



**DELEUZE'S  
LITERARY  
THEORY**

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*THE LABORATORY OF  
HIS PHILOSOPHY*

**CATARINA POMBO NABAIS**

TRANSLATED BY **RONALD BOGUE**

PREFACE BY **JACQUES RANCIÈRE**

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Catarina Pombo Nabais

Translated by Ronald Bogue  
Preface by Jacques Rancière

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I dedicate this book to my beloved daughter, Alice, my veritable wonderland, who was born at the beginning of this work and whose “growing” has always been haunted by it. All my love for her has allowed me to encounter intense lines of flight where humor and joy circulate at an infinite speed, letting us experience life and love as vibrant forces so much bigger than ourselves.



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# Abbreviations

- AO Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, trans. Robert Hurley, Mark Seem and Helen R. Lane, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1977.
- ATP Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, trans. Brian Massumi, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987.
- B Deleuze, *Bergsonism*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam, New York: Zone Books, 1981.
- C1 Deleuze, *Cinema 1: The Movement-Image*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986.
- C2 Deleuze, *Cinema 2: The Time-Image*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Robert Galeta, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989.
- CC Deleuze, *Essays Critical and Clinical*, trans. Daniel W. Smith and Michael A. Greco, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997.
- D Deleuze and Claire Parnet, *Dialogues II*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam, New York: Columbia University Press, 2000.
- DI Deleuze, *Desert Islands and Other Texts, 1953–1974*, trans. Michael Taormina, New York: Semiotext(e), 2004.
- DR Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, trans. Paul Patton, New York: Columbia University Press, 1994.
- ES Deleuze, *Empiricism and Subjectivity*, trans. Constantin V. Boundas, New York: Columbia University Press, 1991.
- F Deleuze, *Foucault*, trans. Seán Hand, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988.
- FB Deleuze, *Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation*, trans. Daniel W. Smith, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003.
- K Deleuze and Guattari, *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*, trans. Dana Polan, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986.

- KCP Deleuze, *Kant's Critical Philosophy*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam, London: Athlone, 1984
- LS Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*, trans. Mark Lester, with Charles Stivale, ed. Constantin V. Boundas, New York: Columbia University Press, 1990.
- M Deleuze, *Masochism: An Interpretation of Coldness and Cruelty*, trans. Jean McNeil, New York: G. Braziller, 1971.
- N Deleuze, *Negotiations: 1972–1990*, trans. Martin Joughin, New York: Columbia University Press, 1995.
- NP Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983.
- OLM Deleuze “One Less Manifesto,” trans. Eliane DalMolin and Timothy Murray, in *Mimesis, Masochism & Mime*, ed. Timothy Murray, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1997, pp. 239–58.
- PS Deleuze, *Proust and Signs: The Complete Text*, trans. Richard Howard, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000.
- TF Deleuze, *The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque*, trans. Tom Conley, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993.
- TRM *Two Regimes of Madness: Texts and Interviews, 1975–1995*, trans. Ames Hodges and Mike Taormina, New York: Semiotext(e), 2006.
- WP Deleuze and Guattari, *What Is Philosophy?*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Graham Burchell, New York: Columbia University Press, 1994.

# Preface

Catarina Pombo Nabais's book will certainly assume a significant place among the texts that finally make Deleuze accessible to us. One should not mistake the sense of the word "accessible": it's not a matter of making Deleuze simpler or easier to understand. To help penetrate a complex thought, there is never any other way than to complicate it little by little, revealing inexplicit choices, discarded paths, erased transformations, and leveled obstacles. The book you are about to read follows this method. Which is to say that it promises nothing to those who seek a "Deleuze for Dummies." The accessibility I speak of means something else: the adjustment of the distance from which one can make one's access to a work coincide with the opening of a problematic space, or again, the exit necessary to penetrate that which, in a thought, has had an effect on us.

We know that Gilles Deleuze is, of all thinkers, the one who makes this exit at once the most necessary and the most difficult. It is he who has most forcefully affirmed that one only thinks through the encounter with an outside that forces one to think, an outside that one cannot think. And literature, where the impossibility of a thought's coinciding with its object is most forcefully stated, is one of the privileged places where philosophical thought is submitted to the constraints of the outside. But the network of concepts, characters, and images that he deployed in order to think these violent encounters of thought with its other has, at the same time, become the tightest, indeed the most asphyxiating, of nets. How many travelers, seduced by the music of these siren-words—nomadic machines and deterritorializations, smooth or striated spaces, crystal images, rhizomes, and lines of flight—are led into an enchanted lake or trapped in a hall of mirrors, unable to do anything but endlessly echo the siren's song! How many others, conversely, have derived from their adventure the simple claim of keeping their distance from these



enchantments, thus lacking the opportunity of a personal encounter with the unthinkable of this thought.

Because she comes a little later, because she belongs to a generation for whom the bloody conflicts of desiring machines with the law of the father—Marxist or Freudian—are ancient history, Catarina Pombo Nabais has been able to establish a sensitive and reasonable access to one of these privileged points where Deleuzian philosophy is constructed outside itself in investing a “nonphilosophical” space, that of literature. Deleuze never articulated a philosophy of literature, nor of art or cinema. As Pombo Nabais immediately points out, Deleuze never tried to do an “aesthetics.” He continually sought a thought that is able to fill the divide that in Kant marks the very birth of the aesthetic theme: the divide separating two domains, “that of the theory of the sensible which captures only the real’s conformity with possible experience; and that of the theory of the beautiful, which deals with the reality of the real in so far as it is thought” (DR 68). After having defined the project of a new transcendental philosophy that seeks the conditions of *real* experience, Deleuze identifies the laboratory where philosophy may find its prescribed routes, that of artistic experimentation, with its divergent series and decentered circles where materials and acts of thought are finally able to seize the work instead of letting it escape through the oversized openings of the representative net. Catarina Pombo Nabais has thus decided to take literally the Deleuzian prescription. In the books Deleuze dedicated to literature, she shows how one can see the implementation of his project of a transcendental empiricism. This decision determines, of course, what one can look for in these books: Deleuze does not study works; he formalizes experimentations. *Proust and Signs* is a “transcendental table of aesthetic experience,” an appropriate substitute for the formal table of Kantian categories, which shows the simultaneous genesis of known objects, of faculties that apprehend them, and of temporalities that correspond to them and of essences that are discovered. What philosophy brings to light in *Venus in Furs* is the pure functioning of the imagination in its transcendent use; repetition becomes pure idea, independent of any expected pleasure. What must be envisaged in Kafka is the experimental mechanism constituted by three united and separate discursive forms: the letters that double the subject, the short stories that create becomings-animal of the subject, the novels that cancel the subject in a collective assemblage of enunciation. Carmelo Bene, Melville, or Beckett will define in the same manner the singular experimentations of thought, subtracting statements with the apparatuses of power, experiencing the impossible or discovering a new possible at the end of an exercise of the exhaustion of all possibles.

To follow these formalizations of experimentations is also to study the displacements in Deleuze’s thought. The time is over when Deleuzism imposed

the image of a unitary thought. Scholars are now sensitive to the ruptures and to the paradoxical continuities: how the “thought without image” of *Difference and Repetition* finds its unexpected completion in *Cinema 1* and *Cinema 2*; how concepts that were once central (the simulacrum, the phantasm, or the assemblage) are effaced from Deleuze’s conceptual scheme; how another (the virtual) is effaced in *Kafka* only to reappear in *Cinema 2*. Catarina Pombo Nabais has chosen to inscribe the variations of these concepts in the heart of three broad approaches to Deleuze’s philosophy of real experience: transcendental aesthetics, the philosophy of nature, and the philosophy of spirit. Faithful to her principle of limitation, she follows their metamorphoses at the heart of the works that Deleuze dedicated to the forms of literary experimentation. She begins with the indications of this metamorphosis that are offered by the transformations of *Proust and Signs*. The first version, despite its Platonic language, is clearly determined by the transcendental problematic of the faculties, which undermines the entire Kantian edifice by making the experience of the discord of the faculties proper to the sublime “the point of the engendering of every transcendental field.” But the sublime disassociation of the faculties does not introduce any form of negative theology in Deleuze, no thought of the unrepresentable. Rather, it unsettles literary experimentation and shifts it toward the positive experience of a new “nature,” that of pure multiplicities, closed boxes, and aberrant transversals where the interpretation of Proustian signs has become a body without organs propagating the vibrations of a spider’s web, a pure machine fit to capture the external world in order to discover this existence as multitude that makes the spider “an element of the immanence of Nature.” To follow these metamorphoses, we see transcendental empiricism transformed into a “philosophy of nature” whose becomings-animal and collective assemblages of enunciation are made explicit principles in *Kafka*.

The reader will follow the path that leads this philosophy of nature to its limits in Bene’s procedures of amputation before constructing, through the nonpreference of *Bartleby* and Beckett’s exhaustion, the forms of experimentation of a philosophy of spirit. There is no need to summarize Catarina Pombo Nabais’s efforts to follow, through the detailed analysis of a few singularities, all the transformations of Deleuze’s thought on literary experimentation, understood as experimentation with possibilities of life. What’s worth emphasizing, instead, is the specific complication through which this analysis explodes any unitary vision of Deleuze’s aesthetics. Her approach is to refuse to unify this aesthetics by understanding it through the concept of the virtual. Catarina Pombo Nabais does not deny the importance of this concept and its transformations in the path that goes from the transcendental aesthetics of the faculties to Deleuze’s philosophy of spirit. But it is important for her to situate these adventures within a much larger conceptual dramaturgy

that puts in play the set of modal categories: not only the real, the virtual, and the actual but also the possible, which Deleuze is said to have purged from transcendental philosophy but which nevertheless is a constituent of the play of metamorphoses operative in literature. Catarina Pombo Nabais shows that in this play there is a reprise and an incessant interpretation of the enigmatic formula of Proustian epiphanies, “real without being actual” and “ideal without being abstract.” If the virtual, at the time of *The Logic of Sense* and *Masochism*, seems to be the concept most appropriate for expressing the modality of this nonactual real, the critique of the Oedipal logic of sense and the formalization of the Foucauldian logic of statements seems to impose, conversely, the primacy of a real that is entirely actual. There is nothing to interpret in Kafka’s texts. There is the depthless reality of becomings-animal and collective assemblages of enunciation. There is the block of the language of power [*pouvoir*], a saturated real that has no place for any virtual or possible. There is the work that splits the block and that invents continuous variations of minor languages. But in this minorization, Catarina Pombo sees the principle of an amputation of the real that reintroduces the category of the possible. She pays particular attention to the way this process is treated in an often-neglected text that she restores to its rightful place, the text written in collaboration with Carmelo Bene, *Superpositions*. There Deleuze makes evident the ontological and political import of the amputation that Carmelo Bene practices on Shakespeare’s *Richard III*. What this work produces, in the strongest sense, is the disorganization not only of the theatrical work but of the scene of power [*pouvoir*]. The elements subtracted from the organization of power disengage new powers [*puissances*]. The task of art is to subtract the actual from the real. This subtraction takes place in the language of the virtual, but this virtual itself is not the virtual of any actual; it is a “virtual to come.” Catarina Pombo Nabais relates this singular modal category to the enigmatic concept that summarizes political thought, the “people that is missing.” This people appears as the necessary horizon of artistic work that “dissolves the borders of power [*pouvoir*], puts into variation the contours of communities, mixes peoples, ruins the codes that separate forces.”

