

AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF

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Using Gilles Deleuze and Fèlix Guattari's notion of a minor literature and their rather specific definition of a traitor this thesis examines the life and work of Bob Kaufman. Bob Kaufman was one of the original Beats, he was black, and he is practically unknown. This thesis examines how Kaufman uses his complex racial background with his poetry to push language to it extremes and in doing so trouble the structures which language presupposes. Through jazz and silence Kaufman causes traditional notions of language, poetry, and life to take flight and become something new, something which attempts to overcome the ills found in society. This thesis is an attempt to examine Kaufman as an example of rebellion not to be emulated but as a precursor of future rebellions.

BOB KAUFMAN, TRAITOR

A Thesis

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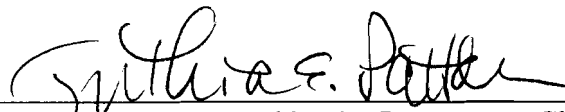
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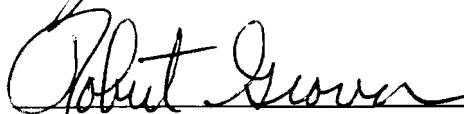
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Bob Kaufman, Traitor

“What’s the fuss about Bob anyway? Just another speed freak low life fars I’m concerned. I don’t give no shit ‘bout poems and all that.” — sentiment toward Kaufman as recorded by Mel Clay in *Jazz - Jail and God: An Impressionistic Biography* (1987)

“I want to be anonymous.” — Bob Kaufman as quoted by Raymond Foye (1981)

“Jazz is an African traitor.” — Bob Kaufman, “War Memoir” (1965)

“The rebel is timeless.” — Bob Kaufman, “Fragment from Public Secret” (1981)

“Abomunism was founded by Barrabas, inspired by his dying words: ‘I wanted to be in the middle, But I went too far out.’ — Bob Kaufman, “Notes Dis- and Re-Garding Abomunism” (1959)

Introduction

Bob Kaufman’s life and work was a fight against the type of institutionalization which this very thesis will place him. Yet, an examination of his life, poetry, methods, and results will provide a better understanding of the revolutionary potential found in betraying traditional usages of language and lifestyle. Still this does not take away from the fact this thesis will attempt to pin down someone who was in constant motion. Not a motion of the physical, but one of becoming. Kaufman wanted to be unseen and his constant motion allowed him to come close to that goal. He wanted to sit on the outside where he could better see ills within society and then attempt to diagnose them and prescribe ways to fix or overcome them. This coupled with his style of writing places him within the French thinkers Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari’s notion of minor

literature. The position allows one to understand how Kaufman troubles language pushing it to its boundaries. Kaufman can be characterized as a traitor to the major language and the system of power and hierarchy which is implied by such a language. His numerous arrests, with his alternative lifestyle and the way in which he uses language causes language and life to move in many different ways. He starts lines of flight which have the possibility to go anywhere once they have taken off. His depersonalized and singular life acts like a moment of potentiality for affects and art, causing numerous potentials to be opened. It is in these lines of flight that one finds Kaufman's betrayal and how it is that he is a traitor. "There is always betrayal in a line of flight" (Deleuze and Parnet 40).

Kaufman is better known in France than he is in the United States, thus he has been given the title of the American Rimbaud. Yet, the connection between the two is more than superficial. Rimbaud, like Kaufman, attempted "an unregulated exercise of all the faculties, which was to define future philosophy, just as [. . .] the disorder of all the senses would define the poetry of the future. A new music as discord, and as discordant accord, the source of time" (Deleuze 35). Kaufman embraced the "new music as discord" which he found in jazz. Kaufman connected with jazz and its influence is found throughout his poetry.

This essay will attempt to categorize a person whose life and work constantly openly resisted categorization. With this in mind the structure of the essay has been left as open as possible to allow Kaufman's line of flights to pass through it and onto the reader. The structure of the essay follows Deleuze and Guattari's model of the rhizome.

Instead of a hierarchical argument or an argument which is contained and depolitized, this essay is an intensity, written so that each point connects with each other point. Moreover, this also makes it a multiplicity since each point is separate, but connects with each other point to form the whole. Finally, it is a map of Kaufman and his work. It does not follow his life as in a trace, but maps over his life in a way which allows for it to connect in many places. In fact, as a map it allows the reader to connect with Kaufman's lines of flight in many numerous manners and dimensions.

While there are distinct sections to this essay it is important to remember that it is a rhizome and that each section connects with each other section. As such one could start anywhere within the essay, beginning in the middle or the end just as easily as the beginning. The first section looks at Kaufman's life and the legends which have been built up around it, sometimes by him and other times by others. This section will also deal with how Kaufman's life and art cannot be disconnected from each other since Kaufman used both his body and his language as weapons to fight oppression. Finally, it will delve into how Kaufman uses depersonalization to open the path for new lines of flight, and show how Kaufman rejects hybridity for movement and becoming.

The second section will deal with Deleuze and Guattari's concept of a minor literature and how Kaufman fits within that notion. It will pay particular attention to the community *not yet*, which Kaufman is working towards. The third section will examine the specific types of structures which Kaufman is rebelling against, and why he sees them as bad. The fourth section deals with the ways in which Kaufman betrays the major usage. It will examine Kaufman's becoming-animal, his delirium, experimentation, and

drug and alcohol use, plus look at how Kaufman troubles language and the effects his betrayal has on the dominant social and political forms. The fifth section looks at how his betrayal effects language, pushing it to its limits and what this means to language and revolutionary change. This section will also deal with Kaufman's connection with music, and will blend with the last section. The last section will examine Kaufman's silence, of which he took two ten-year vows, and how he pushes language to silence, while also looking at the political ramifications of such actions.

Finally, part of the goal of this essay is to tease out certain lines of flight from Kaufman's life and work which have been hidden or overlooked in the past. Particularly and most important is Kaufman's embrace of life and rebellion against the system of death. Kaufman's life and work was dedicated to opening the path for life to move and change. They were complete rejections of fascism and the death which goes with it. This essay does not attempt to dictate a "true" or correct system for looking at Kaufman, only one which attempts to allow him to speak while still examining why and how he speaks.

Biography and Myth

As a somewhat unknown figure of the Beat generation Bob Kaufman's biography is full of myth and legend. From his racial makeup and parental lineage to his life as a sailor, and his time as a poet Kaufman's biography is full of contradiction and inconsistency. As Mel Clay writes, "Everyone had a story about him, his vivid presence amongst his friends created an ongoing imagined scenario - memories, beefs, rumor, transposed dream, like Crazy Horse and King Kong all melting off into myth" (6). Kaufman was born in 1925 to a Jewish German father and a Martiniquan Catholic

mother. It has been written that Kaufman “attended Catholic mass, but he would also join his father in the synagogue on the Sabbath, while at the same time learning the voodoo beliefs (Winans 19). Yet, as Maria Damon repeatedly writes, this is said to be false by his siblings (“Triangulated” 4). Moreover, “his bother George claims that it was their father who, though black, may have been part Jewish and their mother was from an old black New Orleans family” (Damon ““Unmeaning”” 702). It seems very likely that Kaufman was the tenth of thirteen children, his father was maybe part Jewish, while his mother was from New Orleans and a schoolteacher, who probably gave Kaufman a solid education (Lindberg “Bob” par. 1).

Even the rather common story of Kaufman being a merchant marine is full of myth and inconsistency. Maria Damon’s research shows that the myth says he joined when he was thirteen, but “he was in fact eighteen” according to his siblings (““Unmaning”” 702). Yet, while his siblings hold that he was a merchant marine and enrolled in the National Maritime Union (NMU) “his name doesn’t appear in any NMU archive records and [she has] no hard evidence of his membership” (“Triangulated” 4). The myth of Kaufman places his time as a sailor as the time when he was first introduced to poetry and egalitarian thought. Whether or not this is the case, being a sailor influenced his later life as can be seen in his work. “In Kaufman’s sea poetry, the hugeness of the sea is experienced as reassuring and righteous, and sailing becomes not a triumph over the sea but an act of physical harmony with it” (Damon ““Unmeaning”” 732).

Kaufman spent most of his life after the Merchant Marines in San Francisco where he gathered fame through heavy drinking, impromptu poetry readings, numerous arrests, and long bouts of silence. Moreover, he was one of the original Beats having “co-founded *Beatitude*, a seminal journal of Beat culture” (Damon “Triangulated” 4). During this time Kaufman was continually arrested for lewd behavior, and drunkenness.

