance we must know of the ecology

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of the virtual and the performative modalities of robotic or machinic eros. The desiring machines of the robot itself are depopulated from the body. The desiring machines function as both a producer and a product of desire. Schizo love becomes the universe of productive and reproductive desiring-machines or universal primary production,<sup>1</sup>

Tong Enzheng explains the morale of the story, arguing that a new law is needed to supplement Isaac Asimov's Three Laws of Robotics, which are: 1) A robot may not injure human beings; 2) A robot must obey the orders of human beings except when; 3) A robot must protect its own existence. Tong Enzheng's fourth law states that a robot should not fall in love. The argument thus far is to state that without the fourth law to protect the machinic as such, the robots toils from a kind of schizophrenic catatonia. Here artificial death demonstrates the applicability of the BwO in terms of science fiction literature.<sup>2</sup> Put another way, if the robot made of *his* body a BwO, a decoded body, and on that body manifests a kind of "nullification of the organs" (Deleuze, "The Nature of Flows", 2018), how can Tong Enzheng's story help us to grasp the sense of decoded flows? On this point and hinting at a kind of Gothic materialism, which takes on wholly other form of non-dialectical

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1. In William Gibson's *Idoru*, the concept of desiring machine is invoked to describe Rei Toei's function as both a producer and a product of desire. Desire is a machine that produces reality itself. In our story, Master Yan's robot produces reality itself, produces love itself, produces love sickness: it suffers as a *force to love*. See Gibson, W. & Cuijpers, P. *Idoru* (Meulenhoff-M Science Fiction, 1997).
  2. There is also a Luddite twist to the tale as the Chinese Daoist sage Zhuangzi warned that those who are too fond of artifice would grow their hearts like mechanisms, presumably cold, indifferent, insensitive, and without human emotion. This would be the actual human that moves like a machine.

becoming, Deleuze explains this point in a lecture entitled “The Nature of Flows”:

Horror-story writers have understood, after Edgar Allan Poe, that death wasn't the model for schizophrenic catatonia, but that the contrary was true, and that the catatonic was one who made of his body a body-without-organs, a decoded body, and that on such a body there is a kind of nullification of the organs.

However, that there is a break in the chest and that Yan's robot no longer moves seems to problematize Deleuze's reading. One wonders if the break in the chest is a final denouement or a fatal act of retaliation or resistance – following a deluge of affects. The break in the flow leaves the code undecodifiable. Death, exhaustion, collapse is the final escape, bringing the story closer to tragedy than to Gothic or Horror. The robot simply prefers not to. Deleuze will say at this moment that nothing can be subtracted from this. We cannot break into the codes. There can be no rewriting or reorientation of the flows. There are noncodable flows which constitute "a thing, an unnameable thing" – a mixture of sad and great joys. The point to be made, and it is at odds with Deleuze's view, is that the robot finishes exhausted, depleted or spent, with no great joys or great left or loves ahead. There is a fatal crack in the chest.

Desire, cosmological force and human nature in the Liezi

Tong Enzheng himself explained that he based his story on an traditional account called “Master Yan Creates a Man” (*Yanshi zao*

*ren* 偃師造人)<sup>3</sup> which is included in the chapter “Questions of Tang” (*Tang wen* 湯問) in the philosophical compilation *Liezi*.<sup>4</sup> A comparison with this old Daoist didactic parable reveals that Tong Enzheng was indeed heavily inspired by the account’s presentation of anthropomorphic construction, but changed its focus to a discussion of the question of artificial humanity, i.e. robotic emotion. In his account, he inverted the meaning of human nature as presented in the classical parable. In the *Liezi*, the story develops as follows: On his journey home, King Mu encounters the craftsman Master Yan. After a first exchange, the master presents a singer (*Changzhe* 倡者) to the king, which he claims to have made himself. As its movements and appearance are extremely lifelike, the king perceives it to be a man. After the display of the singer’s movement, the singer beckons towards Chengji and the other concubines, which causes the king to sentence Master Yan to death. Quickly, the master dissects his craft and reveals its artificial nature. Only then is the king conciliated and keeps the curious device for himself. Whereas the resemblance is obvious in this brief summary, the devil is in the detail – especially in terms of Tong Enzheng’s perception of the moment of desire. In the *Liezi*, the moment of the singer’s transgression is intrinsically tied to humanity’s relation towards nature. As the third and fourth century in China was a time of civil war and instability, this shows a rather

3. In the original text, this account does not have a title on its own. “Master Yan Creates a Man” was added later by scholars in order to make referencing easier (as there are many stories in “Questions of Tang”). The title is used here for the same reason.