The work of “amputating the real” may be understood in the light of the astonishing pages of *What Is Philosophy?* on the art-monument, the block of variations that “confides to the ear of the future [. . .] the constantly renewed suffering of men and women, their re-created protestations, their constantly resumed struggles” (WP 176). This monument, according to Deleuze and Guattari, “does not actualize the virtual event but incorporates it or embodies it: it gives it a body, a life, a universe. [. . .] These universes are neither virtual nor actual; they are possibles” (WP 177). The percepts and affects of art are here properly designated as the production of the possible (of the “aesthetic” possible, Deleuze and Guattari specify), whereas the question of the

virtual is the concern of the philosophical concept. Pombo Nabais puts this question of the production of possibles, of those possibles without which one suffocates, at the center of the most celebrated of the texts Deleuze devoted to literary analysis, Melville's "Bartleby, the Scrivener." She brings together the impossibility of acting that besets Bartleby, with the impossibility of optical and sonic situations that mark the advent of the cinematic time-image. This also means that she subtracts Bartleby's nonchoice from any quietist interpretation. The question of the impossible here, she tells us, is the question of impossibles. In a Leibnizian mode, Melville's story brings into confrontation the world where Bartleby copies and the world in which he does not. But Deleuze subverts Leibnizian metaphysics by constructing the encounter of impossibles. Impossibles belong to the same world and impossible worlds to the same universe. Bartleby stands on the dividing line of impossibles and this position is that of the seer [*voyant*]. What the seer sees is a people to come. To affirm the impossible is to enter into the universe of fabulation, the universe of falsifying narrations where one rejects the traditional division of the real and the fictional. It is to commit this "legending *in flagrante delicto*" that is part of the constitutive movement of a people not yet in existence.

Does Catarina Pombo Nabais herself succumb to the sirens' song in echoing the song of a people to come? No, not at all. If she underscores the political question of fabulation, she equally warns us against false expectations and false hopes. Deleuze's reading of Melville in *Essays Critical and Clinical* no longer obeys the program formerly identified with Kafka, that of inventing a minor language in a major language. "Minorization" appeared there as the directly political labor of confronting the language of power [*pouvoir*]. The fabulation that replaces minorization does not concern the relation with power but the relation with truth. Bartleby's formula does not create a minor language but opens up a becoming, a possible beyond all possibles, a possible that goes through the position of the impossibility of all possibles. Even if Catarina Pombo Nabais does not do so explicitly, one can oppose this "exhaustion of the possible," which Deleuze sees as Beckett's proper work, to the promise of a people produced by the invention of minor languages. In any case she shows what separates Beckett's exhaustion from the "one less manifesto" that provides the political program of Carmelo Bene's theater. Unlike the scenic space of Bene, which is "erected in order to atrophy relations of power," the space Beckett's characters cross is "reduced to a motor refrain, and it ends up collapsed as if bewitched by its center." The "pure image" that Deleuze sees as the proper invention of Beckett's last plays appears as the ultimate form of this dissociation of the faculties that is at the heart of the Deleuzian conception of the transcendental, "the dissipation of the visible in a purely spiritual movement of internal tension beyond imagination, reason and

memory.” This movement of dissipation completes the last figure of the transcendental project, that of a philosophy of spirit. The passage from a theory of power to a theory of the possible thus accompanies the movement from a theater of the body to a theater of the spirit. But this is no doubt at the price of stressing the gap between the people produced through the transcendental exercises of literature and the people produced through struggle against the mechanisms of domination. Literary experimentation, Catarina Pombo Nabais tells us, in the final Deleuze becomes more and more a “melee [*corps à corps*] of each character with all the figures of the impossible (the impossibility of writing, the impossibility of choosing, the impossibility of moving in a space, the impossibility of even speaking).” We know that the possible in Deleuze is always the product of the confrontation with all impossibles. But we must doubtlessly give this confrontation its true name: not that of political invention but of ethical exercise.

Catarina Pombo Nabais suggests as much without imposing such a conclusion on us. Deleuze’s “politics” is not her object. Nonetheless, her text helps us rethink that politics, through the remote access she provides to the heart of the problem, far from the enthusiasm for nomad machines or the denunciation of desiring machines that characterize bygone polemics. Her efforts help us rethink what at each step is at play and is transformed in the Deleuzian investigation of literary experimentation. She does so, of course, at the cost of leaving unanswered the question posed by all of Deleuze’s journeys through the territories of literature or cinema, painting, or the history of philosophy: does Deleuze “truly” talk about cinema or literature, Kant or Bacon? Or are all these incursions “simple laboratories of Deleuze’s metaphysics”? To leave this question open is not to confess to one’s inability to respond, nor is it to declare that the question is futile, but rather it is to show us why and how it is possible to give not just two answers to the question, but a multitude of answers, which, while ceaselessly displacing the question, open new spaces for thought.

Jacques Rancière

## Translator's Preface

The distinction in French between *pouvoir* and *puissance* presents a conundrum to every translator, and my own solution to the dilemma is certainly no better than others that have been attempted. Although both *pouvoir* and *puissance* may be translated as “power,” *pouvoir* is often used to speak of power over others and *puissance* for the idea of power as force, potency, capacity, capability, or potentiality. For the most part, I have chosen to translate *pouvoir* as “power” and *puissance* as “power/capacity.” However, in “Bartleby: A Nihilistic Aristotle?” (Part Three, Chapter Two), I have had to abandon this strategy. In that section, Pombo Nabais discusses Giorgio Agamben’s reading of Deleuze’s essay on Bartleby the Scrivener. Throughout Agamben’s study, written in Italian, he speaks of *potenza*, which in the French translation is rendered as *puissance*. In the English translation of Agamben’s text, *potenza* is consistently translated as “potentiality” and with good reason. Agamben’s discussion of Deleuze is oriented around a reading of Aristotle’s *dynamis*, which, although translated as *potenza* in Italian and *puissance* in French, in the standard English translations of Aristotle is translated as “potentiality.” I have therefore decided to translate *puissance* in this section as “potentiality.” Elsewhere I have used “potentiality” only to translate *potentialité*, reserving “power/capacity” for the word *puissance*.

Equally insoluble is the dilemma of translating *esprit*. Like the German *Geist*, *esprit* may be translated as both “mind” and “spirit.” I have chosen “spirit” as my translation of *esprit* throughout, but readers should be aware that “mind” could just as well have been supplied as the translation of the original.

Throughout her study, Pombo Nabais relates Deleuze’s philosophy to Kant’s transcendental idealism, often referring to Kant’s *Wirklichkeit*, which in French is translated as *effectivité*, and in English as “actuality”

(or, occasionally, “reality”). I have translated *effectivité* as “actuality,” but always in the format “actuality [*effectivité*],” since Deleuze often distinguishes between the virtual (*virtuel*) and the actual (*actuel*) and the word *actualité* occurs frequently in his writings. I have observed a similar practice with the adjective *effectif/effective*. In *The Logic of Sense*, Deleuze speaks of *contre-effectuation*, which in the book’s English translation is given as “counter-actualization.” I have chosen to translate the term as “counter-effectuation.”

As Pombo Nabais points out, Deleuze refers to the Freudian concept of the fantasy as “*phantasme*” early in his career, but later as “*fantasme*.” I have translated *phantasme* as “phantasm” and *fantasme* as “fantasy” in order to mark that distinction. Freud’s concept of *Verneinung*, usually translated as “negation” in English, is often rendered in French as *dénégation*. Since Pombo Nabais at times distinguishes between *négation* and *dénégation*, I have translated *dénégation* as “denegation.”

Pombo Nabais discusses at length the three editions of Deleuze’s *Proust and Signs*, the first in 1964, the second in 1970, and the third in 1976. There has been some confusion among English commentators on Deleuze’s *Proust* book regarding the date of the second edition. In the English translation of Deleuze’s Preface to the 1976 edition, the translator speaks of “the 1972 edition” when referring to the second edition of *Proust and Signs*. In French, Deleuze speaks only of “*la seconde édition*.” The translator himself supplies the date 1972, presumably because 1972 is the publication date of the English translation of the second edition of 1970.

Anglophone readers should note that Deleuze’s essay on Carmelo Bene, “Un manifeste de moins,” and his essay on Samuel Beckett’s television plays, “L’Épuisé,” both appeared in separate publications, the first in a short volume titled *Superpositions* [Superimpositions] (1978), which includes a French translation of Bene’s play *Richard III*, and the second in *Quad* (1992), which opens with the text of four of Beckett’s television plays and closes with Deleuze’s essay. “Un manifeste de moins” has appeared in English translation as “One Manifesto Less” (trans. Alan Orenstein, in *The Deleuze Reader*, ed. Constantin V. Boundas, New York: Columbia University Press, 1993, pp. 204–22) and as “One Less Manifesto” (trans. Eliane DalMolin and Timothy Murray, in *Mimesis, Masochism & Mime*, ed. Timothy Murray, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1997, pp. 239–58). I have chosen to cite DalMolin’s translation. “L’Épuié,” “The Exhausted,” is included in *Essays Critical and Clinical*, ed. and trans. Daniel W. Smith and Michael A. Greco (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), pp. 152–74.

# Introduction

## *Toward a Cartography of Art*

### ART BETWEEN AESTHETICS AND ONTOLOGY

#### Is There a Deleuzian Literary Aesthetics?

This question seems to make no sense. We know that Deleuze wrote a great deal about literature. We also know that Deleuze radically transformed our access to texts as paradigmatic as those of Kafka, Melville, Proust, or Artaud. Today, it is impossible to read “The Metamorphosis” without recognizing the truth of the processes of becoming-animal that traverse the small modulations of the erotic body, just as the denouement of *Moby-Dick* is inseparable from the becoming-fish of every fisherman. The appearance of Albertine engaged in an amalgam of small perceptions of landscapes and perfumes will be forever marked by the inscription of *In Search of Lost Time* within the technique of the construction of pure forms of time that Deleuze invented by way of Bergson. Likewise, the processes of the poetic intensification of the skin in Artaud, extending to the transformation of the totality of the world into an immense membrane of drives, have, after *Anti-Oedipus*, ceased being simply signs of Artaud’s delirium and have become the first literary elaboration of the reality of the disorganization of one’s proper body, that is, of its transformation into a “body without organs.”

If, at the same time, we consider the consistency and the originality of certain concepts invented by Deleuze either to describe the literary object or to map the type of effects that certain texts produce—like those of the novel as abstract machine, of the writing of a minor community as collective assemblage of enunciation, or of the book-life—it seems evident that, in each of his readings of Virginia Woolf, D. H. Lawrence, or Kafka, we are in the presence, if not of



a theory, at least of a proper experimentation, of a unique practice of letting oneself be affected by the art of writing.<sup>1</sup>

Yet the question continues to impose itself: Does this experimentation or this practice stem from an aesthetic theory? Is this a knowledge [*savoir*] of art, a new penetration into the means of existence of artistic objects and the forms of their reception? Do we find in Deleuze an elaboration of figures of fictional creation or a description of mechanisms of the power of the sensible in writing at the moment of its entry into our field of experience? Can we discover in his texts an appropriate way of viewing the mode of existence of the novel, the story, or the novella?

This question has already produced some division within interpretations of Deleuze. Daniel W. Smith, for example, has said quite simply, “Properly speaking, there is no ‘theory of art’ in Deleuze” (Smith 1996: 41). In his opinion, the plurality of concepts and strategies that we find in Deleuze’s texts on literature, cinema, and painting keep us from discerning the unity of a homogeneous comprehension of art and, hence, a theory of art.

Jacques Rancière, in “Is There a Deleuzian Aesthetics?,” proposes a much more complex response. Deleuze radically rejected aesthetics as a knowledge about artworks to transform aesthetics into a mode of thought that develops in relation to works and that takes them as witnesses of an entirely different question. That other question always goes beyond literature. It belongs to problems such as the problems of a politics of the bachelor, a poetics of the “no,” or a metaphysics of sensation. Deleuze’s central thesis, according to Rancière, is the one formulated in *What Is Philosophy?*: “The work of art is a being of sensation and nothing else: it exists in itself. [. . .] The artist creates blocks of percepts and affects, but the only law of creation is that the compound must stand up on its own” (WP 164). The problem that must then guide Deleuze’s thinking on art is one of determining the nature of this “being of sensation” and this “standing alone” of the compound of percepts and affects.