Raymond Foye states, “He was targeted by the police as a subversive. He was arrested thirty-six times in one year” (Henderson 13). Kaufman’s wife, Eileen Kaufman, says this about his arrests: “They were trying to put Bob in jail for drunk and disorderly every time they saw him on the street. They didn’t like it when he hopped up on the tables and spouted poetry” (13). Kaufman, like his poetry, was a traitor to the major usage. He lived in a sort of delirium which allowed him to understand the world in a way which was differently, and thus allowed him to experiment with life and art. There are numerous references to Kaufman’s “mood shit” or delirium. This usually deals with Kaufman “snatching drinks off tables and drinking em.” While he also jumps “on the bar and recit[es] that shit he’s always doing, words coming out without meaning, man he goes on like that for hours, arms waving and shit and dancing around and reciting and people knows he’s fucking crazy and trying that shit, fucked up, no body understands or follows that shit” (Clay 48). He also “used to come up here [North Beach] and sit real quite like a fucken Indian just staring at people, spooking everybody, scared he’ll slit their throat if they say something he don’t like, then he goes off shouting all that poetry crap, shouting and whispering and singing stuff nobody understands” (61). It is actions like this which

got Kaufman “86'ed” out of most of the bars on North Beach. At the same time, it is actions like this which show Kaufman’s delirium, his line of flight.

In the early 1960s Kaufman went to live in New York City, where he picked up a serious drug habit and ended up in “an argument with a policeman [which] led to a series of enforced electric shock treatments at Bellevue Hospital” (Clay xi). After this he went back to San Francisco where he stayed until his death. During this time he lived where he could, yelled his poetry at everyone, and twice took extended vows of silence. The first time was a ten year span from the assassination of John F. Kennedy to the end of the Vietnam War. “During these times, he effectively withdrew from the society of men and poets and biographers” (Lindberg “Bob” 171). At least that is what the legend says. In actuality Kaufman was often heard saying “You got a cigarette?” (Henderson 16) or “Got any speed?” (Damon “Unmeaning” 702). Of course it is true that during this time “he didn’t speak in any lengthy sentences or anything” (Henderson 16). His wife claims that Kaufman recited “Murder in the Cathedral,” by T. S. Eliot to break his silence at the end of the Vietnam war (18). He also took another vow of silence later in his life from 1978 to the 1980s, without as much fanfare or drama.

Late in his life Kaufman lived the life of poverty-stricken homelessness. Jean Carlisle, a North Beach photographer remembers: “Just a couple nights before he came to us he had gone on a binge in North Beach and had fallen off the pier at three-thirty in the morning and lost his teeth and his glasses and his hearing aid all at once” (Henderson 19). Q. R. Hand, a poet, and community health activist also remembers: “Bob was constantly, constantly sick. He wasn’t paying attention to anything. He hadn’t gotten his hearing aid,

and his eyes needed glasses. So there's no telling how much of his being out there on his own someplace else seemingly crazy was attributable to him actually seeing and hearing and being disoriented in a way'" (21). Kaufman's way of living ate at his own life to feed his poetry. It was through his suffering and delirium that he was able to perceive in a new way, to become. Kaufman understood the power he held by being perceived as being homeless. He was outside of the institution and thus in a position to perceive in a clear new way. In "Bonsai Poems" Kaufman writes, "Every time I see an old man carrying a shabby cardboard suitcase, / I think he is an eternity agent on some secret mission" (*Ancient* 39). This "old man" is Kaufman. Kaufman is explaining that even those unseen people, those underground people, have something which the seen people should listen to or watch for. In "Unanimity Has Been Achieved, Not a Dot Less for its Accidentalness" Kaufman writes, "A beggar is the body of a God-ness, come to shoot movies with his eye" (*Ancient* 17). Here the beggar holds a position of truth since he or she is observing and is virtually unknown to the rest of society. It is those in the depersonalized position who create new assemblages which cause new lines of flight.

His poetry held people captive with its strength. A young girl whom he stayed with late in his life claims:

"'He could do magical things with sound,' [. . .] 'he sat up all night mouthing sounds into the night.' He taught her a mantra and an accompanying rhythm that would make strange things happen. With his fingers, he could summon something called an 'electronic' being. It was ectoplasmic and hovered in the room. Once they were doing that mantra

and someone began pounding on the door shouting ‘I am a demon and I know you’re doing a mantra in there.’ The rhythm alone would cause people to drop things—things to fall, people to act strangely.” (Henderson 26)

As this story shows, the myth and legend of Kaufman are closely wrapped around him. He held people with his words and his silence. He depersonalized himself to allow new becomings to take off from his assemblage, an assemblage which was like no other. He died in 1986 “poverty-stricken and physically debilitated” (Damon ““Unmeaning”” 701).

Kaufman looked like any old bum on the street. To look at him was to look at a homeless man who had lost forty percent of his hearing (Winans 19) and was a drunk. Yet, to hear Kaufman was to hear a poetry which was not only powerful, but beautiful. One finds when examining his biography that Kaufman’s life and his art cannot be separated. “He was committed to a lifestyle where all behavior was directed to fulfillment of his art and muse” (Clay x). Ronald Bogue articulates this thought when talking about Deleuze and Guattari’s analysis of Kafka: “No firm distinction exists between work and world, for which reason Kafka’s experimentation on language is immediately political and social. There is likewise no meaningful division between art and life, Kafka’s diaries and letters functioning together with the short stories and novels as parts of the same writing machine” (188). Kaufman’s experimentations and life are also “immediately political and social.” Kaufman was furthering the Beat project. “They [the Beats] tried to collapse the distance between the ‘private’ and ‘public’ selves, insisting that such a division was a form of social mutilation” (Damon “Triangulated” 6).

Jerry Stoll, a North Beach photographer, claims that as a Beat “he [Kaufman] was a pioneer. I think that it is really clear that people like Ginsberg and the rest of them, when they were political activists, were following Kaufman. They didn’t lead Kaufman, he led them. He had the political consciousness” (Henderson 9-10). Kaufman lived his art and thus was political and social. He was “never a climber he didn’t pander to success. He never taught writing courses, wrote reviews, edited books or showed up at Beat Generation reunions” (Clay ix). It was his becoming which allowed the Beats to also become. Once Kaufman started the process of becoming then the other Beats were able to follow. By becoming-black they were able to form an assemblage with Kaufman, thus creating the Beat poets. He was “there when the Beats began that psychic birthing pain that broke a lot of heads through into a new reality” (Henderson 23). In becoming-black, through Kaufman, the Beats were able to experiment with new alternatives, for example, “jazz instead of European classical music,” and “a lack of racial antagonism” (23). Kaufman was not the only singularity which allowed the Beats to become-black, but he is an interesting case since he has been almost completely forgotten and is rarely mentioned when the Beats are discussed. Yet, his life and work gain a certain power by being unknown. Here he is again playing the traitor. “To be unknown at last, as are very few people, is to betray” (Deleuze and Parnet 45). Kaufman took the nonconformism of the Beats further than any of the rest of them. Through his betrayal he was able to create a passage for new lines. He lost his identity, and his face. He disappeared, became unknown, and imperceptible: “The greatest men have gone unknown: Buddha was the twenty-fourth” (Kaufman *Ancient* 17). Kaufman not only betrayed the hierarchical

structures of power, but, in his most powerful betrayal, the poetic tradition. As Deleuze and Parnet write, “What other reason is there for writing than to be traitor to one’s own reign, traitor to one’s sex, to one’s class, to one’s majority? And to be traitor to writing” (44).

Unlike the other Beats, Kaufman fought against all types of institutionalization. He was pure motion, even when he was not moving. It was his wife, Eileen, who finally talked Kaufman into writing his poems down, which she did mainly herself (Henderson 11). He “cared nothing for publication and [. . .] everything about spontaneity” (11). In fact many of his published poems came from napkins or pages found in North Beach bars which he had left. Most of *The Ancient Rain: Poems 1956-1978* (1981) was transcribed from a tape recording (Foye x). It was others, not Kaufman, who wanted to see him published. His power came from his movement. A movement which none-the-less can be found within his poetry as it is published. He found ways to perceive which allowed him to make new assemblages with anything. It was not only that he was hybrid or of hybridity, it is that he would not stop. On top of this he did whatever he could to keep his work or himself from being canonized. “Bob Kaufman’s life as a poet is unique to American literature. He kept no diary or journal, published no literary essays, wrote no reviews, and maintained no correspondences” (Henderson 7). For Kaufman, becoming, experiment, and delirium was revolutionary and where one found a type of truth. Thus he lived a life which fought against the static, hierarchical notion of the world and the major usage of language. He understood his body to be a site of oppression, as much as

language was, thus he used both as a “miraculous weapon” to fight that oppression (Damon 717).