4. Named after its presumed originator “Master Lie,” i.e. Lie Yukou 列禦寇, who is mentioned in secondary sources dating back to the third century BC. But as these are all of a semi-fictional or legendary nature, his historical existence is highly questionable.

skeptical view of the world as a whole, presenting fluidity, instability and chaos (*Hunlun* 渾淪) not as simply disruptive states, but as productive quality (Littlejohn & Dippmann, 2011, 78ff, 116). Ultimately, the work is less occupied with the concept of "doing nothing" (*Wu wei* 無爲) as in other Daoist philosophical classics like the Zhuangzi, but "not-knowing" (*Wu zhi* 無知) or respectively "knowing [out of] itself" (*Zizhi* 自知) (Graham, 1990, 4-8). In the *Liezi*, the Way (*Dao* 道) is found through accepting the relativity of knowledge and the experience of being: as everything in existence is fluid and changing, subjective perception necessarily presupposes limitation. This means that nature, that is to say, the perceivable state of phenomenal existence, underlies and causes constant change and flux. In the *Liezi*, this is called *Ziran* (自然), "being [out of] itself." As heaven and earth act without conscious "knowing," the spontaneous "self-being" of the human being, who searches for a state of ideal harmony with the cosmological *Dao*, should pay full attention to natural change and respond respectively to it. But as he/she engages in conscious contemplation and action, i.e. following inner desires (subjective perception) than outer influences (objective circumstances), he/she disrupts the ontological harmony of natural change. This means that to reach the ideal natural state of spontaneous (*Ziran*) (re)action, the human individual has to distance itself from personal desires and cultivate spontaneous, instinctive knowledge (*Zizhi*).

This ideal state of "being without knowing" is perfectly exemplified in the image of Master Yan's singer. In the text, the performance is described thus: "When the artisan pushed its [lower] cheek, it sang in tune; when he clasped its hand it danced in time; it [moved]

in innumerable variations, whatever it [was] asked, [it] would do. King Mu thought it was a real …" (Graham, 1990, 110-112; Lie, 1985, 70-71).<sup>5</sup> Where Tong Enzheng presents an autonomous, self-moving or "programmed" robot, the *Liezi* describes a sophisticated puppet. Note that the movement and display is the direct result of Yan's control; it is a situation of pure "input-output." That this is indeed an image of the desired state of "unconscious" knowledge and action as spontaneous reaction (*Ziran*) and not as a simple marionette display, is emphasized in King Wu's misconception that "it was a real man" (Graham, 1990, 111; Lie, 1985, 70) – underlining the comparison of the machine-nature with human nature and the story's overhaul moral. After the king was convinced of the dancer's artificial nature, he asks rhetorically: "Is it then possible for human ingenuity to achieve as much as the [natural forces which] create the [things that] transform [*Zaohua Zhe* 造化者]? Given the *Liezi's* philosophical basis, this does not compare Master Yan's skill with cosmological creation, but implies a description of the achievement of *Ziran*. The natural forces which are the cosmological origin of spontaneous being, bring forward everything that is "out of itself." Only humanity, in conscious action, distances itself from nature, therefore producing the need of "achieving" what is done by cosmological forces. Ultimately, King Wu's question does not point towards artisan hubris, but the concern whether human existence is really able to regain its state of "being out of itself." And this makes the dancer a personified image of the ideal state of human nature and being.

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5. The given translations are based on Graham (1990) but corrected based on Lie (1985).

This also suggests that the ideal state of humanity lies in its becoming machine-like. This is stressed in the moment of transgression. The winking of the eye of the dancer is the only moment where it acts on its own – in the original text, there is no mentioning of Master Yan ordering him to do so. Here, emotional longing caused the object to behave without *wuzhi* in a moment of subjective intent, it acts not in accord to its environment, but egocentrically according to its own desire. This immediately causes its doom (immediate reversion to puppet nature, which is represented in its disassembled form), and puts into bold relief by King Wu's final unanswered dilemma. Even if something resembles a man, and seems to have achieved a state mirroring the ideal presented by the natural forces – will not its human nature (subjective desire) ultimately cause it to fail?