For Rancière, such an “existence in itself,” nonorganic, can be thought only on the basis of a theory of sensation as event, or better, on the basis of an ontology of pure sensation: “equating the power of the work of art with the power of a pure, a-signifying sensible” (Rancière 2004a: 10). This pure sensation does not stem from a subjective determination. It is a multiplicity of percepts and affects that, in itself, forms an autonomous body, a block, or to take up a formulation of Rancière’s, “a sensibility that is no longer the sensibility of the man of representation, but rather the sensibility of the contemplator become object of his own contemplation: foam, pebble or grain of sand” (Rancière 2004a: 12). If the work of art refers back to the sensible power/capacity [*puissance*] of a thought that has created it and the organization of the sensibility of the one who reads it, then it belongs neither to the sphere of creation nor to the sphere of sensation. Thus, Deleuze’s approach

to art dissolves the categories, not only of art as the ontology of the created object but also of aesthetics as the theory of the experience of these objects.

What is paradoxical in the eyes of Rancière is that this dual dismissal of the classical theory of art does not place Deleuze beyond aesthetics. On the contrary, “the logic of sensation,” which Deleuze discovers in Kafka, for instance, or in the blocks of percepts and affects that traverse Proust’s descriptions, leads to the center of aesthetics itself and to aesthetics as thought of *aisthesis*. The concept of pure sensation only displaces ontology. Refusing the organicity of the work, Deleuze transforms it into an ontology of its pure reception, of its *aisthesis*. It is a sensation that is ontologized as a nonorganic assemblage, as a block of percepts and affects. Thus, in Deleuze’s work there is no aesthetics as knowledge [*savoir*] about art because, for him, art itself is already knowledge [*savoir*], it is already sensation, affect, and percept. For this reason, Rancière can write: “Deleuze fulfilled the destiny of aesthetics by suspending the entire power [*puissance*] of the work in the ‘pure’ sensible” (Rancière 2004a: 13).

It is possible to reverse the movement of this approach that Rancière introduced in the understanding of Deleuze’s thought about art. One can relate it, not to a phenomenology of sensation (even a pure one), but to an ontology of the work as virtual reality. Such is the case of Christine Buci-Glucksmann. In “The Crystals of Art: An Aesthetics of the Virtual,” she integrates the theory of pure sensation into the heart of a thought of art as abstraction. Pure sensation, rather than being a figure of experience, becomes the plane on which this abstraction, which is opposed neither to the figurative nor to mimesis, truly becomes real. Thus, Deleuze’s dismissal of the organic image of the work of art corresponds to an approach Buci-Glucksmann defines as “abstract expressionism” (Buci-Glucksmann 1998: 95). This program was first formulated by Worringer in connection with the specificity of Gothic or Egyptian art as opposed to the Greco-Roman aesthetic model. In *Abstraction and Empathy*, which, as Buci-Glucksmann reminds us, Deleuze identified as one of the greatest revolutions in the contemporary theory of art, what is at play is a nonorganic concept of the autonomy of the work of art. On the basis of the idea that art is essentially the movement of an abstract line, the life of the work is radically transformed. Buci-Glucksmann cites the Deleuze of *Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation*: “Worringer discovered the formula of this frenetic line: it is a life, but the most bizarre and intense kind of life, a *nonorganic* vitality” (FB 83). For Buci-Glucksmann, the central question Deleuze poses for art is: What is this abstract line, and to what extent does it have the form of a life? Buci-Glucksmann follows Deleuze’s answers very closely. First, one must not conceive of abstraction as an essence or a geometric ideality. The abstract line acts as a set of operations carried out on forces. It is like the sensible diagram of flows and intensities. Then, one must reject

the idea that this line is the vestige of a movement of creation or of an artist's perspective on the work. The abstract line is precisely what is most immanent to the work; it is its *nervure* and its life.

Buci-Glucksmann highlights an evolution in the way Deleuze thinks the Nature of this immanence. An evolution that goes from a privileging of abstract lines traced by the becoming-art or becoming-work of the body without organs of the artist—present above all in *Francis Bacon*—to an ontology of the virtual in which lines have the status of internal orientations of forces, of lines of flight of intensities that compose the work as a block of affects and perfects—*The Fold* and *What Is Philosophy?*.

This ontology of the virtual is best conceived if the crystal is taken as a model of the work of art. The crystal is not the petrified object, the sedimentation of regular lines of atoms, and symmetries of planes. The crystal Deleuze uses is rather the crystal as abstract form. In this sense, “the Deleuzian crystal is neither a simple metaphor, nor a simple object. Rather, it is an image-thought, which defines a territory and functions as the matrix of a ‘geo-philosophy’ of art. Image of itself and image of the universe, it is the first ‘abstract machine,’ the first ‘monad’ of an aesthetic virtual” (Buci-Glucksmann 1998: 105).

What is strange in this displacement of aesthetics as theory of *aisthesis* (Rancière's point of view) toward a “geo-philosophy of art” (Buci-Glucksmann's point of view) is the process of immaterialization that it traces. In Rancière, the pure sensible belongs neither to a philosophy of nature nor to a phenomenology of the gaze. The pure sensible is of an undecidable immateriality. In Buci-Glucksmann's concept of the crystal, we find the same undecidability. In her view, the figure of the crystal is inseparable from an ontology of the work of art as an ontology of the virtual, of a “virtual aesthetic.” Although the crystal can initially have the value of a “reflexive operator,” what it makes visible is “the virtual as imaging force accompanying the real,” where “the crystal-image conjugates virtual spaces” (Buci-Glucksmann 1998: 107, 109). The crystal as virtual is the place where, precisely, the concepts of nonorganic life and abstract form condense, “as if life, suddenly threatened by its proper non-organic vitality, were able to discover crystalline power [*puissance*]” (Buci-Glucksmann 1998: 110). Crystal and virtual reciprocally define one another such that abstract form is the always heterogeneous “between-time,” the movement, not of actualization of the virtual, but of its crystallization always postponed, “like a gigantic crystal in delay” (Buci-Glucksmann 1998: 110). In this regard, not only is art placed on a plane of suspension or temporal delay under the form of a purely virtual crystal, but it also acquires the condition of an interval between two virtuals. “The virtual in art is [. . .] an event between two virtualities: a chaotic virtuality and a consistent virtuality. Or rather a *virtual of the line* without contour, the interior trajectory of all

abstractions, and a *virtual-world*, where the monadological inter-expression is lined with more or less clear perceptions.”<sup>2</sup> In short, the crystal, according to Buci-Glucksmann, is in no way material, but it is rather an undecidable interval between two immaterialities.

The readings of Rancière and Buci-Glucksmann, though opposed in many ways, touch on the same problem. They place us on the two sides of the great paradox of Deleuze’s thought about art: the project of a thought of art that refuses an ontology of the work or a phenomenology of its reception, which is not a knowledge [*savoir*] of its objects or of its experiences, but which develops in reference to works and which takes them solely as witnesses of questions that go beyond them. Yet, as they have shown, this project itself cannot help but can fall into an aesthetics as thought of affects and percepts, just as it cannot but take up again an ontology of art, even if it is that of an ontology of the nonorganic condition of the life of these works. The nonaesthetics of Deleuze can only be a permanent drift between an aesthesiology of pure sensation and a metaphysics of the immaterial virtual.

Still, another question arises: Isn’t this return to aesthetics in its most canonical form itself the most singular trait of Deleuze’s thought about art?

### **AESTHETICS BETWEEN A THEORY OF CONDITIONS OF THE SENSIBLE AND AN ANALYTIC OF JUDGMENT: THE PROGRAM OF TRANSCENDENTAL EMPIRICISM**

Deleuze does indeed further the destiny of aesthetics as knowledge of artworks and of the conditions of art’s experience. But he displaces this knowledge, he makes it gravitate around something else. And this something else not only becomes perceptible in the works he reads, but also reveals itself as a new condition of access to the meaning of these works and to the way they affect us. This something else is what Deleuze likes to define as a new image of thought. Art only interests him to the extent that art puts experience in crisis.

Perhaps because he avoids the classic questions of aesthetics, he can turn artworks into critical sites for thought. He never addresses the question of the nature of the literary work—a question that since Mallarmé has become constitutive of the task of writing. But his texts on literature have shaken our very idea of literature in its relation to thought, inscribing forever in that idea concepts as powerful as those of the “perverse contract,” “abstract machine,” and “collective assemblage of enunciation.” It’s also because Deleuze proposes that the general problem of painting is neither representation nor conceptualization, but instead the capture of forces, that he can highlight in the work of Francis Bacon the forms of a figural thought, a nonfigurative thought, that is,

a thought that is neither illustrative nor narrative. That thought, rather than a representation of the horror of the world, is the presence of the cry, as presence of the forces and flows that are at work behind this same world.

Likewise, with cinema, his analyses of movement-images and time-images have opened up a new domain of experience in our cinematographic perception, even if Deleuze at no moment confronted the aesthetic effect of these images. What interests him is the relation of cinema to thought and the brain. He describes pure images as “disenchained” from sensory-motor ties, establishing only incommensurable relations with one another. The image becomes the direct presentation of time and the relation of thought to the unthought, bringing into appearance the relation of the brain to the cosmos, the inside to the outside. As time-image, the image is the presentation of the brain. The cinema-brain becomes the projection of the cerebral process, which Deleuze calls the spiritual automaton.

This permanent movement of a backward flight, this deterritorialization of works to revisit them via another plane of composition, is perhaps the most decisive center of Deleuze’s style. He traverses works and their modes of perception like domains of a plane that exceeds both the works and their effects. The objective is that these works and their effects appear on a single plane, as a single plateau where the effects are immanent to the objects that produce them and where the works exist only as experimentation. Deleuze believes that this excess, that this recomposition of canonical fields of aesthetics on a new plane, the plane of a new image of thought, can bring about a convergence of the two senses of the aesthetic that, since Kant, have been radically separated: that of the theory of the sensible and that of the theory of the beautiful. It is in order to respond to this scission, to respond to this crisis that divides thought about art, that one must inscribe the question of art in a new formulation of the transcendental program, in a new version of the idea of a description of the conditions of experience. As Deleuze says: “The elementary concepts of representation are the categories defined as the conditions of possible experience. These, however, are too general or too large for the real. The net is so loose that the largest fish pass through. No wonder, then, that aesthetics should be divided into two irreducible domains: that of the theory of the sensible that captures only the real’s conformity with possible experience; and that of the theory of the beautiful, which deals with the reality of the real in so far as it is thought. Everything changes once we determine the conditions of real experience, which are not larger than the conditioned and which differ in kind from the categories: the two senses of the aesthetic become one, to the point where the being of the sensible reveals itself in the work of art, while at the same time the work of art appears as experimentation” (DR 68). Deleuze treats the work of art as the materialization of the conditions of experience, not

possible experience, but real experience, experience whose conditions are no larger than that which they condition. Hence, one must meld the forms of the beautiful with the forms of sensibility and make visible the work itself (and not judgment) as that conformity between the sensible and its conditions, on one hand, and the beautiful, as that which conforms to experience in its reality, on the other.

Deleuze seeks something other than an aesthetics. But that something other beyond aesthetics is the sole response to the fact that aesthetics, since its speculative foundation with Kant, is split into two domains. To go beyond this cleavage between the transcendental aesthetic as a part of a general theory of the conditions of possibility of experience and the aesthetic of judgment as theory of forms of the reflexivity of the real in the judgment of the beautiful and the sublime, one must refashion both transcendental aesthetics and the aesthetics of judgment. On one hand, the field of the conditions of experience itself must be displaced. Instead of defining the transcendental field from the vantage of possible experience, one must make real experience the departure for a deduction of the a priori. And, on the other hand, this real experience has its privileged domain, precisely, in art. The work of art as a block of percepts and affects is the unique revelation of the being of the sensible. The condition of experience is no larger than the conditioned. The work of art, in its singularity and exceptionality, contains all the conditions of experience that constitute it as object of judgment of the beautiful or the sublime. The work of art, then, appears as experimentation, that is, as the genetic locus of both the object and the conditions of its becoming-sensible, as the locus of a genesis that does violence to thought and forces it to think.