Minor Literature

The power of Kaufman’s betrayal comes from his usage of language. He takes a major language and works a minor usage upon it. In doing this he is working in what Deleuze and Guattari call a minor literature. Minor literature is a very useful concept since it allows theorists to “reevaluate the criteria for the definition of what ‘literature’ is” and, more important to work dealing with Kaufman, it allows one “to wrest from the grip of ‘literature’ works that would not have been integrated into the canon without having their critical (political and ideological) force neutralized” (Bensmaia 219). While practically no one would argue that Kaufman is a likely candidate for the canon any time soon, because of the difficulty in categorizing him, any move to place him within “literature” would in effect neutralize his revolutionary power. Since, for Deleuze and Guattari, the tradition or major usage of “literature” is mainly focused on meaning, as opposed to function. Bogue succinctly writes, “Literary works do not mean so much as they function. When properly constructed, they are machines that make something happen. The writers Deleuze admires, those who practice a minor usage of language, experiment on the real, thereby at once fashioning a critique of power and opening a passage toward new possibilities for living” (187-8). This is the minor literature, not a substrate of literature, but when literature “functions as it should” (162). It is the “revolutionary conditions for every literature within the heart of what is called great (or established) literature” (Deleuze and Guattari, “Kafka” 18).

Deleuze and Guattari list three main characteristics of minor literature. First, in minor literature “language is affected with a high coefficient of deterritorialization” (Deleuze and Guattari “Kafka” 16). Second, everything in minor literature is political (17). Third, everything in minor literature takes on a collective value (17). For Deleuze and Guattari, the deterritorialization found with the first point is seen in how the minor author works on the major language. “What they [minor authors] do, rather, is invent a *minor use* of the major literature within which they express themselves entirely; they *minorize* this language, much as in music, where the minor mode refers to dynamic combinations in perpetual disequilibrium” (Deleuze 109). The major usage leaves the dominant social codes intact, while down playing any political or collective aspects, while the minor usage dismantles dominant social codes and undermines fixed structures, through the political and collective (Bogue 113). The second characteristic, of everything being political, draws the minor writer out of the darkness which major writers are found to hide in. Minor writers are not understood as great individual writers, “in the sense of an autonomous figure distanced from the political sphere” (Bogue 109). Instead they are great writers who are firmly lodged within the political sphere. Moreover, minor literature gains its political power not from being the literature of the minority or restricted group, but from a minor usage of literature which troubles “the dominant power structures inherent in language” (97). The final characteristic of minor literature deals with the collective enunciation of the writer. While this issue will be dealt with in more depth later it is helpful to give a few preliminary comments about collective enunciation in the light of minor literature. The minor writer “is like a foreigner in the language in

which he expresses his self, even if this is his native tongue” (Deleuze 109). Yet, he or she is able to draw “strength from a mute and unknown minority that belongs only to him (110). Through deterritorialization the minor writer utilizes “the virtual lines of continuous variation and causes language itself to stammer” (Bogue 112). This stammering opens up new “lines of metamorphosis.” These virtual lines then “are the ‘people to come,’ the virtual collectivity that functions together with the actual writer as a new and metamorphic collective assemblage of enunciation” (112). Finally, the collective assemblage of enunciation is found in both major and minor writers, since no “writer act[s] as an independent agent creating ex nihilo” (Bogue 109). The difference then is how they each approach the collective. The major writer “accepts and confirms the role of depoliticized individual that the social order assigns the artist, whereas in a minor usage the writer rejects that assigned function and directly engages the collective assemblage of enunciation” (109). While Deleuze and Guattari label three main characteristics of minor literature, as once can tell, is it very hard to separate the three from each other. There are three characteristics of a minor literature, but work together as one, in a multiplicity.

The “collective enunciation” of minor literature holds particular interest when looking at Kaufman. For Deleuze and Guattari the “collective enunciation” does not refer to the minor writer speaking for a group in the present, instead “the people are missing.” That is the artist is a becomer, one who “goes beyond the perceptual states and affective transitions of the lived” (Deleuze and Guattari *What* 171). The artist writes for those who

are not yet. This is not to say that the community not yet has to be, only that the artist perceives in a way different than what is or has been. As Deleuze and Guattari write:

The people is internal to the thinker because it is a ‘becoming-people,’ just as the thinker is internal to the people as no less unlimited becoming. The artist or the philosopher is quite incapable of creating a people, each can only summon it with all his strength. A people can only be created in abominable sufferings, and it cannot be concerned any more with art or philosophy. But books of philosophy and works of art also contain their sum of unimaginable sufferings that forewarn of the advent of a people. They have resistance in common—their resistance to death, to servitude, to the intolerable, to shame, and to the present. (Deleuze and Guattari *What* 109-10)

Kaufman, then, through the sufferings of delirium gains the strength or life needed to write his poetry. As Deleuze would say, Kaufman is like a vampire sucking life which then gives him the power to write in a minor usage. Mel Clay, a Kaufman biographer, has a remarkably similar thing to say about Kaufman, “He ate all the life he could find and it nourished his poetry and when he had enough he passed away” (x). This is not to say that Kaufman was for death or destruction. By “taking in life” he was able to produce something new and revolutionary. Deleuze writes, “The great and only error lies in thinking that a line of flight consists in fleeing from life; the flight into the imaginary, or into art. On the contrary, to flee is to produce the real, to create life, to find a weapon” (Deleuze and Parnet 49). As one can see Kaufman’s line of flight, his betrayal was not a

movement toward death, instead it was the greatest expression of life possible. It is through his betrayal that Kaufman is able to open the passage for a potential community. In fact “the only means of creating such a people is through an undoing of the codes of power, which inhere in the forms of conventional [. . .] representation as well as in their contents” (Bogue 148). So one finds that Kaufman embraces life and experiments with the real and in doing so opens up potential lines of flight for new communities.

In this conception of literature and life, one finds “a new conception of the ‘revolutionary’ potential of literature” (Smith xli). Since, “this is not exactly a people called upon to dominate the world. It is a minor people, eternally minor, taken up in a becoming-revolutionary” (Deleuze 4). Yet, while this community not yet is revolutionary as with any becoming it has the chance of becoming fascist. Here one finds two possibilities within Deleuze’s conception of becoming-revolutionary. One possibility is “as diabolical powers to come” and the other is as the “revolutionary forces to be constructed” (Deleuze and Guattari *Kafka* 18). When Kaufman expresses the potential community he does not simply “describe something that is fully formed” (Bogue 110). Instead, he opens up the means for the new community. By betraying language and making it stammer to its boundaries, Kaufman creates becomings and openings not found outside of literature.

Kaufman’s work is a deterritorializing the major usage. He is a traitor to the major usage of language. This opens up revolutionary new forms, affects, and becomings, but Kaufman has no control of them. Once the new lines of flight fire off in different directions they can become something revolutionary, which for Deleuze and

Kaufman would be something moving towards egalitarianism. Yet, they could also move in a direction of fascism. This will be dealt with in more detail later in the paper. At the same time Kaufman had some knowledge or understanding that he was writing for a community not yet. He even gave it a name “Abomunism.” Kaufman wrote the “Abomunist Manifesto” for a people who were missing. As Katherine Lindberg points out Kaufman was “in the long avant-garde tradition of sticking it to the bourgeoisie, [he] named a movement without a foundation or members” (“Bob Kaufman” 167).

Kaufman’s minor usage with this naming of a people missing or not yet places him firmly in the positions of a traitor to major usage, a becomer of revolution and a seer of a people not yet.

Kaufman was able to reach this community not yet, through his depersonalization. He strove to be not simply hybrid, but to be open to all multiplicities. Yet, his depersonalization made him a singularity within the population in which he lived. Deleuze writes, “neither imprecise nor general, but unforeseen and nonpreexistent, singularized out of a population rather than determined in a form” (Deleuze 1). Since Kaufman is singularized and not of the form of the population he is in a position to experience the world in new ways by forming new assemblages with the other multiplicities. One should not confuse singularization with individualization, since in singularization “one can no longer be distinguished from *a* woman, *an* animal, or *a* molecule” (italics in original 1). Kaufman is not simply “an ego or a person or a subject” in the traditional sense. Instead he finds “a real name for [himself] only through the hardest exercise in depersonalization, by opening [himself] to the multiplicities

everywhere within [him], to the intensities running through [him] (Smith xxxvi-xxxvii).

Kaufman's "real name" is found in Abomunism, where ever the name itself is a multiplicity of "among other things, communism, atom bomb, Bob Kaufman, and abomination" (italics in original Lindberg "Bob" par. 5). Abomunism, like Kaufman, is not simply a hybridity, it is a multiplicity, an intensity. Both abomunism and Kaufman are inclusive and open. Both are ready to take in and include all others. Moreover, one finds that Kaufman's work develops through his body and his poetic work. Kaufman "was and was not black, Jew, Beatnik, hetero-/homosexual, American, African, Buddhist, junkie, drunk, jailbird, jazz poet, musician, minstrel, 'Abomunist'" (Lindberg "Bob Kaufman" 167). He refused and embraced all generic modifiers, placing him a position which is more than hybrid. He was a traitor "to the world of dominant significations, and to the established order. This is quite different from the trickster: for the trickster claims to take possession of fixed properties, or to conquer a territory, or even to introduce a new order. The trickster has plenty of future, but no becoming whatsoever. The priest, the soothsayer, is a trickster, but the experimenter is a traitor" (Deleuze and Parnet 41).