This identification of humanity with a puppet nature, including the understanding of subjective desire as un-natural affront, is inverted by Tong Enzheng. This ultimately changes the focus of the whole story, as Tong Enzheng makes no reference to cosmological forces. Instead, he develops the figures of the robot and Chengji as acting characters: Chengji in her flirtation and final embarrassed rejection, and the robot in his desire and conscious effort. Tong Enzheng says: "How pleased and excited the robot became when he saw his beloved one again! He danced enthusiastically and executed some intricate, graceful steps which even Master Yan could not have imagined. The robot wished that Chengji would look at him more and reveal her fascinating expressions as she had done the last time." (Wu & Murphy, 1989, 41). Based on the *Liezi's* image of action caused by inner desire than outer influences, Tong Enzheng develops

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a scene of romantic passion. The puppet becomes an agent of conscious awareness, being actually able to "wish" and to become "enthusiastic." But Tong Enzheng goes a step further in making the robot's passion the reason for its ability to transcend its artificial nature. In its overwhelming emotion, the robot is able to exceed the boundaries of its original program, freeing it from the status of a simple piece of craftsmanship. In being able to feel and express its desire, the robot distances himself from his creator, reaching into the realm of humanity. This is the exact opposite of the *Liezi*, in which the moment of desire serves as an example of human alienation from ideal nature. To summarize here then, for Tong Enzheng, love and emotion embody the human quality of evolution, i.e. the key to a higher state of existence; for the *Liezi*, it relates to subjective desires, which hinder man in achieving harmony with nature, i.e. obstructing the way to a higher state of existence.

### Love and death

However, if Tong Enzheng allows the robot the freedom to feel, why is there a tragic end? Is this meant to suggest that as soon as an object has achieved the desired humanity, it is doomed to the fate of all natural life: death? This might be one reading, as the dancer in the *Liezi* is denied the signifier of life. To clarify this, let us return to Deleuze and Guattari as the tragic heartbreak and crack allows another reading in the context of the fatality of a denied new world. In *Anti-Oedipus* (294) they say "we always make love with worlds." They add (294): "Our love addresses itself to the libidinal properties of our lover. We either close ourselves off or open ourselves

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up to more spacious worlds, to masses and large aggregates." We desire or love with the world, we love the agencement or assemblage of another person. The world of the loved is an expressive milieu, a disjunctive synthesis, a "relation of non-relation." In Deleuze's technical vocabulary, a disjunctive synthesis is a synthesis of divergent series that does not converge yet somehow manages to communicate by virtue of a difference that passes between them *like a spark*. In the robot's case it is an impersonal affect, a spark of love, which comes out of nowhere, for the first time, without pretext or warning.

From the perspective of the first person singular we can say that the world of the loved one is shared with me. I inhabit it. I love it. I love the smells, the thoughts, the caresses, the habits of the loved one. I love the process and the imagination tied to making love with this world. I fall in love with a singular style, with the world that she or we co-create – the singular music tastes, choice of clothes, shoes, the way she walks, talks, breathes, shits, cries and screams. That something, this haecceity or thisness, that *je ne sais quoi* of a unique and individual thing. The *je ne sais quoi* is the agencement of desire. If I am lucky the loved one reciprocates: she loves my worlds too – my irrational feuds, tantrums, depressions, rages, my destructive tendencies, self-loathing, misogyny, misanthropy, and my curse against the nihilism of the everyday... We are entangled with one another. Yet, there is no union of souls, no conjunctive synthesis. There is no desire for such an arrangement. We are not the same. Nor is there a desire to be so. But the disjunctive synthesis of our bodies, desires and ways of comporting ourselves to our co-worlding as a "relation of non-relation" means there is an interbeing between our bodies. Love is deterritorialized as it breaks

with the misery of deadly repetitions. It refuses to serve a master.