It is true that Deleuze cannot, as Rancière argues, thereby avoid falling into an aesthetics as theory of *aisthesis*, which becomes an ontology of the forms of incarnation of the sensible as art. But, in Deleuze's view, the very conditions of contemporary art are what have disturbed this Kantian split between an aesthetics of the sensible and an aesthetics of judgment. For example, thought about involuntary memory in Proust's narrative has no meaning except as a refutation, which is at the same time a regrounding, of transcendental idealism: to think sensibility from the conditions of its real genesis in art and to think art as a transcendent exercise of the sensible. What one finds from Proust to Kafka, from Artaud to Melville and Beckett, is always the process of inscribing the aesthetics of judgment within transcendental aesthetics, in order to found the transcendental in an ontology of the sensible. Deleuze's aesthetics seeks only to trace the plane that can capture, inside each work, this transversal cut of sensation and judgment, of the transcendental and the transcendent usage of the sensible, which constitutes the fundamental experience of contemporary art. Deleuze defines this program as "transcendental empiricism."

## AESTHETICS AND PHILOSOPHY OF NATURE

I will try to show that as Deleuze sought a radicalization of the transcendental, he took up the aesthetic tradition of romanticism, an aesthetics that was transformed into a philosophy of Nature, into a philosophy of the auto-expressive properties of natural forms. Transcendental empiricism led Deleuze to a theory of objects as auto-expressive of the sensible, to a description of the mode of existence of works as epiphanies of forms of life. If the theory of pure *aisthesis*, which Rancière sees as the essential trait of Deleuze's aesthetics, must be read as a moment in the project of transcendental empiricism, of the project of an analysis of the genesis of faculties in real experience, that is, in the experimentation of art, then likewise, the ontology of the virtual, that other tendency in Deleuze's aesthetic, according to Buci-Glucksmann, is a rigorous perspective on his thought about art only if it is related to the philosophy of Nature that gave birth to it.

In *A Thousand Plateaus* (1980), one finds a return to Schelling, beyond Kant's critical philosophy, in the statement "art is not the privilege of human beings. Messiaen is right in saying that many birds are not only virtuosos but artists, above all in their territorial songs" (ATP 316–7). According to Deleuze, art begins with territorial marks. These marks refer neither to a subject or a sensation that captures them and establishes them as impressions, nor to an object whose nature is to exhaust itself in the expression of its marks. In Deleuze, there exists only "a self-movement of expressive qualities" (ATP 317). We must not confuse this expressiveness with impressions associated with any point of view, regardless of how a-subjective, pure, or abstract it might be. Expressiveness is autonomous, it is self-sufficient, or in Deleuze's later formulation, it "stand[s] up on its own" (WP 164). It is in this autonomy that expressiveness fulfills the condition of the work. It refers back only to itself: "expressive qualities, the colors of the coral fish, for example, are auto-objective, in other words, find an objectivity in the territory they draw" (ATP 317).

From the perspective of this philosophy of Nature, art is the primordial event of natural forms. Art should be thought on the basis of the constitutive marks of domains, of dwellings created by territorial animals. "Art is fundamentally *poster*, *placard*. As Lorenz says, coral fish are posters" (ATP 316). These marks are artistic events inasmuch as they are expressive, as they become new properties of a territory that pertains to the subject that bears them. But these properties are artistic precisely because they are originally expressions and signatures. Only after they become determinations do they then become qualities of the animal that produces them.<sup>3</sup>

This "vitalism" of expression disrupts the center of gravity of almost all questions that orient our system of thought about the art of literature. It is

true that Deleuze always refers to classics of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, like Zola, Whitman, Proust, Kafka, Virginia Woolf, Faulkner, Artaud, and Kerouac. It is also true that he addresses the canonical subjects of literary theory—the status of the narrator, the nature of fiction and of fabulation, the difference between genres, and even the question of the literariness of a literary enunciation. However, the approach to literature through a concern with the life of literary works displaces, at each moment, the manner of thinking the questions that organize literary aesthetics from romanticism on. This is the case with the opposition between the autonomy of form and the depth of the interior life of the writer, the question of the relation of the work to the mind—a question that is at the heart of the theoretical considerations of Proust or Mallarmé. The trajectory of the solution of this series of oppositions is placed entirely on the side of the subject who writes. Literature is an event involving production, the subjectivation of the act of writing. But this subject is related to a plane that is entirely a-subjective. It is a collective subject, a subject-machine of expression of a community. Deleuze invents a nonpsychological realism of fabulation, which is at the same time a politics of becomings, of movements, and of lines of the production of people who are missing. From another perspective, he articulates a theory of writing as experimental activity involving the health of a writer who inhabits language as a foreigner, as an excluded individual, and as a member of a minor community. The interiority and depth of a work are brought back to the surface of assemblages that a minority realizes as the line of flight of apparatuses of codification and the territorialization of desires.

The descriptions of processes of the deterritorialization of language in Kafka or the Proustian experience of a foreigner in one's own language inaugurate what Deleuze defines as a pragmatics of collective assemblages of enunciation, a pragmatics that treats each enunciation as an order word and as a formula.<sup>4</sup> What interests Deleuze is the relation of every enunciation with its social conditions, with speech acts as markers of power [*pouvoir*]. The classic opposition between the pure act of writing and passion, or the contrast between the gravity of expression and the indifference of the theme—at the center of Flaubert's analyses of "frivolity" or the schizophrenia of Artaud—is thus related to the necessarily social character of the enunciation, that is, to assemblages of language that are always collective.

Fictionality, fabulation, and expression—everything in the literary work—are displaced toward the domain of a preindividual life, toward the domain of a pragmatics of assemblages of enunciation as machinic and collective form of life. One must underscore the fact that this pragmatics of the assemblage is always a singular philosophy of Nature. Indeed, all assemblages of enunciation are double: if there is always something one says in an assemblage, there is also always something one does. Expression and content—assemblages are



hence at once assemblages of enunciation and machinic assemblages. According to Deleuze, to think literary enunciations is to understand the modalities of articulation of these two sides of the assemblage and of their forms of inscription in strata. The assemblage is the effect of a territory that is, in turn, a decoding process of stratified milieus. Thus, Deleuze's pragmatics refers back to a theory of strata and stratification of the world and of codes, environments, and rhythms from which the assemblage emerges. This is a theory of Nature, a pluralist philosophy of Nature summoned forth by this hyper-realism of the collective subject of enunciation. Concepts belonging to geology, biology, and physical chemistry—such as coagulation, sedimentation, or molecular compounds—fuse with semiotic categories so as to describe phenomena like the stratification of a statement or the deterritorialization of a narrative or a character.

There are no strata and no territories except within a plane of immanence or a plane of consistency. This plane, as well as the assemblage, has two sides: Thought and Nature. It is necessary first to trace the plane, to build the concepts that will occupy and populate the plane, in order to reveal the *Physis* that constitutes it. These concepts, surfaces, or volumes, deformed and fragmentary, whose plane is the unlimited absolute, are not the correlate of an object of contemplation or the product of a subject of reflection. As incorporeal transformation assigned to bodies and contents, the concept is what is expressed by a statement. And what is expressed is not the result of an activity. It is not performed by the spirit [or “mind,” *esprit*], within the contemplative spirit, which thus precedes every memory and every reflection. We see here that Deleuze is coming closer and closer to a philosophy of the spirit. The natural philosophy of expression, then, becomes a physics of the brain–thought.

The turning point is his work on cinema. When Deleuze discovers, in film images, a brain–thought that exists on the screen, he begins to shift the center of immanence from the plane of the actual toward the plane of the virtual. And the virtual, starting with his books on cinema, becomes the time crystal, just as the event becomes a contemplation without knowledge, a soul. This soul, this form in itself that doesn't refer back to any external point of view, “has only a single side whatever the number of its dimensions, which remains copresent to all its determinations without proximity or distance, traverses them at infinite speed, without limit-speed” (WP 210). It is the brain at the moment; the brain is in the state of a contracted vibrating sensation, a sensation that has become quality and variety.

What we adopt as an architectonic regime for approaching Deleuze's thought is the discovery of a permanent displacement of Deleuze's view of literary art. This displacement occurs in three layers: transcendental empiricism, the philosophy of nature, and the philosophy of the spirit.

What makes this displacement a true means of overturning our theoretical experience, however, is the fact that, in order to make visible each of these layers, to describe exactly his regime of thought and its condition of existence, Deleuze always treats literature as the good image. For example, to accede to the ontology of the virtual (the project of transcendental empiricism that preceded the project of a philosophy of nature), the analysis of the phantasm-event of Oedipus, as fictional kernel of every novel, is the proper path to pursue, according to *Difference and Repetition* and *The Logic of Sense*. Each of a neurotic's individual myths transports all the novels of the world as a virtual, which the neurotic can only actualize. This is how *In Search of Lost Time* puts into effect the Proustian formula "a bit of time in a pure state," which makes truly visible the three syntheses of time—those of the living present, the pure past, and the pure form of time. In *Difference and Repetition* the three repetitions that found the syntheses of time—bond-repetition [*répétition-lien*], stain-repetition [*répétition-tache*], and eraser-repetition [*répétition-gomme*—have their most originary mode of existence in the literary work. And *A Thousand Plateaus* takes up this tripartition of the syntheses of time, relating them to three broad literary genres, the novel, the novella, and the tale. Literary art is shown to be the place of the genesis of the forms of time and the forms of repetition. (See Plateau 8: "Three Novellas or 'What Happened'" [ATP 192–207].)

On the layer of the philosophy of spirit, one finds a similar mirrored development. In an interview about his cinema books, Deleuze says that film "puts movement not just in the image; it puts it in the spirit. Spiritual life is movement of the spirit" (TRM 288; trans. modified). With cinema, Deleuze discovers images that let us perceive the activity of thinking. Cinema is a life of thought and a spiritual life. And with "The Exhausted," that almost clandestine text on Beckett's television plays, and the activity of the spirit is presented as the creation of images. The movement of the spirit culminates in the creation on the screen of pure images in auto-dissipation. It is in his analysis of these television plays that Deleuze is able to show that Beckett's central subject is to make visible, through images, spirits that can only prepare to create images. With "The Exhausted," we arrive at images of thought, at the life of the spirit, which exists only insofar as it forms images in disparation. Thus, it is with Beckett that Deleuze formulates his last vision of life, that of the spirit.

In short, each layer of Deleuze's theoretical labor—the layer of transcendental empiricism, the layer of the philosophy of assemblages and strata, and the layer of the spirit—is already an entry into the world of literary experience. Each of these layers transforms our view of literature. And all bring into existence a statement [*énoncé*], a fictional event, and a character as the materialization of an experience of time, either as the image of a block of nature or as the manifestation of a spirit.

To make Deleuze a means of access to a work of art is to study ethology, geodesy, topology, neurology, a field that is at once a biology of the inorganic, a crystallography of the virtual, and an anatomy of pure faculties. In a word, it is to think the concept of life. Deleuze himself, in a Letter-Preface to Mireille Buydens's *Sahara: l'esthétique de Gilles Deleuze* (1990), writes: "I believe that you have seen, in your own way, what is essential for me, this 'vitalism' or a conception of life as non-organic power [*puissance*] ([. . .] it is 'life' that seems essential to me)" (Buydens 1990: 7). Deleuze here underscores the essence of his project: that his is an aesthetics only insofar as it is a thought of life and a thought of forms of life in art.