Kaufman moved past notions of hybridity and being a trickster, since they rely on stable identities. Kaufman "no longer appears as the product of a particular isolated consciousness (even an 'unhappy' or 'split' one), but rather as an arrangement of *n* elements—in other words, as a desiring-machine that functions only because it is always already connected to other 'machines'" (Bensmaia 216). He was fluid and open, and thus he was a multiplicity, a singularity, and, as one continually finds, a traitor. Kaufman's

intellectual genealogy of *Does the Secret Mind Whisper?* shows his notion of progression and, more importantly, how numerous influences come together in him:

marble corpse of twice dead socrates who begat gandhi who begat krisna
 who begat buddha who begat christ who begat einstein who begat michael
 who begat melville who begat dostoevski who begat lincoln who begat
 morpheus who begat farnsworth who begat starkweather who begat
 gernimo who begat whitman who begat hymened women

His poetry also broke down simple notions of hybridity to embrace depersonalized multiplicity. There are numerous stories of Kaufman including “snatches of poems, Crane, Lorca, Eliot, Baudelaire, Karl Marx, new creations with permutation of all his influences” (Clay 21). Raymond Foye states:

He [Kaufman] would often times mix these poems in with his own poems so you didn’t know where Eliot left off and where Bob Kaufman began. And that was not an egotistical way of putting himself on that level, it simply had to do with the fact that for Bob all poetry was one. There was a commonality to poetry in his mind and it’s why later in life he wrote poems and never signed his name, often times leaving them behind in cafes” (Henderson 24).

His “palimpsestic allusions” helped him in destroying “traditional poetic genealogies and philosophical influences” (Lindberg “Bob Kaufman” 173).

Kaufman was a singularity in which the poetic tradition was another intensity with which he coupled to form an assemblage. As a poetic-machine Kaufman connected with

many other things, his own cultural and racial background, plus drugs, alcohol and the Beats. Moreover, this placed him in the position to express the potential for another community. He spoke a collective enunciation as an individual, thus his assemblages and his expression form as a multitude. He was one and many, while always being open to form new connections. Within which he was able to produce an affect altering poetry which challenged notions of identity, race, and language.

The Tree

Before further examining how Kaufman is a traitor it is important to understand some of the institutions that he was rebelling against. Kaufman's betrayal was on one level against language, but he also worked against the hierarchical power systems found in society, particularly capitalism, religion, and compartmentalizing institutions. Kaufman's life and poetry were aimed at breaking out of the grasp of these structures. Moreover, to do this he had to trouble the inherent power structures within language and society. His lifestyle shows how he attempted to attack power, but one must also look at his poetry to see his other means of attacking these systems. In "Benediction" Kaufman relates capitalism with death: "Every day your people get more and more / Cars, televisions, sickness, death dreams" (*Cranial* 105). Material things and money are things of death which keep people from reaching their full potential, hence Kaufman's rejection of these things in his life. His abomunists did not "write for money; they write / the money itself" (*Cranial* 117). He is stating that instead of striving for money the abomunists strive for truth and this truth is the "money" people should covet. The money of capitalism leaves people in fear and hollow as is seen in this extended quote from *Does*

the Secret Mind Whisper? (1960) (please note that this broadside is one full poem, has no punctuation, and is one complete paragraph even though it spans many pages):

hunting the human dog with stilettos of fear and dreams of money sex
 money cars money suits money shoes money muscles money houses
 money hair money pearly teeth money pointed shoes money hats money
 brains money hate money love twisted into pimp patterns of money
 success grasped by money gnarled hands of lanky editorial writers false
 teeth credit dentists cheap meat queer butchers hollow chested bus drivers
 eye shadow salesgirls all american football businessmen hollow thigh
 supermarket clerks money flag makers money mountain movers money car
 makers money eyed raw material citizens pulped of money landscapes of
 holy money timemusical voices of tiny money children

Capitalism was one of the ills Kaufman saw in society which as a cultural physician he attempted to remedy through opening up a new potential community which was free of capitalism.

Religion was another thing in which Kaufman saw as an ill and attempted to remedy. In “Blues for Hal Waters” he writes, “God is my favorite dictator” (*Ancient* 28). At another time Kaufman has Carl Chessman call god and ask “does santa clause believe in children?” (sic) this causes god to get panicky. Chessman then accuses god of “felonious deism” and “god cops out” (*Golden* 4). Here one finds Kaufman attacking god for being weak and presenting himself as something he is not. Where Kaufman sees capitalism as something which keeps people hollow and full of fear, religion keeps people

weak and in the dark. In his poem to Allen Ginsberg, Kaufman writes, “The Church is becoming alarmed by the number of people defecting to God. / The Holy Intelligence Agency is puzzled: they have proof he is broke and his agents / Use spiritual brainwashing in addition to promises of quick sainthood” (*Solitudes* 23). The church and god are subversive distractions which in fighting for the control of people mislead them and manipulate them. The church is equated to the secrecy of the CIA in “the Holy Intelligence Agency” while god is shown as “brainwashing” people. Yet, Kaufman’s relationship with religion is not so clear cut as to simply say that he rebelled against it. He did rebel against a type of religion which keep people static, weak, and ignorant, but at the same time he embraced another type of religion. Kaufman saw the power of egalitarianism within some religions equating the sacrifice of the poet with the sacrifice of Jesus to help the downtrodden. Moreover, many accounts claim that his silence was done as a Buddhist vow. Also, his broadside *Second April* (1959) begins with a Christian scripture from the book of *Romans*: “Be ye not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind.” While the original quote deals with changing one’s mind to be in line with the Christian god’s, Kaufman uses this quote to state his betrayal of the dominant powers. For Kaufman this quote is about becoming, even becoming in the face of religion. From this it seems that one could argue that Kaufman’s notion of religion was one which was completely immanent and changing. His immanent religion is one of egalitarianism and experimentation, or even becoming. The notion of religion which Kaufman opposed was the transcendent religion which has been used to create stable power hierarchies, such as the church and other institutions.

Finally, Kaufman also rebelled against the seemingly innocent institutions of jails and hospitals. Institutions which seem to be for the betterment of society, but in actuality work as nodes of power compartmentalizing people and making static and controllable subjects of them. Kaufman's biography attests to a lot of time in jails. He was at one point sent to receive electric shocks, which highly affected his ideas about these institutions: "I go to hospitals named after sadists with diseases that don't exist" (*Solitudes* 43). Kaufman is aware that some, particularly psychological diseases are created to control people whose desires are too much for society. Hospitals and jails, for Kaufman, are used to keep people from becoming, from following their desires and thus they are used to compartmentalize people into subjects. Moreover, Kaufman is aware of how pervasive these institutions are and how their reach is much further than their walls: "In a universe of cells—who is not in jail? Jailers. / In a world of hospitals—who is not sick? Doctors" (Kaufman "Bob Kaufman" 200). Kaufman sees these institutions as modes of power extending from capitalism and religion to keep people static, in their place, and in effect dead. It is these things in which Kaufman is betraying, and in betraying these institutions Kaufman is fighting for life and the joy of becoming in the face of death and power of staticness.

Traitor

Kaufman's betrayal is the fleeing from death to life. "To flee [. . .] is to trace an uncharted course and depart from the paths of conventional sense and preexisting codes. Hence, too, 'there is always treason in a line of flight,' a betrayal of 'the world of dominant significations and established order'" (Bogue 154). Kaufman was living out the

Beat experiment “where the distinction between the outside and inside was broken down. Where relationships were fluid, everyone was outlaws, but the police were guilty, and heaven and hell came together” (Damon “Triangulated” 5-6). He attacked “the citadel of high art and [took] mass culture along” (Damon “Gertrude” 208). Moreover, his own denial and acceptance of many adjectival markers, even when they were conflictual, “undermined the hierarchic logic of dominant Euro-American metaphysics and its attendant political and aesthetics organizing principles” (“Unmeaning” 706). Also, “Kaufman performed Dadaist and Surrealist raids on the sense and power of American identities” (Lindberg “Bob” 169). Yet, for Kaufman this was the position of the poet in society: “The poet shocks those / around him. He speaks openly / of what authority has deemed / unspeakable, he becomes the / enemy of authority. While the / poet lives, authority / dies” (*Cranial* 131). He also writes, “Here is a rebel, one large, monstrous rebel, who first tears / down himself, and sneaks like fireworks into the paths of / others, hoping to explode, often showered, existent to the / end” (*Ancient* 18). The poet is a rebel, who betrays the dominant usage and authority. This is the position of the poet, to give himself or herself totally to the becoming and cause new lines of flight to take off and disrupt the power structures:

Abomunist poets, confident that the new literary / form ‘foo-printism’ has freed the artist / of outmoded restrictions, such as: the ability to / read and write, or the desire to communicate, / must be prepared to read their work at dental / colleges, embalming schools, homes for unwed / mothers, homes for wed mothers, insane asylums, / uso canteens, kindergartens, and

county jails. / abomunists never compromise their rejectionary /
 philosophy. (Kaufman *Cranial* 118)

The abomunist poet not only is rejecting traditional models of poetry but is a traitor to poetry itself. He or she is pushing poetry further and in new directions, opening up new communities and shifting affects to free life from the grasp of death. No one is safe from the effects of the abomunist poet, he or she is a warrior fighting language, like a nomadic horde attacking the walled city.