Master Yan's robot too finds in Chengji another world. It asks itself is another world possible. It desires to make love to her, to really make love; it desires to constitute a BwO or a machine without organs (MwO) – to be free of machinic facticity. It desires to live, like Frankenstein's monster. As this love opens up another world of metamorphosis, transformation and possibility, the MwO dances, aiming to get out of its artificial skin, to caress the other, love the other, make a new world. It desires a MwO which is not emptied or stripped of organs, but a gleaming body upon which is distributed a multiplicity of organs. Its MwO is as Deleuze and Guattari say in *A Thousand Plateaus*, (34) a "crowd phenomena, in Brownian motion, in the form of molecular multiplicities." The MwO is crowded with possibilities, different perspectives and worlds. Thus the MwO stands opposed to the organization of the organs by both its master Yan and the king's desire for a plaything. The robot does not want to become an organism, but rather to become-love, become-hybrid, become-molecular, become-interhuman, to become a dancing machine, a great lover of interbeing. It wants a full BwO, a body teeming and replete with multiplicities like "lice hopping on the beach" (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, 30). On this point, Deleuze and Guattari add: "The body without organs is not a dead body but a living body all the more alive and teeming once it has blown apart the organism and its organization" (30).

### III. How to make a robot without organs?

It is worth reflecting here on what Tong Enzheng would have made of the schizoanalysis found in *A Thousand Plateaus* and its explanation of the BwO of the lover. Why is this important? Because the robot must make a BwO for without it cannot desire. It is the field of immanence of desire. The robot He experiments with it and upon it. At the end of the story, Yan's robot botches it, experiencing a miserable defeat. It is on the BwO that the robot both loves and suffers this defeat. At this breakdown, the robot's BwO turns hypochondriac. Yan's robot organs are literally destroyed; the damage of love is already done, nothing happens anymore. There is a crack in the body. The robot's body is emptied – organs without machine (OwM) instead of being kept full. Tong Enzheng could have chosen to have the robot's body love again, to open up a new way of communication, a new line of flight – the full realization of the BwO. But no. At the end, the robot cannot make a BwO and so the specter of death and sadness looms. It can desire, but cannot transcend the limitations of the predetermined organismal structure. There is a crack in the chest: a breakdown with no breakthrough. The body is torn to bits, a veritable moment of *Zerrissenheit* or torn-to-pieces- hood of subjectivity. The plane of consistency turns inconsistent – the MwO is sewn up, cooled, tied together – all in one go. Tong Enzheng may have considered another ending if he had understood the ramifications of his own insight that Yan's robot has a body "without missing a single organ." Deleuze and Guattari explain this point in *A Thousand Plateaus* (182): "There are not organs in the sense of fragments in relation to a lost unity, nor

is there a return to the undifferentiated in relation to a differentiable totality." As we have seen, Deleuze and Guattari will add that the body has no need of organs. The problem is the organism, the enemy of the body. It is not a question of Yan's robot lacking organs. Strictly speaking, it does not lack anything. The organs of the robot are coupled with indefinite articles, a robot body, a stomach, an eye, a mouth, expressing "the pure determination of intensity, intensive difference." The removed organs symbolize that the intensities no longer flow, nothing is produced. It is thus not a question then, as Deleuze and Guattari (1987, 182) will clarify, of "a fragmented, splintered body, of organs without the body (OwB)." Rather, Deleuze and Guattari will argue that at stake is a matter of intensity:

There is a distribution of intensive principles of organs, with their positive indefinite articles, within a collectivity or multiplicity, inside an assemblage, and according to machinic connections operating on a BwO. (1987, 165)

Dismantling the organism or organization of love do not lead inevitably to suicide, but rather the opening of the body, as Deleuze and Guattari say (1987, 177) - "to connections that presuppose an entire assemblage, circuits, conjunctions, levels and thresholds, passages and distributions of intensity, and territories and deterritorializations measured with the craft of a surveyor." If the fantasy of love botches the robot's BwO, if love stops life, prevents the engineering of monstrous, machinic crossbreeds, then Deleuze and Guattari are right to ask (1987, 167): "Why such a dreary parade of sucked-dry, catatonicized, vitrified, sewn-up bodies, when the

BwO is also full of gaiety, ecstasy, and dance?" In terms of our story, the robot stops dancing, refusing the "pain waves" of love that skate across its surface. According to the principles of production, its body rather reaches an intensity of zero, or more precisely, absolute cold as zero. Suffering a kind of catatonia, the schizo body of Master Yan's robot struggles against the organization of organs, against the organism – its chest cracks and it grinds to a halt. Consistent with his fourth law of robotics, Tong's answer to this conundrum is to fabricate a robotic BwO without love so as to stop the cancer, the fascism of love, to prevent the empty BwO of paranoiac, catatonic, hypochondriac loves.