Life is also the last theme of Deleuze's final text. And Giorgio Agamben sees in "Immanence: A Life" the form of a philosophical testament. If we consider that in this text *life* allows us to think in a single image the concepts of *immanence*, *power/capacity* [*puissance*], *the virtual*, *the singular*, and *intensity*, we may verify that nearly all Deleuze's vitalism is condensed in these four final pages he published. Shouldn't we regard this fact as a methodological indication of how we should proceed?

We know that the concept of *life* furnished the principal traits of philosophical style for Deleuze: (a) his way of reading the history of philosophy, always treating a thought as a form of intensification of a *life*; (b) his permanent treatment of literature as the unique image of *life* in its singularity; and (c) the experience of philosophical writing as a vitalism of the concept, as the actualization of virtualities engaged in each problem. In each of these domains, it is always a matter of thinking *life* as the unity of a force and its sense, as the depth of an event in its incorporeality, as individuation in its intensity.<sup>5</sup>

This means that the fundamental concepts of life, such as the body without organs, abstract machine, or line of flight, are never biological metaphors transposed into the domain of *aisthesis* or an ontology of the artifact, but strategies of intelligibility of the plurality of forms of life on the very inside of art. To understand the constitution of a territory, the lines of intensity that traverse it as movement of flight or sedimentation, to accompany these cartographies of forces and flows, is to enter fully into that strange art of tracing maps of abstract lines of life, of becomings. It is in the spirit/mind that these cartographies of life are effected. The last figure of inorganic life, as we will try to demonstrate, is found precisely in a philosophy of spirit and in the faculty of the creation of images and concepts. One may thus say that in the spirit Deleuze encounters the mode of existence of inorganic life that expresses itself in microbrains. His final image of the life of thought is therefore a transcendental neurologism or a spiritual empiricism.

Isn't *life*, then, the point of entry to all that is most singular in Deleuze's thought about art?<sup>6</sup> And is it not the guiding thread in the great displacements

that Deleuze produced within literary theory—the territory par excellence of the immanence of a life?

## TRANSCENDENTAL EMPIRICISM, PHILOSOPHY OF NATURE, PHILOSOPHY OF SPIRIT: QUESTIONS OF METHOD

The central difficulty in Deleuze's approach to art concerns the mode of existence of this concept of life in its relation to thought. As we have tried to show, there is a triple theoretical project in Deleuze's texts: first, as transcendental empiricism; then as philosophy of nature; and finally, as philosophy of spirit. These are the three planes that explain the unclassifiable character—at once post-Kantian and precritical—of Deleuze's thought on art. Rancière and Buci-Glucksmann have touched on this paradox. And Deleuze has done nothing to cancel it. Quite the contrary. It takes us directly, not only to the question of the speculative status of his view of art, but above all to the permanent instability of his positions.

On the side of his project of a transcendental empiricism as theory of the faculties, Deleuze changed the way of defining the field of the conditions of real experience. Deleuze attempted to reformulate Kant's transcendental project through nonhomogeneous approaches, first, through a new theory of the faculties. This theory of the faculties may be found in his books on the novels of Proust (1964, 1970, 1973) and Sacher-Masoch (1967). There, the literary experience is always approached as the site of the genesis of the conditions of thought, of sensibility, of the imagination, of memory, and of reason as forms of reflection of the modes of appearance of art as experimentation. Deleuze abandons this model—which one may call "critical"—in order to experiment with a "clinical" model, which presupposes a philosophy of nature. The delirious universe of the schizophrenic in his relation to languages (the case of Artaud and his concept of the body without organs, for example), the battle for new forms of health in Fitzgerald or Virginia Woolf, even the paranoid functioning of juridical and penitential machines in Kafka—all these limit-domains of literature—appeared to Deleuze as a new field, empirical and transcendental. One discovers this model in *Anti-Oedipus* (1972), *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature* (1975), *Dialogues* (1977), and *A Thousand Plateaus* (1980).

Although the ontology of the virtual, which Deleuze takes from Bergson, is found in nearly all his books, having its most paradigmatic formulation in *Difference and Repetition* (1968) and *The Logic of Sense* (1969), the mode of existence of art, starting with *Kafka*, comes to be thought, not in terms of an ontology of what is ideal without being abstract and real without

being actual, but in terms of a philosophy of nature. And, with the cinema books (1983–1985), art encounters a third virtual plane: the thought–brain. Here, vitalism is manifest in its last version, as philosophy of spirit. The thought–brain is described later, in *What Is Philosophy?*, as the very faculty of concepts. In this sense, the position of Buci-Glucksmann is exemplary in what she ignores, but also, in what she reveals in regard to the evolution of Deleuze’s thought. That thought began with an ontology of the virtual as plane of the symbolic, where the virtual depended on the relation between desire and law. That ontology was then developed into a philosophy of nature as a new idea of modes of existence of life, eventuating finally in a new ontology of the virtual as philosophy of spirit, an ontology that defines the thought–brain as a consistent absolute form, in auto-survey without distance, at infinite speed, to which Deleuze grants the same status as the pure event or the reality of the virtual. The brain will thus be the last figure of the virtual. Deleuze describes it as the faculty of the virtual, as the faculty that creates concepts at the same time that it draws the plane of consistency on which the concepts are placed. Deleuze says “The brain is *spirit* itself” (WP 211; trans. modified). From a philosophy of nature, Deleuze thus moves to a philosophy of spirit. Art (alongside philosophy and science) becomes one of three planes—the plane of composition—on which the brain becomes subject and becomes thought–brain.

The three domains of Deleuze’s thought on art, therefore, do not always have the same weight. The program of a new theory of the faculties plays a fundamental role in the books on Proust (1964) and Sacher-Masoch (1967). Starting with *The Logic of Sense* (1969), especially with the introduction of the concept of the “body without organs,” which Deleuze presents for the first time in his discussion of Artaud, it is a theory of inorganic Nature that occupies the center of his work on art. The body without organs is at once a transcendental field, a pure nonsubjective form of experience, and a foundational reality of the idea of life in its nonfunctionality, in its machinality. After the discovery of the autonomy of the cinematographic image as brain materialized on the screen, vitalism acquires the condition of a philosophy of spirit. The empirical interpretation of the Kantian theory of the faculties is transformed into an ontology of the thought–brain. The brain, at once virtual like the concepts it creates and actual like the chaos it cuts across with its concepts, is a singular spirit. It is the subtlest dimension of a nature that contemplates, of an internal sensing [*d’un sentir interne*], as soul or force, as microbrain or inorganic life of things. In a sense, the philosophy of spirit of the late Deleuze is only a final version of both transcendental empiricism and the philosophy of nature.

To understand the role of the program of a new theory of the faculties in the books on Proust and Sacher-Masoch is not a difficult task. One need only

inscribe the thought about literature within the texts on the history of philosophy of that same period. The books on Hume, Nietzsche, Kant, and Bergson give us access to the Kantian questions of the theory of signs and essence that Deleuze discovers in *In Search of Lost Time* as well as the theory of the fabulative imagination in its relation to the perverse phantasm in his analysis of masochism.

Access to the philosophy of spirit is not any more complicated. It has a precise date in Deleuze's work, and after its appearance, it increasingly becomes the theoretical center of his work. It begins in the cinema books of 1983–85, where the pure image makes visible the thought–brain. In *The Fold*, the philosophy of spirit is rendered as the figure of the soul and of the doubling-on-itself of the expressed world as virtual totality in each monad. There, all Leibnizianism is put in the service of the vision of the baroque as an architecture of folds of the soul, a true physics of spirit. The thought–brain occupies the center of *What Is Philosophy?*. In that book one finds the idea that the concept is constructed on a plane of immanence insofar as it cross-cuts a chaotic (virtual) variability and gives it consistency, that is, brings it into reality. Thought is this becoming-real—that is, consistent—of chaos: “A concept is therefore a chaoid state par excellence; it refers back to a chaos rendered consistent, become Thought, mental chaosmos” (WP 208). The brain as faculty of concepts is spirit itself. The concept of spirit has its final outcome in the poetics of Beckett. As Deleuze shows in “The Exhausted” (1992), Beckett's entire dramaturgical labor involves the project of creating a pure image, through the exhaustion of all the physical dimensions of the theater (names, voices, movements, gestures). A pure image is obtained by the auto-dissolution of the visible; it is pure spiritual life. And the task of Beckett is the perfect expression of what Deleuze calls a “theater of the spirit.”

But how should one enter into Deleuze's philosophy of nature? To understand the displacements that the concept of life produces within his thought about literature, where should one begin? Should one engage in a rhizomatic approach to Deleuze's pages on literary art? Deleuze proposes to think art via mechanisms of power [*pouvoir*] that appertain to a theory of the living in its relations with space, domains, and strata. But, where should one enter this philosophy of nature?

In 1988, in a conversation about the publication of *The Fold*, Deleuze said he intended to resume his common work with Félix Guattari on what he called “a sort of philosophy of Nature” (N 155). Earlier in the same conversation, he said: “There's a profound link between signs, events, life, and vitalism: the power of nonorganic life that can be found in a line that's drawn, a line of writing, a line of music. It's organisms that die, not life. [. . .] Everything I've written is a vitalism, at least I hope it is, and amounts to a theory of signs and events” (N 143; trans. modified).<sup>7</sup>

“Nonorganic life,” “theory of signs,” and “event,” are the key concepts of Deleuze’s philosophy of Nature. We only have to follow them to enter into the fundamental lines of this new “vitalism.” Yet, what term should one take as a starting point? The concept of “nonorganic life”? Or the “sign”? Or the “event”? Deleuze himself suggested a response. In this same conversation of 1988, he said: “I’ve tried in all my books to discover the nature of the event” (N 141; trans. modified). Hence, we see that the “profound link” Deleuze recognizes, within his vitalism, between a theory of signs and the concept of nonorganic life, is revealed in his project of constructing a new comprehension of this trivial, and at the same time unthinkable, object that traverses all his writings: the event.

### LIFE BETWEEN THE EVENT AND THE ASSEMBLAGE

So, we must turn to an archaeology of the concept of the event in the work of Deleuze, in such a way as to reconstruct the foundation of his philosophy of nature. But an enormous mass of interpretative problems gradually appears. First, we must note that the concept of the event is a late concept. It appears for the first time, and in a timid fashion, in *Difference and Repetition* (1968). And only in *The Logic of Sense* (1969) does this concept receive a systematic explication. Also, it disappears in *Anti-Oedipus* (1972), *Kafka* (1975), and *Foucault* (1986), and it only reappears in *The Fold* (1988) and then occupies a central place in *What Is Philosophy?* (1991).

If the genesis of the concept of the event is mysterious, its destiny is no less so. In *Dialogues* (1977) and *A Thousand Plateaus* (1980), the concept of the “event” is always presented in relation to that of the “assemblage,” to such an extent that the two are often confused. Here, they function now jointly as equivalents of the concept of the “haecceity,” and now as one forming part of the other (the event as that which disengages itself in an assemblage of the type “haecceity”). Finally, and surprisingly, in *What Is Philosophy?* the concept of the assemblage appears only once, in a totally marginal fashion, whereas the concept of the event forms the horizon of the possibility of thinking the large themes of this book.