Kaufman's betrayal is intimately connected with his thoughts about jazz. For Kaufman, jazz is also a traitor and warrior, which together with Kaufman can fight against the static hierarchical power structures. Katherine Lindberg notes the importance of jazz within Kaufman's work: "They [Kaufman's works] are so full of coincidence and play, suggesting the syncopation, improvisation, and valences of jazz, that it might be best simply to say that Kaufman riffs on words; his poems are jazz riffs. Therefore, so do we riff on his words" ("Bob" 181). Kaufman's riffing turns "words loose from proper to active or diacritical forms" ("Bob" 181). On top of his jazz usage of language, in "Battle Report" Kaufman continuously talks about jazz as an infiltrating warrior. For Deleuze, "The war machine is a force of metamorphosis that disrupts stable codes and social relations. Hence, the warrior is inevitably a traitor, that is, one who betrays 'the world of dominant significations and the established order'" (Bogue 124). In "Battle Report" jazz is personified as warriors slipping into a city. They are seen as infiltrating the city, "under blue cover," "moving in," and as a "secret agent." A "secret code is flashed" and "now is the time, now is the time. / Attack: The sound of jazz. / The city falls" (*West* 7). For

Kaufman jazz is just as much as a revolutionary figure as he is. He connects with jazz forming a jazz machine assemblage which is opening the path for a new people and in doing so is overcoming the death of the city, that is the hierarchical power structures which permeate society. Moreover, jazz, for Kaufman is the music of hell: “No more harp sessions for me; I am going to hell and hear / some good jazz” (*Ancient* 28). Here jazz is with the demons who are moving and changing, not in heaven which is pristine, solid, and hierarchical. Jazz is the music of the traitors not those within the tradition. Finally, the power of jazz as a traitor is clearly seen in Kaufman’s “Hawk Lawler: Chorus” which shows the many manifestations which jazz has for Kaufman:

[P]laced it to his parched lips and sighed, for without willing it they came—numbers, notes, songs, battle cries, laments, jazzy psalms, tribal histories in cubist and surrealist patterns, and an unmistakable call to arms, to jazz, to him as others put down their horns in silent thanks that he had come, as the drums had promised he would come, come to lead into the unpromised land, littered with pains, odored of death, come to lead, with his pumping, grinning throat. (*Cranial* 145)

Here the jazz performer is more than a traitor. He is a type of anti-savior leading the people to “the unpromised land.” Like the abomunist poet, the jazz musician leads people of confines of tradition and sets them free to a land which is not yet, and has not been. Instead of a people or land which is foreseen the poet and jazz musician find the new land or people through experimentation and the creation of lines of flight which could become that land or people.

Becoming is key to understanding the ways in which Kaufman betrays the dominant power structures. Deleuze writes, “so that it is only by becoming that the combatant can lash out ‘against’ his enemy, in league with allies” (132). Yet, for Deleuze becoming is a movement “to form and create, to enhance affectivity, to induce and undergo metamorphosis and transformation” (Bogue 12). Becoming then is an affirmative action which causes change and creates. Moreover, its movement troubles the stability of the hierarchal power structures. Kaufman, as Maria Damon notes, has a similar notion when he talks about voyaging, which “has the implication, not only of political freedom, risk taking, and possible martyrdom, but also of spiritual and visionary freedom” (“Unmeaning” 728). In his poem “Plea” the voyager is a “wanderer of the heart” who is sent to find the children of Hiroshima, to “tear open concrete sealed cathedrals” and to “fill vacant theaters with” laughter (*Golden* 72). In just this section of the poem the voyager, or becomer, or poet is seeking to save the future from destruction by hierarchical power systems which wield mass death, he or she is opening religion, and bringing back humor. The voyager is being called to be a traitor and to open up the stifling structures to movement and joy. This is seen in the next verse of the poem (which is also a verse found in Kaufman’s “Night Sung Sailor’s Prayer” another call for healing) where Kaufman calls for freeing sons from “mildewed fathers,” finding the lost “whores,” giving “sunlight and barking dogs” to those in jail, finding pity for the “wax bitches” hidden in “male Cadillacs,” helping “Negro millionaires” overcome money, and finding love for junkies (72-3). He finds the oppressive structures and sees the paths which should be followed to free those people and allow them to also become. He is attempting

to change affects and alter the way in which people see the world by becoming, and calling for becoming.

Another particular type of becoming which Kaufman utilizes to betray language and writing is seen in his becoming-animal. Becoming-animal, as Deleuze and Guattari deal with it can be described in five main points: 1) it is “not content to proceed by resemblance”; 2) it is “a becoming-molecular that undermines the great molar powers”; 3) it deterritorializes attempts at Oedipal reterritorialization; 4) it entails “a kind of contract of alliance,” with “a favorite in the pack”; 5) it institutes an assemblage (*Thousand* 233). This fits very well with the notion of minor literature, and in fact the two are connected. As the first point notes becoming-animal is not a becoming as in acting or being like an animal, instead what it refers to is a type of creation which brings together otherwise contrary concepts or aspects. In becoming-molecular the becoming-animal is betraying the static power structures and opening up lines of flight full of potentiality. Moreover, as mentioned it connects with another to start these new lines and in doing so institutes an assemblage which is the becoming-animal.

One finds, throughout Kaufman’s poetry, many times when he mentions animals having human abilities or vice versa. For example, in “Heavy Water Blues” Kaufman writes, “My neighbors are drunken linguists, & I speak butterfly” and “I am hanging out with a drunken linguist, who can speak butterfly” (*Golden* 60-1). In “Grandfather was Queer, too” he writes, “Playing chess with an intellectual lobster” and “Discussing politics with an unemployed butterfly. / They hung that poor butterfly, poor butterfly” (*Cranial* 106). While these lines have powerful resonants with becoming-animal,

delirium, and language, speaking to the need for new ways in which to understand language, they do not have the power as other times in Kaufman's writing. In "Song for a Broken Giraffe" one finds not only a "broken giraffe" as stated in the title, but a broken semantics. With lines like, "In an emergency, I can rearrange your beautiful wreckage" (*Solitudes* 34) and "The man said we could have a birthday party if we surrendered" (35). This "breaking" of language with the "broken giraffe" shows Kaufman attempting to write like an animal, and thus become-animal. Obviously giraffes cannot write, thus it is in his connection of a broken animal with that of the broken language which forms the assemblage, or becoming-animal. It is interesting to note that the animal is a giraffe, which is native to Africa. By selecting this animal Kaufman is showing the disruptive power the African tradition can have on the "normal" usages of English. Kaufman uses the giraffe to betray the major usage of English. This becoming-animal can also be found in another poem of Kaufman's, which goes by two different titles, but is otherwise identical, "Abomunist Rational Anthem," and "Crootey Songo." Here the becoming-animal is remarkably different, yet has many of the same features and outcomes. In this poem one finds Kaufman using nonwords to create a jazz-like feel with his poetry. This also then troubles the nature of language and poetry opening it up to numerous lines of flight. One single word could connect with numerous other words for each person each time he or she reads the poem. Here is the poem in its entirety:

DERRAT SLEGELATIONS, FLO GOOF BABEREO,
 SORASH SHO DUBIES, WAGO, WAILO, WAILO.
 GEED BOP NAVA GLIED, NAVA GLIED NAVA,

SPLEERIEDER, HUYEDIST, HEDACAZ, AX, O, O
 DEEREDITION, BOOMEDITION, SQUOM, SQUOM, SQUOM,
 DEE BEETSTRAWIST, WAPAGO, WAPAGO, LOCO,
 LOCORO, LOCOEST
 VOOMETEYEREEPETIOP, BOP, BOP, BOP, WHIPOP.
 DEARAT, SHLOHO, KURRITIP, PLOG, MANGI, SQUOM POT,
 CLOPO JAGO, BREE, BREE, ASLOOPERED, AKINGO LABIOP,
 ENGPOP, ENGPOP, BOINT PLOLO, PLOLO, BOP BOP. (*Golden 54*
 and *Abomunist*)

Maria Damon writes, “not only is its language made up of fragments, presymbolic scraps of sound expressed through outbursts of protest and play, but the body is presented alternately as disintegrating, devolving back into nature, separating from the ‘I’ of the poem, or rigidly alien” (“‘Unmeaning’” 718). With the exception of her comment that it is “devolving back into nature” Damon comes very close to understanding the poem as becoming-animal, but to imply that it is moving backward instead of forward misses the true power of the poem. The poem’s power is that it connects the jazz tradition with poetry and in doing so pushes language to its boundaries. As Damon says it separates the I from the poem and creates something alien. Thus, this assemblage creates numerous lines of flight, through the opening of possibility by depersonalization. It is in this sense that the poem is another example of becoming-animal. It connects with a favorite of the pack, jazz, and creates an assemblage opening new forms. Moreover, Kaufman’s use of “jargon,” as Damon refers to it, has a “double-edged connotation.” “It is both gibberish,

the babble of animals, and a sophisticated code of ungraspable meaning, conveying esoteric knowledge of the chosen few” (Damon “Gertrude” 220). Kaufman’s seemingly meaningless “babble” holds the power of becoming and opening of lines of flight otherwise nonexistent.