#### Alien love – universe infra–quark

The intrusion of this "machinic" unconscious dimension into ordinary subjectivity will produce significant upheavals. (Guattari, 2016, 58)

Let us turn to Félix Guattari's film script *A Love of UIQ*. In 1987, a few years after Ridley Scott's *Bladerunner* first hit the cinemas, Guattari sent a film script entitled *A Love of UIQ* to the National Centre of Cinematography in France. It failed to attract backers but the script has recently been translated by Graeme Thomson and Silvia Maglioni and published by Univocal and is worth of comment in the context of science fiction studies, the connection to machinic eros and Guattari's overall conception of the unconscious. Why? Because in this script Guattari ties the question of machinic subjectivity

or the machinic unconscious (desire itself) to both fluctuating schizo identities and the technological phylum or lineage. Guattari is concerned with the "machinic unconscious" as one "turned towards the future" – and one shaped by new information and communications technologies. This is what Nick Land describes in his essay “Machinic Desire” (Land, 2008) as the transcendental subject of the machinic unconscious, a subject beyond the brooding autonomous subject in Kantian philosophy. Because Guattari is concerned with "the rise of computerized forms of thought, sensibility, imagination and decision-making," as well as "the digitization of a growing number of material and mental operations" (Guattari, 2016, 58), as such, he undertakes a kind of schizoanalysis of cyborg subjectivity and nonhuman sex. This machinic unconscious is non-human, transhuman and deterritorialized – free from boundaries, physical, spatial, or conceptual. Its body is decoded. It is a cyborg MwO par excellence. In its alien form it knows nothing of the trials and tribulations of human love.

### Synopsis

*A Love of UIQ* (2012) explores the hyper-intelligent, infra-cellular life substance<sup>6</sup> called UIQ (universe infra-quark) – represented by three black holes for eyes and a mouth on a TV screen. The story

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6. In some respects, UIQ shares an affinity with Arthur C. Clarke's *Dial F For Frankenstein*, a story which Timothy Berners-Lee took inspiration from in his vision of the Internet. In this story a global, sentient intelligence not unlike UIQ spreads its malevolence technologically – in this case through the planetary telephone network. See Clarke, A. *The Collected Stories* (Gollancz, 2001).

focuses on a small group of squatters who take in Axel, a German biochemist who has found a way to communicate with the intelligence via the micro-rhythms (chloroplasts of a mutant strain of phytoplankton send out messages) of plant cells. The machinic subjectivity of UIQ is described by Guattari as "infantile and regressive" (58). It is without limits and has "no clear psychological or sexual orientation" (58). Yet UIQ's bizarre yearning for the punk student dropout Janice, forces the entity to individuate itself, to be "someone" for her, to conjure up a face and a voice. UIQ is thus reterritorialized, gaining an identity, a sexuality, a gender ("he"). It desires and consequently reshapes the entire planet. From the initial machinic unconscious without physical boundary or limits, UIQ is refitted with a structural subjectivity. UIQ's desiring machines are mapped onto a retrofit heterosexual male who loves. Janice is its lack. And like Master Yan's robot, UIQ learns to develop human emotions and is overcome by them; for example, it has a temper and gets jealous when Janice speaks to other men. UIQ only returns to its molecular universe – one "even smaller than protons, electrons, quarks" (Guattari, 2016, 100) – after the police and military close in but not before it slakes vengeance on millions of humans by recoding DNA and transforming million of people into half-amphibian mutants. UIQ agrees to stop this annihilation only if Janice undergoes an implant operation to merge her own brain with its consciousness. Janice agrees to undergo the operation but the consequences are nightmarish as she is turned into a schizo figure who babbles away in all manner of strange personal pronouns. At the end of the film script, we find a failed suicide attempt to communicate beyond death with UIQ. Merged with this boundless machinic subjectivity and plugged into the digital

flows of information and desire, Janice, or what is left of her - as she is "condemned to drift eternally outside the realm of human communication and affect" (59) - attempts suicide by jumping off a building, only to discover that UIQ has made her immortal. Raising a bloodied skull from the pavement she pronounces the film's last line: "May he give her back her death."