Given the strange genesis and no less obscure destiny of the concept of the event, a hypothesis takes on increasing urgency: what if the books (almost all from the 1970s)—where the concept of the event is absent—do not represent a suspension of the theory of the event, but only a replacement, however provisory, of this concept by that of the “assemblage”? In that case, we could say that the concept of the assemblage inherited, not the characteristics, but the function of the event. Yet what would this replacement signify? Are they synonymous concepts, or does this replacement represent a theoretical

displacement in Deleuze's philosophy of nature? Furthermore, this substitution is not linear: (a) In *Anti-Oedipus* we no longer find the concept of the "event," and the concept of the "assemblage" is not yet present; (b) the concept of the "assemblage," as aesthetic category, appears for the first time in the third part of *Proust and Signs* (1973) as a means of conceiving the status of the narrator in the *Recherche*; (c) the concept of the assemblage is also the central concept of Deleuze and Guattari's great book on literature, *Kafka* (1975), as collective assemblage of enunciation and machinic assemblage of desire; (d) in *The Fold* the concept of the "event" is taken up again as central; and, finally, (e) in *What Is Philosophy?* all the problems that were formulated in *Kafka* and *A Thousand Plateaus* within a physics of the "assemblage" are approached solely in terms of the "event."<sup>8</sup>

How can we follow this permanent metamorphosis of the key concepts of Deleuze's philosophy of nature? And does this metamorphosis have any equivalence in his theory of literature? Can one not say that there is a strong link between the development of the philosophy of nature (the passage from a theory of the event to a theory of the assemblage) and the question of literature in Deleuze? May one establish a parallelism between the archaeology of the concept of the event and the transformation one finds in Deleuze regarding, for example, concepts of fiction, fabulation, or even the narrator?

The most striking case is that which exists between the role played by the concept of the "phantasm" in the readings of literary texts from the 1960s and the radical refutation of any theory of the phantasm and the imaginary that one finds in the opening pages of *Kafka* (1975). If, for example, in Proust's novel, fiction is explicated in terms of the dynamism of the sign, in terms of this infinite return of things of the world, of affects or of art, where the writer is only the narrator of this involuntary memory of things with things, *Masochism* treats fiction as the result of the work of the phantasm. One cannot forget that this book, seemingly about masochism, is an inquiry into the nature and role of the literary work of art. The first sentence of the book is "What use does literature serve?" (M 15; trans. modified), and Sacher-Masoch is analyzed as an example of what Deleuze calls a "literary efficacy." The erotic functions of language, the processes of denegation in Sade, those of denegation and suspension in Masoch, the roles of the woman and the father in their novels, the novelistic elements of the institution, and the contract—all of these are approached within an effort to theorize the nature of the novel. It's the phantasm—the effect of the processes of denegation and suspension of the imagination—that invents the frozen scenes, the painful occurrences, in short, the entire false world of the novel, where readers join the old pleasure of the displacement of their objects of desire. And, in a surprising fashion, *The Logic of Sense* disclaims this analytic version of fiction. There the phantasm is also the point of origin of fiction, but the phantasm is no longer the



product of the imagination. In *The Logic of Sense*, the phantasm, the mode of incorporation of the event, is thought above all as the movement of the depths of the body to the surface of the statement. It is the virtual object and the partial incorporation of the phantasmatic event par excellence: the drama of Oedipus.

One can thus say that with *Kafka* (1975), at the moment that Deleuze most systematically elaborates the concept of the assemblage, he entirely rejects the program of a theory of the imagination and the phantasm, which had provided the foundation of his thought on literature in the 1960s.

What kind of correspondences can one establish between the discontinuities in Deleuze's philosophy of nature and those in his theory of literature? Are there specific paradigms, or at least sufficient differences, to affirm that with each concept of the event, as well as each concept of the assemblage, there is a corresponding thought about literature? What are the consequences of this hesitation between the concepts of the *event* and the *assemblage* for questions such as that of fiction? In a word, to what extent does the movement from the event to the assemblage and then back to the event, accompanied as it is by internal ruptures in Deleuze's thought about literature, express something fundamental in the becoming of his thought?

Let us clarify these questions. What is Deleuze's philosophy of nature before 1969, that is, before the theory of the event that appears in *The Logic of Sense*? In *Proust and Signs*, or in *Masochism*, the concept of the event has not yet appeared. Is there a philosophy of nature of another sort, or should one seek something else? And what must one say about the great chronological proximity between *The Logic of Sense* and *Masochism*, and at the same time, the very great theoretical distance in what concerns a decisive point, that of the presence of the concept of the event? If one compares the ideas about desire and the law, or about the phantasm and Oedipus, in *Masochism* and *The Logic of Sense*, it seems that Deleuze's thought is the same, except in one respect: that which concerns the event. In *Masochism*, there is not yet an explicit concept of the event. In *The Logic of Sense*, the event becomes the concept par excellence in the pages dedicated to Carroll or to Artaud.

It is not, then, *Anti-Oedipus* alone that marks a rupture in Deleuze's thought about literature. It is true that this book is the most trenchant indictment of psychoanalysis, where all fiction is connected to the family novel and the private myths of the neurotic (a paradigm which, as Deleuze recognizes in *Dialogues*, nevertheless structures the most fundamental pages on literature in *Masochism*, *Difference and Repetition* and *The Logic of Sense*). At the same time, it is also true that *Anti-Oedipus* is the most "spectacular" moment of internal rupture within Deleuze's thought on literature.

From *Marcel Proust and Signs* (1964) to *Essays Critical and Clinical* (1993), each approach to literature is marked by very different perspectives

on decisive subjects such as the nature of fiction, the autonomy of the literary work, the form of fictional time, and the structure of the expressive layer.<sup>9</sup> To take these discontinuities seriously requires a systematic traversal of Deleuze's texts on literature through four periods: the period before the theory of the *event*; that organized by the *event*; that centered on the *assemblage*; and, finally, that marked by the return of the *event*.<sup>10</sup>

These, then, are the presuppositions that direct my reading of the question of literature in the work of Deleuze. They necessitate a method that is at once diachronic and excentric. We will follow Deleuze's texts on literature in terms of the movement of his writing and throughout inscribe them in three speculative planes that traverse them and exceed them: the project of a transcendental empiricism as theory of the faculties, the idea of a new philosophy of Nature, and the transformation of that philosophy of Nature into a philosophy of spirit. The reading of his first book on literature—*Proust and Signs*—is paradigmatic for my method. It expresses all these breaks and these displacements. My discontinuist reading of Deleuze's book on Proust, being an entrance into a first formulation of the question of literature in Deleuze—in its regime that is itself discontinuous—is designed to justify my method, that is, my way of being sensitive to the facts of noncontinuities. That is why, we will begin with this work.

## NOTES

1. As René Schérer says, "In a certain fashion, Deleuze's entire oeuvre may be considered a theory of literature, a theory of writing" (Schérer 1998: 19).

2. "What interests [Deleuze] in a text are the processes, the resisting strategies writers invent in order to demystify language itself, to experiment with it, to 'complicate' signs, to confront the Outside or Life itself, to survive this confrontation and to create their own work, their own events. [. . .] In this regard, philosophy and literature are inseparable" (Colombat 2000: 29).

3. "The expressive is primary in relation to the possessive; expressive qualities, or matters of expression, are necessarily appropriative and constitute a having more profound than being. Not in the sense that these qualities belong to a subject, but in the sense that they delineate a territory that will belong to the subject that carries or produces them. These qualities are signatures, but the signature, the proper name, is not the constituted mark of a subject, but the constituting mark of a domain, an abode. The signature is not the indication of a person; it is the chancy formation of a domain" (ATP 316).

4. As Rancière says about "Bartleby or the Formula," "Remote from any tradition of the sacred text, [Deleuze] instead describes the work as the development of a formula, a material operation that the materiality of a text produces. This term, 'formula,' situates the work's thinking in a dual opposition. On one hand, the formula is opposed to the story, to the Aristotelian plot. On the other, it is opposed to the

symbol, to the idea of a meaning hidden behind the narrative” (Rancière 1998b: 146). In this article, Rancière shows the extent to which this metaphysics of the formula as alternative literary apparatus leads Deleuze to the utopia of a literature that opens the passage to a politics, to what would be a justice of fraternal humanity. And, according to Rancière, it is precisely this idea of a literature that becomes a politics that makes evident the impasses in Deleuze’s thought. We will return to this fundamental text later.

5. It is significant that in his book on Foucault, Deleuze underscores the mutation that Foucault produced in the status of the “intellectual”: “So the intellectual or the writer becomes adept at speaking the language of life, rather than of law. [. . .] Is not the force that comes from outside a certain idea of Life, a certain vitalism, in which Foucault’s thought culminates?” (F 91, 93).

6. “For Deleuze, literature is reference and source. [. . .] He has the art of accessing life because he has the secret of becomings, in the line he is engaged in, which is called the line of flight: not because that line would make him de-realize the world through an escape into the imaginary, but because he knows how to engage, beyond the path of burdensome identities, in the paths of metamorphosis” (Schérer 1998: 19).

7. In *Dialogues*, Deleuze affirms: “We have set out to write a book of life” (D 145). Also, in 1989, when responding to Arnaud Villani’s remark that physis seems to play a large role in his work, Deleuze said: “You’re right, I think that I have been concerned with a certain idea of Nature, but I had not yet considered this notion directly” (Villani 1999: 129).

8. In this genealogical reading of his oeuvre, we are forced to consider the divisions proposed by others’ reconstructions of Deleuze’s path. José Gil underscores the rupture produced by the introduction of the “body without organs” at the end of *The Logic of Sense*, which only has its full effect in *Anti-Oedipus* (cf. Gil 1998b: 68–88). Arnaud Villani develops the discontinuities in the passage from *Difference and Repetition* to *Anti-Oedipus*. “We may thus reconstitute an ideal genesis of Deleuzianism in its first three moments. *Difference and Repetition* corresponds to a philosophical stage in the most classic sense, with an almost unsustainable density. [. . .] In a second moment, *The Logic of Sense* (a work toward which Deleuze later expressed some reticence, finding this tentative effort too dependent on structuralism) concerns the empty space and displaces sense toward the ‘paradoxical instance’ or the disparate. Eat-speak, this is still Carroll, but this leads quickly to Artaud. [. . .] *Anti-Oedipus* takes into account, up to its furthest consequences, the power of the displacement of schizophrenia. This work is at once the explication of the progressive corporealization of *The Logic of Sense* and the inversion of the relation between Carroll and Artaud, and the veritable birth of the syntheses as they are maintained to the end of the work” (Villani 1998: 46–7). Anne Sauvagnargues proposes a tripartite division of Deleuze’s oeuvre: “From the first works to *Difference and Repetition*, the question of art is treated largely in terms of literature. With Guattari, and the pragmatic turn of thought starting from *Anti-Oedipus*, Deleuze sketches a critique of interpretation and a logic of multiplicities that allows him, after *A Thousand Plateaus*, to devote himself fully to the semiotics of the image and artistic creation” (Sauvagnargues 2005: 13).

9. Cf. DR, in Chapter 2, “Repetition for Itself,” the sections titled “The literary system,” and “The phantasy or simulacrum and the three figures of the identical in relation to difference” in the table of contents (DR 121–126).

10. And in this traversal, we are confronted by a new fact: before the emergence of the assemblage, hence before the third version of *Proust and Signs* in 1973, Deleuze always thought art through the literary artwork. His reference points are always texts—by Proust, Masoch, Artaud, Klossowski, and Zola. It is only with *A Thousand Plateaus*, precisely in this book where for the first time he establishes this renewal of the question of art via a philosophy of nature, that Deleuze constructs a thought about art that takes into consideration other domains of artistic creation (painting, music, architecture, theater, and cinema). Is the “assemblage” the key concept of a more general thought about multiple forms of art?