On top of becoming there are other ways in which Kaufman betrays language. Three other ways are experimentation, delirium, and drugs and alcohol. Experimentation fits with becoming-animal in that “a writer isn’t a writer-man; he is a machine-man, and an experimental man who thereby ceases to be a man in order to become an ape or a beetle, or a dog, or mouse, a becoming-animal, a becoming-inhuman, since it is actually through voice and through sound and through a style that one becomes an animal, and certainly through the force of sobriety” (Deleuze and Guattari *Kafka* 7). Thus Kaufman’s becoming-animal is also one of his experimentations. Kaufman’s work is not created out of nothing, but it is through his becoming-animal and “experimentation on the real,” which “produces effects both within the work itself and in readers” (59). Kaufman “experiments on the virtual lines of flight immanent with his world” (85). He finds the potential variation within language and plays with it or troubles it. He sends it off in new directions to create new affects. Finally, Kaufman’s experimentation is also, in itself, a form of his rebellion:

Experiment, but you need a lot of prudence to experiment. We live in a world which is generally disagreeable, where not only people but the established powers have a stake in transmitting sad affects to us. Sadness, sad affects, are all those which reduce our power to act. The established

powers need our sadness to make us slaves. The tyrant, the priest, the captors of souls need to persuade us that life is hard and a burden.

(Deleuze and Parnet 61)

Thus to experiment is to rebel against the sad affects and attempt, through experimentation on the real, to produce new affects which open the doors for people to become, or to act in ways which are otherwise closed by the powers that be. Kaufman's experimentation on the real not only allows him to follow his desires but it opens the passageway for others to follow theirs.

Delirium, like experimentation, follows lines of flight:

A flight is a sort of delirium. To be delirious is exactly to go off the rails (as in *déconner* – to say absurd things, etc). There is something demoniacal or demonic in a line of flight. Demons are different from gods, because gods have fixed attributes, properties and functions, territories and codes: they have to do with rails, boundaries and surveys. What demons do is jump across intervals, and from one interval to another. (Deleuze and Parnet 40).

Kaufman is delirious saying absurd things throughout his poetry, following lines of flight, and playing with variation. Kaufman felt: "Why think? Think is control. He wants to lose control. Be in the center of it. Feel it rushing all around. Watch it scatter up into all little parts with everyone reaching to try to put it and keep it together. He doesn't want to keep anything together. Let it fly" (Clay 31). He is a traitor, a demon, not a trickster, god, or even a hybrid. He never stops at one place long enough to be. Instead he his is in

constant motion and constant experimentation. Pushing the boundary of thought and affects through his work and life. It would seem that his drug and alcohol use would help his delirium and help to keep him in movement, but actually as Deleuze notes about such substances that is not the case. He writes, “We are trying to extract from madness the life which it contains, while hating the lunatics who constantly kill life, turn it against itself. We are trying to extract from alcohol the life which it contains, without drinking. Becoming is loving without alcohol, drugs, and madness, becoming-sober for a life which is richer and richer” (Deleuze and Parnet 53). From this quote it would seem that Kaufman is actually killing life and not becoming, but as has been shown and will be shown, Kaufman is very much for life. Yet, Deleuze and Guattari write:

The question of whether drugs help the artist to create these beings of sensation, whether they are part of art’s internal means that really lead us to the ‘doors of perception’ and reveal to us percepts and affects, is given a general answer inasmuch as drug-induced compounds as usually extraordinarily flaky, unable to preserve themselves, and break up as soon as they are made or looked at. (*What’s* 165)

Thus when one takes the two quotes together and looks at Kaufman’s drug and alcohol use one finds that Kaufman is not using the drugs and alcohol to produce his works or his delirium. Since his works do stand up and are not “extraordinarily flaky, unable to preserve themselves, and break up as soon as they are made or looked at.” Instead his works are for life. Of course it is hard to say that the drugs and alcohol did not effect his work, but they are not the point nor are they the impetus for his work. The point and the

impetus is to free life and allow it to flourish, even if that means his own destruction from drug and alcohol use.

As has been shown Kaufman uses many different methods for betraying language. He becomes-animal, uses experimentation, delirium, and drugs and alcohol. All of these things come together in Kaufman's troubling of language. For Deleuze and Guattari, "The function of language is not primarily to communicate, they argue, but to impose order [. . .]. Every language encodes the world, categorizing entities, actions and states of affairs, determining their contours, specifying their relations, and so on" (Bogue 98). Moreover, the constants seemingly found in language "are not primary to language, but secondary productions of structures of power" (Bogue 187). Language then is not constant, but none-the-less is used to encode the world and impose order. Therefore, when one troubles language one is also destabilizing "all the assemblages of practices, institutions, entities, and states of affairs that those linguistic regularities presuppose" (100). Kaufman, then, finds the "lines of continuous variation that are immanent within language" and by activating them or sending them down lines of flight cause them to "disrupt the regular functioning of fixed power relations" (5). Seeing these power structures as unacceptable his "only option is to induce a metamorphosis of the established forms of the social field, with no guarantee that the result will be a more acceptable community" (110). Kaufman creates a foreign language within his own language and causes the variations within language to fly down lines of flight, which destabilizes power structures, but opens a path to unknown possibilities. Yet, Kaufman's betrayal of language pushes language to its extremes and to its limits.

For Kaufman troubling language is one of the main methods for change.

Understanding the power structures within language Kaufman writes in his *Abomunist Manifesto*, “Abomunists spit anti-poetry for poetic reasons and frink” (*Solitudes* 77) and “Abomunism’s writers write writing, or nothing at all” (78). The abomunists are to write against writing, but in doing so they are writing writing. That is, they are to overcome the conventions of writing and push it onto new lines of flight and when they accomplish this they are actually writing. They are opening writing up to become. In their betrayal of writing they are the only ones who are actually writing. Kaufman’s own example of this is found in both the *Abomunist Manifesto* and *Does the Secret Mind Whisper?*. In one section of the *Abomunist Manifesto* called “Abomunist Rational Anthem” (remember becoming-animal) Kaufman writes in a sort of bebop non-language. He mixes and twists words in a way which allows them to connect with new and different words for each new reader of the poem. By making this the “Abomunist Rational Anthem” he is showing how much variation can be found in language and how that variation can be used to create a text full of movement and connection. Moreover, he is making a direct connection between jazz and poetry. He is writing against writing, but in doing so pushing writing in new directions. In *Does the Secret Mind Whisper?* Kaufman writes a multiple page broadside without any punctuation marks, with the exception of an ending period. There are not even any paragraph breaks. Here one finds Kaufman doing the same things as he does in the “Abomunist Rational Anthem” only here he is playing with the variation within grammar. Without the usual punctuation structure Kaufman’s piece becomes different each time it is read, since with each reading emphasis and pauses

are placed in the reader's hands. Again Kaufman is opening language up, playing with variation and sending language down new lines of flight which not only trouble language but troubles the structures in which language affirms. Kaufman, then, is joining "social protest and physical fracturing through linguistic play" (Damon "Unmeaning" 710).

Katherine Lindberg also finds this variation within Kaufman when she writes:

Kaufman's playfully titled addendea—'Notes Dis- and Re- Garding Abomunism,' 'Boms,' '\$\$Abomunus Craxioms\$\$'—fiddle Dada-like with the trappings of poetic identity and at resisting the inevitable fixity and fixtures of language. Or, more accurately, Kaufman sets words free to associate, through puns and sliding topical allusion, and to undermine the sexual and political repression that characterized the humorless strictures of Cold War behavior and ideology. ("Bob Kaufman" 167)

Kaufman saw the problem in "the humorless strictures of Cold War behavior and ideology" and in creating a foreign language within his own language he troubled those structures and caused the possibilities for new affects of life to emerge.

Ultimately it was through humor that Kaufman was able to accomplish his goal. As Deleuze and Parnet write, "Humor is treacherous, it is treason. Humor is atonal, absolutely imperceptible, it makes something shoot off" (68), and "[h]umour [. . .] claims kinship with a minority, with a minority-becoming. It is humour which makes a language stammer, which imposes on it a minor usage, or which constitutes a complete bilingual system within the same language" (69). The power of Kaufman's betrayal is finally seen in his use of humor. Throughout his work he uses tongue-in-cheek and satirical humor to

overcome the power structures inherent in language and to engage with the racism found throughout American history.