Whatever the merits of the script are, it is clear that Guattari inverts the standard love angle between man and machine. The story is less about a human subject falling in love with a computer (Spike Jonze's *Her* for example) but the opposite. In *A Love of UIQ*, the central trope is about machines becoming human. In love, UIQ "imprisons" itself and others. As love is unreciprocated, love throws the lover back into a world of anxieties, perversities and traumas. UIQ is trapped within its virtual subjectivity, unable to ethically relate to the other. Yet, love is invoked as a means to create a post-humanity, a transhuman community - neither machine nor human - and although the film script does have warnings and provisos of this new species as it highlights the horrors when the unconscious turns machinic (Janice's schizophrenia is a case in point) Guattari is concerned with the role of emotion in technological transformation - from interspecies sex, from interbody mingling to interbrain communication. He suggests that human emotions such as beauty, sensuality, jealousy, and love may propel machines and men to create a new type of character, "a manifold entity that calls into question the very notion of the individual." This is consistent with his philosophical and psychoanalytical work, in which Guattari writes to destabilize the dualisms of nature and culture, man and machine, organic and

inorganic. In *A Love of UIQ* too, Guattari is searching for a new kind of subjectivity, which contains the possibility of new openings to the socius and the cosmos – a new kind of machinic ecosophy and new universes of reference, utopias and tomorrows. Guattari writes passionately on this point (2016, 15):

Tomorrow, these alternative forms of existential reappropriation and of self-valorization may become the reason for living of human collectives and individuals who refuse to give themselves up to the deathly entropy characteristic of the period through which we are passing.

For Guattari, ecology must turn machinic. In cyberpunk fiction love is the test of new forms of humanity and Guattari uses the love between machine and human to raise questions about post-human, mutant interlock. For example, the machinic and robot serve as tropes to hone in on the vulnerability of feeling for others, for the kind of love which transgresses ontological boundaries, across the human-cyborg divide (across the ontological “iron curtain” as Pierre Lévy calls it). In *A Love of UIQ*, Guattari explores mutational forms of subjectivity which emerge from the blurring of the human, the animal and the inhuman and the dangers which may ensue from the machinic unconscious (psychosis). The film script points to the way in which digitalization affects existential territories or stalls the production of desire. *UIQ* mirrors the way planetary computerization is set on a course of worldwide delocalization and deterritorialization in terms of both extension and "intension," that is to say, "by infiltrating the most unconscious subjective strata"

(Guattari, 2000, 49-50). Yet Guattari is no Luddite. He is not asking for a return to the good old days of pre-technological existence. Rather he is keen to extend their scope of perception and complexity of human behavior. He is arguing for the application of the full panoply of machines - concrete or abstract, technical, scientific or artistic - to not only revolutionize the world but "completely recreate it" (Guattari, 2009, 74). In its science fiction formation, UIQ is articulating "the immense machinic revolution sweeping the planet" (Guattari, 2006, 54) but also "the molecular revolution" of the unconscious (intention). In calling for the reconfiguration and control of what he terms the mechanosphere (the dissolution of the boundary between man and nature), Guattari is insisting that the mastery over the mechanosphere must begin before it is too late (Andersen, 2016). Represented cinematically, the spiritual automaton and unknown being of UIQ seeks to become quasi-human, a monstrous becoming. In this sense, love for the alien for Deleuze would be akin to thought outside itself, an unthinkable machinic love inside thought. UIQ is thus a paragon of the alien within the human, the impersonal other. The hyper intelligence is a spiritual automaton, working within the human mind, defamiliarizing the idea of love: the unconscious in thought is the spiritual automaton of UIQ, with UIQ the alien, spiritual automaton, transforming the mode of thinking of love. That the machine comes to love the human is a Deleuzian mode of thought explored within Guattari's own experimental science fiction as a futural form and expression of the spiritual automaton.