## *Part I*

# PROUST AND SACHER-MASOCH

## *Categories, Law, Madness*

### INTRODUCTION: FOUR, THREE, TWO

*Proust and Signs* was Deleuze's first book dedicated to literature and a single writer. It is perhaps for that reason that he returned twice to this text. In 1970, he added to the 1964 edition a Second Part—"The Literary Machine"—and, in 1973, the Conclusion—"Presence and Function of Madness, the Spider"—which had been previously published in a collective volume in Italy.<sup>1</sup> *Proust and Signs* thus constitutes a unique laboratory in which to observe the metamorphoses of Deleuze's thought.<sup>2</sup>

This process of rewriting *Proust and Signs* was almost inevitable. It was Deleuze's first book on literature and each displacement toward different landscapes of thought compelled him to reformulate his initial approach to Proust. *Proust and Signs* is hence a veritable rhizome book whose contours Deleuze will later define in relation to Kafka. The crossings of different modes of thought provoke new editions, in a process of permanent change of paradigms. On the basis of a single object, the *Recherche*, Deleuze proposes, in three distinct editions, completely different concepts, models, and categories. These discontinuities make evident very subtle differences, displacements, and microscopic gaps, which are the effect of enormous revolutions in the whole of Deleuze's oeuvre. Each augmented part functions as a new ramification in which the new theoretical field appears as a new entry point. It is symptomatic that this rhizome book focused on Proust. It is precisely on the writer who made his work an experimentation on the idea of the literary artwork and his novel a Bildungsroman, a novel of the invention of oneself as narrator-hero, that Deleuze writes a book forever under construction. Marcel Proust is the completed monument of an absolute fusion of the experience of writing and a form of life. One must rethink *In Search of Lost Time* each time

there is a change in Deleuze's way of understanding this fusion. It is as if, as a point of departure, *Proust and Signs* had to be rewritten so that Deleuze could believe in the density and the continuity of his own development. Both *Proust and Signs* and the *Recherche* are books in progress and in permanent reconstitution of themselves as their proper object. We must thus understand this internal becoming, the order of fractures, of unraveled parts, that reveal to us the unity of this multiple deployed between 1964 and 1973.

*Proust and Signs* is thus a paradoxical work. It makes visible the existence of enormous discontinuities in Deleuze's thought and different ways of reading the literary work of art, and, at the same time, it strives to create the appearance of a harmonious continuity. If we think, for example, of the definition of the *Recherche* itself, we immediately see three different conceptions. First the *Recherche* is presented as a story of apprenticeship, in which the task of the narrator is to explicate the contents hidden in signs until there is a revelation of essence, which the narrator has discovered through this apprenticeship; in the 1970 edition, the *Recherche* is defined as a machine that produces truth and as a machine that functions on the basis of a series of transgressions of the laws of desire; finally, in the third part, the *Recherche* is thought of via the figure of a web made by the narrator-spider as body without organs. But, in the three editions, we also find different approaches to the sign, different conceptions of the philosophy of Nature, different classifications of the faculties, different explications of the process of fiction, composition, and even of writing. Deleuze's book is a true work of education, a book-life, almost a repetition of the *Recherche*.

Hence, an entire ensemble of different literary paradigms is manifest in these diverse means of explicating the unity of Proust's oeuvre. As we will show, in the 1964 edition the *Recherche* is viewed from a Kantian perspective. The essence of the literary work is the consequence of the discordant harmony between the faculties, which, according to Kant, defines the experience of the sublime. In the second edition, by contrast, a psychoanalytic view dictates the explication of the work's unity through its relation to the law, to the forbidden. It is the horizon of *Difference and Repetition* and *The Logic of Sense* that brings Deleuze back to Proust in 1970. This same horizon is the basis of *Masochism: Coldness and Cruelty* (1967). We will see the extent to which this book and the second edition of *Proust and Signs* are limited cases of an Oedipal approach to the nature of literary fiction. In the third edition of *Proust and Signs* (1973), after the publication of *Anti-Oedipus*, that is, at the moment of rupture with the categories of Freud and Lacan, Deleuze projects on the *Recherche* the point of view of his new schizoanalytic program.

Despite the appearance of a simple progressive amplification that extends over almost ten years, the three editions of Deleuze's book on Proust express three virtually noncommunicating universes. It's as if condensed in the three

parts of *Proust and Signs* were almost all the major ruptures in Deleuze's thought during the 1960s and the early 1970s.

Reading *Proust and Signs* has become for me the most obscure object, and for that reason, the most transparent laboratory of the method that guides all of my research. To begin, my work with this book does not arise simply from a respect for chronology. It is also an attempt to justify my approach to Deleuze's thought about literature. I am well aware of the excessive discontinuity of my reading method. My work underscores too strongly the internal ruptures in Deleuze's thought. My insistence on the appearance and disappearance of certain concepts, on the mutation of the meaning of other concepts, on the return of formulations that Deleuze himself disavowed—all run the risk of a hermeneutical delirium. It is not sufficient to draw up an internal history of Deleuze's concepts. It is necessary, at the same time, to show that this history forms a system, that is, it is related to other parallel histories of concepts and that, in this ensemble of elements, the network is reciprocally illuminating.

The place where the discontinuity in *Proust and Signs* is the most flagrant, and at the same time the most symptomatic, is in the typology of signs—a fundamental concern throughout the whole book. In the three parts of *Proust and Signs*, the system of signs is always an element of a wider constellation. Signs lend themselves to thought only through their articulation with the system of the faculties, the dimensions of time, the degrees of truth, and the modes of incarnation of essence. This constellation, however, is not always configured in the same fashion. And what is most striking is that the classification of signs, or more precisely, their enumeration, decreases in each iteration. In 1964, the exposition of the system of signs, the forms of time, the play of the faculties, and the times of incarnation of essence are all articulated according to a regime of four terms. This is no longer the case in the second part of 1970, "The Literary Machine." Here, Deleuze follows a ternary model. Finally, the "Conclusion" of 1973 is constructed according to a binary model. There is a striking reduction of the number of signs when we pass from the first edition to the third edition, although Deleuze never acknowledges this fact. Deleuze presents four types of signs in the first part (worldly, amorous, sensible, and artistic). In the second part, added in the 1970 edition, there are only three types, which Deleuze calls "orders of signs." Yet Deleuze does not reject the previous types of signs. Rather, he regroups the four types of signs from the 1964 edition into two orders (one composed of natural and artistic signs and the other of worldly and amorous signs), while adding a third order of "universal alteration," to which correspond the signs of aging, illness, and death. Finally, in the 1973 Conclusion, Deleuze speaks only of two orders of signs, or better, of two types of "sign-deliriums: deliriums of a paranoiac type of interpretation and deliriums of an erotomaniacal or jealous type of demand" (PS 179).



Can we say that it is the form of the objects of thought that determines the way one thinks of them? Can it be that as long as the analyzed domains are reduced in their elements, Deleuze is himself forced to reduce the number of necessary categories to analyze these same domains? Although seductive, this hypothesis seems improbable. The fundamental object of analysis is always the same: *In Search of Lost Time*. The analyzed domains are always the same: signs, faculties, the degrees of truth, the modes of essence, and the dimensions of time. Deleuze's effort is always to draw a complete map of signs and to construct Proust's semiotic system. It must be emphasized that, from the first to the second part, the number of signs increases from 4 to 5. But then, how to explain the fact that the five signs are grouped in three orders? The number of objects increases, but the classificatory structure diminishes. This is more than a table of elements. It is a constellation and a cartography. At each level of this constellation, the sign is revealed more and more, in a movement of implication and explication with each type of faculty or each line of time. The signs lead us to several universes and each universe lets us perceive a new trait of the sign. Deleuze has constructed a veritable table of categories of signs.

Therefore, it is not a question of drawing a correspondence between the object and its model of intelligibility. Why then does Deleuze present this system, first in four terms, then three, and finally two? Is it a matter of gradual simplification, of purification, until reaching a final condensed formula? No, it is not about a direct relation between the object and its model, nor a purification of the structure of this description. It is a question neither of the dimension of the analyzed domain, nor of a simplification of thought. Rather, it is a question of point of view, a question of the model of representation of thought in its signs–faculties relation. The first part's system of signs, written soon after Deleuze's book on Kant and the doctrine of the faculties, follows Kant's system of the faculties, the four Proustian signs corresponding to the faculties of sensibility, imagination, memory, and thought. The second part of 1970, with its three orders of signs, reproduces the Lacanian triadic structure of the symbolic, the real, and the imaginary, and in the third edition (1973), the distinction between paranoid signs of interpretation and schizoid signs of erotomania or jealousy makes use of the binary model of schizoanalysis first presented in *Anti-Oedipus* (madness/delirium, paranoia/schizophrenia, and molar/molecular).

We believe that this explains why, in the first edition, signs are mainly related to the faculties and the incarnation of essence; in the second edition, signs are derived from different figures of the law in its relation to desire; and, finally, in the third edition, signs reproduce the opposition schizophrenia/paranoia as a “non-Oedipal” delirium of signs.

Let us briefly enunciate this transformation in the paradigms or models of the relation between signs and faculties. In the first part of *Proust and Signs*,

there is a perfect correspondence between the four types of signs and the system of the faculties, the dimensions of time, the forms of incarnation of essence, and the degrees of truth. First, there are two groups of signs, material signs (worldly, amorous and sensible) and immaterial or dematerialized signs (artistic). They refer to four distinct faculties (intelligence for worldly and amorous signs, involuntary memory and imagination for sensible signs, and pure thought for artistic signs) as well as to four dimensions of time (time that we lose, lost time, time that we recover, and recovered time). Each type of sign implies, in turn, four types of truth: the truth of the emptiness, the dullness, and the forgetfulness of worldly signs; the multiple, approximate, and equivocal truth of amorous signs—the laws of the lie and the secrets of homosexuality; the truth of “nothingness” and eternity of sensible signs; and the truth of the absolute and spiritual eternity of artistic signs. To each truth in turn correspond four relations between essence and signs (implication, explication, envelopment, and development). To each type of sign also corresponds a certain modality that states the degree of individuality of the incarnation of essence (on one hand, contingency: the generality of the group of worldly signs and serial generality of amorous signs; on the other, necessity: the specific individuality of sensible signs and the singular individuality of artistic signs). What Deleuze presents is a true table of signs, constructed piece by piece as an equivalence of the table of categories in Kant’s *Critique of Pure Reason*.<sup>3</sup>

In the second part of 1970, the correspondences are still visible, although the elements have changed. The structure of the division has also changed. Signs, faculties, time, truth, and essence are no longer divisible into the material and the immaterial, but a decisive element is introduced: death. The binary structure (material/immaterial) that sustained the regime of four times has incorporated this third element, that of aging and the movement toward death. This element thus requires that the entire system be rethought in terms of 3. There are now five types of signs (the fifth is that of aging, death, and disease) that correspond to the three orders of signs (material and immaterial signs and signs of death). The signs are no longer in relation with the faculties, but with three types of machines (production of partial objects, production of resonances, and production of universal alteration and death), which are productions of truths. Hence, there are three orders of truth (the truth of general laws of pleasure and sufferings; the singular truth of reminiscences and essence; the truth of universal alteration, death, and the production of catastrophe). There are also three dimensions of time (lost time, time regained, and the time of universal alteration). As concerns the faculties, they are projected onto the planes of the real (sensibility), of the symbolic (perception), and of the imaginary (imagination and thought). One can’t help seeing the presence of Lacan in this three-term architecture and in the role

played by the relation between desire and the law that is manifest in the new signs—those of death, of aging, and of disease.

Let's look now at the third edition. First, as concerns the faculties. They widen with the signs according to the type of delirium. Thought is the faculty of the delirium of interpretation, whereas perception and imagination are those of the delirium of an erotomaniacal or jealous type of demand. The third *Proust and Signs* is thus characterized by two regimes of signs: discursive and nondiscursive. The first are divided into the voluntary and involuntary, and the second into signs of violence and signs of madness. The latter are related either to the delirium of interpretation or to the delirium of an erotomaniacal or jealous type. Time, in 1973, concerns discourse and varies according to intensity, speed, and rhythm (time of denegation and time of distancing for a discourse of logos; and the unexpected time of madness). Truth, as well as essence, is no longer in question, but one can say that if there is truth and essence, they are those of delirium, of the discourse of madness, of the narrator-spider who weaves his web.