It is important to examine the possible effects on the social and political field which Kaufman's betrayal triggers. "Deleuze and Guattari reject any notion of revolutionary action as aimed toward the realization of a plan or design of an ideal society" (Bogue 84). For them revolutionary action is "through an intensification of destabilizing, deforming and decoding forces that are being stabilized, formed and coded by the particular social system" (84). This is accomplished through the methods formerly examined and attributed to Kaufman. While, "becoming-other holds creative promise, [. . .] it also entails danger. The affect of desire may easily change into an affect of destruction" (123-4). There are two paths experimentation can possibly take, one of "diabolical powers of the future" and the other revolutionary possibilities which are opened and can become actualized. It is because of the lack of "distinction between the oppressors and the oppressed" that Deleuze and Guattari call for drawing out lines of flight, which modify people's affects, and which therefore have the possibility of becoming fascist or revolutionary (*Kafka* 59). The one who triggers the line of flight cannot know where the line will head, and can only hope that the line works against the fascism in which he or she fights. Deleuze writes this about the entire process:

Here again, there is always the risk that a diseased state will interrupt the process or becoming; health and athleticism both confront the same ambiguity, the constant risk that a delirium of domination will be mixed with a bastard delirium, pushing literature toward a larval fascism, the

disease against which it fights—even if this means diagnosing the fascism within itself and fighting against itself. The ultimate aim of literature is to set free, in the delirium, this creation of a health or this invention of a people, that is, a possibility of life. (*Essays* 4)

Kaufman was a man who rejected any set plan or path for revolution. Instead he experimented in the hope that he could cause change. He set himself into a delirium, a becoming which was identical to the “pure and simple movement of self-destruction; Fitzgerald’s alcoholism, Lawrence’s disillusion, Virginia Woolf’s suicide, Kerouac’s sad end” (Deleuze and Parnet 38-9). Kaufman was a warrior against fascism. As Jerry Stoll remembers, “Bob’s main concern was the revolution. His poetry was a revolutionary germ that was functioning in people’s psyches to transform them. And so I think also that he was always concerned with transforming his own psyche” (Henderson 8). As shown before Kaufman is the revolutionary impetus to the Beats. He saw fascism, in any form in which it appears, as death, and he was for the “invention of a people, that is, a possibility of life.”

Language and Boundary

Kaufman’s betrayal of dominant power structures is revolutionary, but the effects upon language which stem from his betrayal deserve particular attention. Through his betrayal Kaufman strains language and “it starts to stutter, or to mummer, stammer” (Bogue 165). When language is made to stammer it is pushed to its limits. It finds its outside and is made to confront silence. For Deleuze, “language’s limit is ‘made’ of nonlinguistic visions and auditions, yet language alone renders them possible” (Bogue

163). Visions and auditions occur “through words, across them, traversing them, [and] between words” (163). They “take place when a foreign language is created within one’s own language” (163) and they “are language’s outside, in the interstices and gaps of language” (163). Finally, they are the “sights and sounds produced through words but existing above words, between them” (176). Visions and auditions are not outside of language, but they are the outside of language, the limit (Deleuze 112). For Deleuze this outside “is a painting or a piece of music, but a music of words, a painting with words, a silence in words, as if the words could now discharge their content” (112-3). To fully understand this one must understand that for Deleuze “there is no substantial difference between painting, music, and writing” (Deleuze and Parnet 74). They are differentiated from each other by mediums, “substances, codes, and territorialities” (74), but they all have the same lines going through them. “Painters, musicians, and writers all experiment on the same lines, each finding a different means of manifesting those lines” (Bogue 186). Thus when language is pushed to its limit it is pushed to the point where painting and music can be found, but they are a painting and music which is of words, through words, and between words.

Kaufman understands that the stammering of language pushes it to the point of silence and its limit where music and painting are found. This has been shown in how Kaufman troubles language, through experimentation, becoming-animal and delirium. Yet, it becomes more clear when one looks at Kaufman’s relationship with music and silence. Jazz is an important part of Kaufman’s work, and silence is one key aspect of his life. His knowledge of their power is found throughout his poetry.

Among the many labels which have been ascribed to Kaufman, one of the most frequently used is jazz poet. “Kaufman was a ‘true’ jazz poet, a poet deeply steeped in the jazz tradition. I found his work to be essentially improvisational, and was at its best when accompanied by a jazz musician” (Winans 19). One of the legends of Kaufman’s life shows him as a baby nursing on his mother while she is playing piano. A story which, whether true or not, shows the deep and solid connection Kaufman has to music. This story exhibits the sonorous block which is intimately connected to Kaufman’s desire (Clay 4-5). In *Closing Time Till Dawn* (1986), a written conversation between Kaufman and Janice Blue published after Kaufman’s death (of which there are no page numbers) one finds Kaufman stating, “For us, / music / then / is feeling, / not sound.” Here Kaufman is stating that there is more to music than just what one hears, it is also what one feels. The same works for Kaufman’s poetry, which is not as much about what it actually says as much as it is about the feelings it elicits, thus for Kaufman the function of music and the function of poetry are the same. Throughout his work one finds many references to jazz and jazz musicians. For Kaufman jazz had the same experimental, minor usage of which he strove for in his poetry. Jazz had the same revolutionary potential Kaufman saw in poetry. The type of jazz which is “most associated with Kaufman is bebop” (Damon “‘Unmeaning’” 733). Jazz performers like Charlie Parker held a particular power for Kaufman as warriors against the tradition notions of music and life: “Charlie Parker was a great electrician who went around wiring people” (Kaufman *Solitudes* 12). Maria Damon notes this about bebop: “the emphasis on disaffection and nonconformism in the social world of ‘bop,’ and the sophisticated

sartorial campiness of the beboppers all indicate them as precursors of the beatniks” (“Unmeaning” 733). Again one finds that Kaufman is at the forefront of the Beat movement, ahead of everyone else, and opening the doors for their becomings. It is also interesting to note the similarities between Kaufman’s poetic style and the style of bebop, with its “fragmentary, atonal treatment of melody and its complex rhythms” (733). Moreover, like Kaufman’s poetry, “the bebop musician breaks up, reverses, inverts, distorts, and repeats musical phrases in improvised play” (734). Interestingly enough, it is when music is pushed to its boundaries that Kaufman finds his poetry: “there in the anarchy of Monk’s music, the total newness of the hearings, the quakes and trembles and beautiful mysteries he begins to see words take shape, to come along as sentences and make the things he has to say—the sound is there, the Duende like gypsy hondo singing, like jungle drums” (Clay 12). Kaufman picks up lines from music which he uses to help him push language to its stammering point. Both Kaufman and bebop are striving at experimentation and in doing so, work in a minor usage, thus they both are political and revolutionary, a theme which Kaufman is quick to repeat: “The music of the Ancient Rain is heard everywhere. The music is purely American, not European. It is voice of the American Revolution” (*Ancient* 77). He writes: “Believe in the swinging sounds of jazz, / Tearing the night into intricate shreds, / Putting it back together again, / In cool logical patterns, / Not in the sick controllers, / Who created only the Bomb, / Let the voices of dead poets / Ring louder in your ears / Than the screechings mouthed / In mildewed editorials. / Listen to the music of centuries, / Rising above the mushroom time” (*Golden* 48). In the first quote from *The Ancient Rain* Kaufman relates “the music of the Ancient

Rain” with American music. The Ancient Rain is Kaufman’s somewhat abstract image for talking about egalitarian change, and washing the world clean of past racism and hatred. American music of course relates to jazz and together with the American Revolution shows Kaufman’s belief that jazz is revolutionary. In fact it is the new American Revolution since it has the power to overcome the problems of the first American Revolution.

In the second example, Kaufman shows jazz experimenting with the real, disrupting it and tearing it apart, only to put it back together in a new way, which is not the hate-filled logic of the past, but something new which embraces life. Kaufman tells the reader to listen to “the voices of dead poets” and “to the music of centuries,” since these things are more alive than “the screechings mouthed / In mildewed editorials.” Kaufman is stating that the poetic and musical tradition cannot die and continue to strive into the future, always in the state of becoming, while those “who only created the Bomb” are focused on death and the cessation of becoming. Thus, for Kaufman, poetry and music are for life and the dominant powers are for death.

This is a theme which is also found in Kaufman’s poem “Night Sung Sailor’s Prayer.” In this poem Kaufman calls “for children still in flight” to sing “laughter,” “love,” “sunlight and barking dogs” for the wretched and unseen people of the world. He also calls for them to sing healing for the “wax bitches,” “negro millionaires,” and “junkies” (*Golden* 69-70). He ends the poem, “Sing love and life and life and love / All that lives is Holy. / The unholyest, most holy all” (70). Throughout this poem one finds Kaufman using poetry and music to not only call for revolution, in that he calls for love to

“twisted sons,” “used up whores / dying in some forgotten corner,” and “the born losers,” but Kaufman is also calling for healing of those who are lost.