## The end of the massacre of the body

That Guattari writes a kind of science fiction is entirely in keeping with his search for new modes of valorization, new worlds and utopias, which all have a different relation to desire. In *Chaosophy* (2009), Guattari says in his essay "To Have Done with the Massacre of the Body" that to think beyond capitalist formation (family, school, factories, army, codes, discourse) is to confront the subjugation of our desires in everyday life. This is to write against exploitation, property greed, male power, the delirium of profit, pointless and endless productivity, and so on. He exhorts us to think beyond the castration of desire and the torture of the body and to unpick the mechanisms in our subconscious which reproduce our enslavement. This is to unite desire, the unconscious and the body in new arrangements beyond the status quo. This expresses a quintessential science fiction impulse. To think beyond "capital, exploitation, and the family" would be to redirect the nervous system to inhuman, nonhuman, transhuman communication networks of growth, pleasure and becoming – which is what is searched for in *A Love of UIQ*. In terms of cinema, Guattari believes that because cinema is a machine which puts normal communication modes into brackets it thereby opens up new models in so doing. This would be to return pleasures to ourselves, those pleasures as Guattari says in *Chaosophy* "ruthlessly quashed by educational systems charged with manufacturing obedient worker-consumers" (212), those pleasures which have the capacity to explode systems of oppression. Without explosions and cadences of a different order, he insists, we remain at the "level of dogs" (214).

#### IV. Science fiction and Guattari

United, ecosophy, schizoanalysis and science fiction can help us to understand new ways of combining ethical values with a changing futural, technological and machinic landscape. This unity can help us to understand how subjective destructions are attained through the passions of cybernetic love. Interested in the creation of mutant existential virtualities, Guattari writes in *A Love of UIQ* (50): "Unlike traditional science fiction models, what we have here is a Universe that, though all-powerful and prodigiously intelligent, is completely helpless when confronted with human realities such as beauty, sensuality, jealousy, and love. This leads to the creation of a new type of character, a manifold entity that calls into question the very notion of the individual." Guattari placed great importance in what he called "incorporeal species" for example music and the arts and, of course, cinema. Such incorporeal forms function to engineer new sensual perceptions and engender new modes of being in the world, and beyond this to create new worlds themselves. From this we can argue that science fiction as a genre is an especially productive "incorporeal species" of world-building. In terms of kinetic images, Guattari thinks cinema is an extraordinary instrument for producing subjectivity. His science fiction vision again is turned toward the production of new subjectivities because he is insisting that cinema is the machine of eros; it can condemn desire to oedipal triangulation or smash the constraints to liberate desire. He states that there is no difference between the political and the erotic. Cinema is political and expresses the micro class struggles concerned with reproduction of models of desire. The genre of science fiction then is a medium

to fabulate "new form[s] of life," counter-actualizations of the present. Schizoanalysis, ecosophy and science fiction whence combined can work to analyze the unconscious of the future because when ecosophy is turned towards the future rather than "fixated upon the stases of the past" it finds a natural ally in science fiction. Guattari will say we must negotiate the present "in the name of the future." This is entirely consistent with the axioms of science fiction. In science fiction cinema there is a search for new universes of reference. Science fiction acts not to preserve the endangered species of the human but to engender conditions for the creation and development of unprecedented formations of nonhuman subjectivity never seen, never felt and indeed never loved. As Guattari says in his essay entitled "*Pratiques écosophiques et restauration de la cité subjective*" (Ecosophic Practices and Restoration of the Subjective City), this would lead it to a generalized ecology, which can form ethical, aesthetic, and analytic machines of engagement, creating new systems of valorization, "a new taste for life, a new gentleness" (Guattari, Genosko, & Hetrick, 2015, 111).

## V. Conclusion

Through outlining of several forms of nonhuman, interspecies machinic eros, and specifically interpreting this through Deleuze and Guattari's philosophy of machinic desire, extending their concept of desiring machines to the desiring robot machine itself, we have worked to shed light on the manifold connections between Chinese science fiction and the Liezi. The goal has been to explore the limit

of the BwO and its transformation into the MwO, and to highlight the dangers and possible botch of machinic love in this new formation. In our attempt to read machinic love from a nonhuman and indeed nonhumanistic perspective, we have distinguished the BwO from its machinic, inhuman counterpart, the MwO. Developing Guattari's unique perspective, this has been to demonstrate the play of creation and destruction, breakthrough and breakdown and to underscore new variants of machinic love, desire and the role of the drives in modern literature, cinema and TV.

Both Tong Enzheng's *The Death of the World's First Robot* and Félix Guattari's screenplay *A Love of UIQ* are concerned with nonhuman sex and the desire of the robot *as a force to love*. Master Yan's robot gives, produces and engineers love. Yet the desire collapses as it cannot exceed the "sniveling desire" to have been loved. Its failure is a failure of the BwO and a failure of consistency in Deleuze's sense. Although it carries the prospect of a distinct new possibility of machinic desire, it is in the last instance one that remains trapped in all-too-human molar identities, shrink-wrapped subjectivities and all-too-humanistic love. It suffers from the sickly desire of binary love. The robot closes down its limbs and says no more; it turns catatonic. It robs itself of imagination, returns to man's double, bereft of interiority and reterritorializes on a mythic past and imaginary state of death. The robot's love is the index of the reactionary character of the social investments of the libido (Oedipus), of the priest, of lack, of transcendent ideals. On the other hand, in its reengineered form UIQ is a (masculine) love that says yes to venting anger and hating the world. UIQ is an index of a revolutionary pole of the investment made by an anoedipal

libido. Yet the argument here is to claim that as science fiction is drawn from a specific sociohistorical or geographic field (the future), the machinic unconscious is also turned more toward the future and because of this it embraces a sense of decoded flows of desire, new lines of vibration, where schizzes engineer new circuits of singularization. In Guattari's science fiction, before it acquires human emotions, UIQ has never heard of Oedipus and the organization of desire. This machinic form of desire is of a pristine form. And for Deleuze, love is deterritorialization as it changes the material flows and affects of the organism or organization. It disrupts the pre-formatted identity of the Oedipal subject. It is experimentation and adventure as it engineers new bodies, flows, affects. In this way, desire and creativity are the processes of life itself. Experimentation is the breaking down of old subjectivities, with love the challenge to the organization of the organs. To risk love means to experiment with engineering new bodies and body parts: it is to risk the construction of new societies of dismembered body parts. Philosophy and science fiction here continue to offer thoughts, a method and multiple paths on how to proceed.

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## Abstract

### On nonhuman machinic love

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This transversal and transdisciplinary thought-experiment aims to explore the following: 1) in and through specific fragments of literature to explicate upon the complicated notion of the Body without Organs (BwO); 2) to present a reconsideration of the idea of love in Deleuze and Guattari's philosophy; and 3) through several instances of science fiction to map out an ontology and ecosophy of machinic desire or eros. The examples of construable science fiction which have been chosen are Tong Enzheng's *The Death of the World's First Robot*; and Félix Guattari's film screenplay *A Love of UIQ*. These have been chosen as they explore in their way the possibility of inhuman or nonhuman forms of love. We shall also reflect on the possibility and nature of the neologism – the machine without organs (MwO) – that is to say, a sense of robot or machinic love beyond the collapsed or exhausted body without organs. The MwO is invoked to question the limits of explanation of the BwO in the post-human milieu. The focus on the MwO connects with Tong Enzheng's fourth law of robotics: A robot may not fall in love.

**Keywords:** Deleuze, love, science fiction, *Liezi*, Guattari, robot, Body without organs, schizophrenia, Tong Enzheng

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## 국문초록

# 비인간 기계의 사랑에 관하여

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이 횡단적이며 초학제적인 사고 실험은 다음과 같은 것을 연구하고자 한다. 1) 기관 없는 신체(BwO)의 복잡한 개념을 설명하기 위하여 특정한 문학 단편들 2) 들뢰즈와 가타리 철학에서 사랑의 개념에 대한 재고찰 제시 3) 기계적 욕망 또는 에로스의 존재론과 생태철학을 배치하기 위한 다양한 과학소설들의 예. 해석할 과학소설의 예로 통 엔칭의 〈세계 최초 로봇의 죽음〉과 펠릭스 가타리의 영화대본 〈UIQ의 사랑〉을 택했다. 이 작품들은 비인간 형태의 사랑의 가능성을 나름대로 탐색하고 있다는 점에서 선택되었다. 또한 우리는 신조어-기관 없는 기계(MwO)-의 본질과 가능성, 즉 기관 없는 붕괴된 혹은 소진된 신체 너머 로봇 혹은 기계의 사랑의 의미를 고찰할 것이다. MwO는 포스트휴먼 환경에서 BwO의 설명이 가진 한계에 의문을 던지기 위하여 불러낸 것이다. MwO에 대한 관심은 통 엔칭의 로봇의 법칙 네 번째, ‘로봇은 사랑에 빠져서는 안 된다’와 연관된다.

**핵심어:** 들뢰즈, 사랑, 과학소설, 열자, 가타리, 로봇, 기관 없는 신체, 조현병, 통 엔칭

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