While this theme of healing others can also be found in the life of some religious figures, for Deleuze, it is one of the functions of a writer. Ronald Bogue writes, “The writer for Deleuze is a Nietzschean physician of culture, both a symptomatologist who reads culture’s signs of sickness and health, and a therapist whose remedies promote new possibilities for life” (2). Deleuze sees such writers as Sade, Masoch, Proust, and Kafka as cultural physicians, who “diagnos[e]s the diabolical powers of the future and prescribe lines of flight from those powers” (5). Moreover, part of the health which comes out of literature “consists in inventing a people who are missing” (Deleuze 4). The writer as physician diagnoses the problems and in turn opens up passages to a life which is free from those problems. In being a traitor to the dominant power structures, Kaufman is also a physician of society. Kaufman writes in “Jail Poems,” “Am I not more than mass of entrails and rough tissue? / Must I break my bones? Drink my wine-diluted blood” (“Bob” 201). As a poet Kaufman sees himself as more than his own body, he sees himself as one who can help, or at least attempt to. In “I am a Camera” Kaufman shows the healing sacrifice of the poet more clearly: “nailed on / the hard bone of this world” and how the poet’s blood “flows / out with his poems” (*Ancient* 73). Finally he ends the poem with “his [the poet’s] death is a saving grace / creation is perfect” (73). Kaufman’s depersonalization is his sacrifice it allows him the position of creating new possibilities from which life can be healed of its past ills. Kaufman’s sacrifice allows for the

becoming of something new; thus for Kaufman “creation is perfect” since it is always allowed to change.

Moreover, there is a connection between Kaufman’s notion of the sacrificed poet and the sacrificed goat found in *Does the Secret Mind Whisper?*. Kaufman writes, “near the middle of the street just as old mag [one of the characters of the poem] had that goat killed by raindrop pressures on the headbone” and later, “just when jazz jumped out the window and broke the legs of that goddamned old sacrificed goat of mag’s lying there waiting for some poor old medicine man to write him a prescription.” (Again, please note that this broadside has no punctuation and is one full paragraph.) There are a few things to point out to help one understand the connection of the poet and the goat. Obviously, they are both sacrificed, but there is also the connection of middle. The goat is sacrificed “near the middle of the street” and for Deleuze and Guattari the middle holds particular power. For Deleuze and Guattari looking at the power of the things in the middle allows them to disrupt the hierarchical power structures which are based on what is on top and what is on bottom. Instead of there being a vertical power structure, there is a horizontal one where everything has the ability to connect with everything else. Thus the sacrificed goat is able to connect with many other things, much in the same way the depersonalized poet is able to.

The second quote has two elements of connection, one jazz and its escape, and the other the “poor old medicine man.” “When jazz jumped out the window” it is breaking free from traditional notions of music, something which has already been examined. It then breaks “the legs of that goddamned old sacrificed goat” placing the goat’s movement

at the hands of jazz. The sacrificed goat and the sacrificed poet's movement is lost to that of jazz, thus the two are connected. Moreover, the broken legs disrupt normal modes of movement, but do not stop the goat from becoming in its connection with jazz or the medicine man. Kaufman, then, with jazz, is lost to normal modes of poetry, but is open to create new ones. With the prescription from the medicine man the goat is able to become something new. The medicine man is another important image for Deleuze and Guattari. The medicine man or shaman is the one who lives on the edge of the multiplicity and helps it to connect it with other multiplicities. Deleuze and Parnet writes, "The Anomalous [or shaman] is always at the frontier, on the border of a band or a multiplicity; it is part of the latter, but is already making it pass into another multiplicity, it makes it become, it traces a line-between" (42). For example, the shaman becomes animal and thus is able to carry the entire multiplicity with him or her. Here the goat with its own becoming connects with the medicine man and together they form a new assemblage. One finds then that the path of the goat is similar to the path of that Kaufman or his sacrificed poet travel upon: becoming lost in the middle or depersonalized, becoming connected to jazz which opens up new potentials and then creating something new and opening the door for more becomings.

Silence

Kaufman and music are only one side of his betrayal of language. The other side is silence. As has been discussed earlier, Kaufman took two extended vows of silence throughout his life. The first one went from the death of John F. Kennedy to the end of the Vietnam war, and the other during the late 70s and early 80s. With the expectation of

bumming cigarettes and drugs Kaufman did not speak. Kaufman's own silence is important in understanding how he pushes language to silence. For Deleuze when language is pushed to its outside it meets its limits in auditions and visions: "And ultimately, auditions create a paradoxical silent music. When language is pushed to 'its limit, its outside, its silence,' there is 'a painting or a music, but a music of words, a painting with words, a silence in the words, as if the words now disgorged their content, grandiose vision or sublime audition'" (qtd. in Bogue 165). Kaufman troubled the language to the point of silence, and mirrored this movement with his own voice.

Kaufman's minor usage of language and the ways in which he troubles language and makes it stammer pushes "language in its entirety [. . .] to its point of suspension, a song, a cry or silence—a song of the woods, a cry of the village, the silence of the steppe" (Deleuze 55). When language is strained to reach its outside it is made to confront silence. It is here, once one has exhausted "the possible with words" that "one cuts and chops the atoms" and "dries up the flows" to produce "a true silence, not a simple tiredness with talking" (156). This is the point which Kaufman reaches with his poetry and his decision to be silent. Pierre Delattre remembers, "The greatest poet on North Beach, and he wasn't all that great, but he was a great poet, was Bob Kaufman, who was a neighbor of mine and a very good friend. Bob burned his brain out on methedrine, on speed—and only now is just beginning to recover to an extent to be able to articulate again. For ten years, he was totally out of it" (59). Again whether this is true is not the point as much as the perception it suggests about Kaufman. Kaufman made his body stammer, much in the same way as he did with language, by pushing it to the extreme and

thus to his silence: “My body is a torn mattress / Disheveled throbbing place / For the comings and goings / Of loveless transients” (*Cranial* 111). Here his body is not only stammering but it is the point of from which the community not yet stems. Kaufman also, as has been shown, takes language to its extreme and in doing so makes language go silent. Thus Kaufman attacks the dominant power structures within language by pushing them to their extremes. At the same time his own personal silence is an attack on the dominant power structures which work and play upon his body in the form of jailers and electric shocks. Kaufman’s two weapons for fighting the power structures are his body and language.

Kaufman’s silence, as with Melville’s *Bartleby*, “said everything and exhausted language at the same time” (70). It was the powerful silence where “the powerful—users of words—assume the powerlessness of those whose voices are ignored” (Damon “Unmeaning” 710-1). Kaufman, as a “politically marginalized and silenced” individual, overcomes “authority by *choosing* [. . .] the silence of religious withdrawal and political disillusionment rather than *submitting* to the silence enforced on him as a black person” (711). His choice for silence is his power: “As a bird he can fly to heaven the Hart Crane way—jumping overboard in the Gulf of Mexico, as many Africans did, preferring death to slavery” (Damon “Unmeaning” 724). Here one finds a type of becoming-animal which opens a passage for the oppressed. Moreover, one again finds the “politically marginalized and silenced” overcoming “authority by choosing.” Kaufman’s becoming-animal opened the door for him to choose silence. Yet, at the same time his stammering of language places him in a position open for change and transformation, thus his silence

is not only power, but it is becoming. Katherine Lindberg captures the essence and power of Kaufman's silence: "Still, silence and giving voice to silent suffering offer the hope of transformation" ("Bob Kaufman" 172). He pushes himself and language to the outside and there is confronted with silence and it is here that he truly becomes.

Conclusion

Kaufman's life and work moves against language and in doing so moves against the institutions which are presupposed by language. He commits a type of violence against the oppression he finds in society, as his way of warring against the death which comes with that oppression. He is a traitor hiding and moving through language ready to attack. He pushes language and affects in a new direction away from the more traditional emotions and desires toward a world which is not yet, but now open to the possibility of actuality.

This essay has looked at how Kaufman used his own life and body as tools to fight oppression. He troubled his biography and family history in an attempt to disrupt the notions of categorization and racial makeup. Using the notion of a minor literature and the community not yet, it has been shown that Kaufman's writing is subversive and politically charged. His minor usage does violence to the major usages of language pushing them to new limits. He worked against the institutions of capitalism, religion, and compartmentalization. The essay has examined how Kaufman used experimentation, becoming-animal, and delirium to trouble language and push it to its boundaries. Boundaries which for Kaufman are primarily found in bebop jazz and silence. Both are modes of rebellion which Kaufman incorporated into his life and writing.

In the end, one finds that Kaufman was the impetus for the Beats, he troubled language, and thought, while he also diagnosed the ills of society and found their prescription in a community not yet. Kaufman was a poet of affects; attempting to open the paths of desire that would free individuals from the constraints of society. Finally, Kaufman worked within a minor usage to move past hierarchical structures in an attempt to move egalitarianism closer to actuality. Kaufman was, and his work still acts as, a traitor.

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Bob Kaufman, Traitor

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