But there is yet another level where it is possible to discover this discontinuity among the three editions. As regards these differences on a plane we might call formal—from four types of signs in 1964, to three types in 1970, and finally two in 1973—it is possible to understand the extent to which this progressive reduction of the number of signs is manifest in other domains. This is the case, for example, in regard to the question of the unity of the *Recherche*. The manner in which Deleuze approaches the idea of the Proustian oeuvre undergoes significant changes. In the first *Proust and Signs*, Deleuze is concerned with the unity and totality of the work (nonorganic but vegetal). In the second edition, via the introduction of the third element, death, he is interested in the nonunity, or in the unity of the fragmentary. The third part is more radical. If death corresponded to the third element in the 1970 edition, madness and delirium destroy this entire attempt at systematization. The idea of the unity of the work—which had already become in 1970 the unity of the fragmentary, that of transversality—is now thought on the plane of madness and delirium. In 1973, the unity of the *Recherche* corresponds to the body without organs, to the web of a spider in the process of spinning it.<sup>4</sup>

After this introduction to *Proust and Signs*, which we may call “structural,” we are now ready to penetrate in depth Deleuze's theses on art, on forms of life, and on the modes of experience of the literary object.

## *Chapter 1*

# **The Proust of 1964**

## *Toward a Kantian Theory of Literature*

### **FROM THE TABLE OF FACULTIES TO THE REGIONAL ONTOLOGY OF ESSENCES**

The first edition of the Proust book has a thoroughly classical structure. Although the sign is the stated subject of the book, its main concern is a theory of art, which, from the onset, is built on the forms of disclosure of essence through aesthetic experience. But these essences, often presented as Platonic Ideas, require an epistemological clarification. Deleuze must explain how they are apprehended in art and how they allow themselves to be seen, through what modality of experience they are exposed—which leads to a theory of the faculties. Through the distinction of sensibility, memory, imagination, intelligence, and thought, Deleuze is able to show a correspondence of nature between essence, which is given in art, and thought (pure thought is even defined as the faculty of essences).

Hence, four great layers make up the book: a semiotics, an aesthetics, an ontology, and a theory of knowledge. Their interrelation comes from a single thesis: “Essence is precisely this unity of sign and meaning as it is revealed in the work of art. Essences or Ideas, that is what each sign of the little phrase reveals” (PS 40; trans. modified). Art alone can reveal the unity of a sign and its sense, and through that unity, it gives pure thought access to essence.

More than this composition of layers, that which above all gives the book its classic architecture, is the role attributed to the theory of essence. In fact, signs, art, and the faculties are all defined in relation to essence. Essence always establishes the link between the sign and its sense, and this link emerges above all in aesthetic experience. This connection between sign and sense within essence is not homogeneous. It contains diverse degrees of necessity and intimacy. From sensible signs to worldly, amorous, and artistic

signs, the link between sign and sense goes from contingency and abstraction to the highest fusion and individuation, but it is always given by essence.<sup>5</sup> For its part, art is explained as a process of unveiling the essence or Ideas. The incarnation of an essence in the work (in the canvas, in the little musical phrase, etc.) gives it its real existence, independently of the instruments, sounds, or materials in which it is incarnated. On the other hand, the independent existence of essences explains the ensemble of faculties. Although pure thought alone apprehends, in the artwork, essence in its most individualized ideality, all the other faculties, in their involuntary exercise, exist only in order to do violence to thought, in order to force it to think essence.<sup>6</sup>

Thus, the concept of essence, in the 1964 version, is the first indication of the unity of *Marcel Proust and Signs*. From its determination proceeds the intelligibility of each of the layers that constitute this reading of the *Recherche*. And yet, the concept of essence is the most obscure concept. It is difficult to think the concept in itself. Deleuze always presents it as something else. If essence is, for example, that which forms the link between sign and sense, apparently it is nothing other than this link. Deleuze defines “essence” as the foundation of this relation between the two. “Beyond the sign and the sense, there is Essence, like the sufficient reason for the other two terms and for their relation” (PS 90–1; trans. modified).<sup>7</sup> It is the same within the concept of art. Essence is simultaneously that which gives itself to be seen and which constitutes this given. Deleuze says that “the revelation of essence (beyond the object, beyond the subject himself) belongs only to the realm of art” (PS 50). And when we try to understand this concept of art where essence is revealed, we discover that the idea of art already contains the concept of essence. “Identity of a sign as style and of a sense as essence: such is the character of the work of art” (PS 50; trans. modified). Art is this sign where there is a perfect identity between sign and sense, as the presence of essence in style. Essence is the sufficient reason of the structure of the sign, the foundation of the link between sign and sense. Hence art unveils essence, but, circularly, because art is essence in its absolute realization.

This circular definition of the sign and essence, or of art and essence, can also be found in relation to the concept of apprenticeship—the grand subject of the *Recherche*. As Deleuze likes to emphasize, the entire work is a long journey toward penetrating the world of essences. To learn is to disengage in the sign its sense as essence. But apprenticeship does not proceed via abstraction nor proceed by the direct intuition of the idea. It requires all the painful experience of the world, the series of lost loves, and the unfulfillment of all expectations. Signs must be revealed as deceiving; the object to which they refer does not give us the secret that we seek. Only this nothingness, this sole refutation of objective interpretation, leads the author to seek something else behind the sign. That something else can only be a subjective investment in

its sense. Deprived of the possibility of relating signs to their designatable objects, the hero of the *Recherche* tries to grasp signs as subjective projections, as a surplus of signification attributed by memory and imagination. One only arrives at essence through a double movement: disappointment and compensation. “Each line of apprenticeship undergoes these two moments: the disappointment afforded by an attempted objective interpretation, then the attempted remedy of this disappointment by a subjective interpretation in which we reconstruct associative series” (PS 16).

We see that if the concept of essence is the key to the aesthetic theory of the *Recherche*, its explication leads to a definition of the artistic object as sign. Ultimately, the theory of essence depends on a singular semiotics. Deleuze must draw up a complex system of signs in order to disengage the plurality of the forms of essence. And from the sign to essence, all the layers of *Marcel Proust and Signs* are reinvented. The sign becomes the unity of the *Recherche* precisely because it is the touchstone of the entire system of reference, that is, of the entire process of the reciprocal definition of faculties, time, and essence in aesthetic experience. Thus, we must reconstitute this system of signs in order to understand the originality of the theory of essence.

As we have seen, signs are, at the same time, the unity and the plurality of the *Recherche* (cf. PS 4). They constitute the central object of the *Recherche*—the novel is the educational path of the narrator in his apprenticeship in signs. First, he must know where to find signs, know when a thing, a gesture, and a scenario, are transformed into a revelation of something else, are transformed into a means of referring to another feeling, another gesture. Apprenticeship is presented afterward, as the exploration of these different worlds of signs, that is, as their interpretation. This apprenticeship is the functioning of the “story of education” [*récit de formation*] that constitutes the *Recherche*. It is also by their properly multiple nature that signs are the cause of the pluralism of the *Recherche*. Signs are plural in themselves, and they always refer to a larger system of elements of another nature, irreducible to a semiology that may be called pure (where the sign would refer to another sign, always in a conventional system, in a constructed language). The sign that Deleuze offers us is a sign that forms part of a system of heterogeneous reference.<sup>8</sup> Things themselves are signs. They refer directly not only to other things but also to senses—memories, sensations, and thoughts.

We may even apply to signs the presentation of the concept of the rhizome in *A Thousand Plateaus*. Like the rhizome, signs are elements of a simple universe, yet complex by their very simplicity. It is a universe of  $n$  elements,  $n$  relations, and  $n$  encounters between elements. A universe where everything circulates and repeats by its very difference. It’s a transverse universe, in which encounters succeed themselves in pure difference. “Circulation is substituted for ascension. Signs circulate, repeat in pure difference, in

itself, outside all progression, all integrative dialectic, any finality” (Schérer 1998: 72).

Apprenticeship, that is, the unitary reconstruction of the world through signs, takes place by following lines. The ways of Méséglise and the Guermantes, for example, are lines of apprenticeship. Deleuze fashions the idea of apprenticeship as a series of oppositions (cf. PS 3–4). Apprenticeship is defined not by a recollection or a memory, where time past has an existence that needs to be discovered, but by experience turned toward the future, which is formed not in a linear time, but in several lines of time. Apprenticeship is experimental; it is a process, a knowledge [*savoir*] that is constructed, and not an abstract knowledge, built on a past that is already frozen. In the *Recherche*, according to Deleuze, apprenticeship involves the education of a man of letters, where the truth he seeks is never revealed except at the end, in the work of art that itself is described as the story of that education—the loves of a young man, his initiation into the world, his first passion, his literary discoveries, and so on. Proust’s work is the path of the narrator’s education in the apprenticeship in signs, and the goal of this apprenticeship is art, where the narrator finally discovers spiritual sense or absolute essence.

There are many criteria for classifying signs, but these same criteria are also established from two different points of view—that of an apprenticeship in process and that of the process’s final revelation. Deleuze presents this system of signs via seven criteria and two points of view. Thus, signs can be considered according to (1) the matter in which they are fashioned; (2) the manner in which something is emitted and apprehended as not only a sign but also the dangers that derive from an objectivist or a subjectivist interpretation; (3) the effect and the kind of emotion they produce in us; (4) the nature of sense, and the relation signs establish with sense; (5) the principal faculty that explains or interprets them; (6) the temporal structures or lines of time implicated in them and the type of truth corresponding to them; and finally (7) essence (see PS Chapter 7: Pluralism in the System of Signs, 84–93).

There are thus four types of signs (worldly, amorous, sensible, and artistic) that correspond not only to four objects that emit them (1. Emptiness; 2. The face, the skin, the cheek; 3. Odors and tastes; 4. The web, the musical score) but also to the subject who apprehends and interprets them (1. See and hear; 2. Swear, give homage to the object; 3. Observe and describe the sensible entity; 4. Work, force oneself to think the significations and objective values) without ever taking recourse to a play of subjective associations. Each type of sign provokes a specific emotion: (1) nervous exaltation; (2) suffering and anguish; (3) extraordinary joy and yet more anguish; and (4) pure joy. The nature of the sense of signs depends on four relations that they may establish with sense: (1) empty nature in a relation that claims to valorize sense; (2)

duplicitous nature in a contradictory relation in which sense reveals itself at the same time that it hides itself; (3) truthful nature, even with the opposition of survival and nothingness; and (4) immaterial and spiritual nature in a closer and more intimate relation. To each sign corresponds a determined faculty that develops the sense of the sign: (1) intelligence for the nervous exaltation that must be calmed; (2) intelligence for the sufferings of sensibility that must be transformed into joy; (3) involuntary memory and imagination, which are born of desire; and (4) pure thought in the quality of the faculty of essences. But the interpretation of sense implies, on the other hand, a certain time. There are many temporalities, many forms of the experience of time in the development of sense: (1) the time one loses because the signs remain empty at the end of interpretation and at the end of the process of their development; (2) lost time in the signs of love; (3) the time one regains through sensible signs; and (4) time regained in artistic signs. The different types of signs are apprehended by different types of faculties, but these faculties are engendered by the signs they capture, according to specific temporal relations. And this triad of sign–faculty–time is formed ultimately in the movement toward the discovery of essence in the experience of art.

Thus, what Deleuze presents in *Marcel Proust and Signs* is a veritable transcendental table of aesthetic experience: four types of signs, four faculties, four forms of time, and four moments in the movement from sense to essence. It is not possible to determine which of these dimensions of experience—semiotic, epistemological, phenomenological, and ontological—is the ultimate condition, the foundation of art. There is a common and simultaneous genesis of the known objects, the modes of apprehension, the lived temporalities, and the discovered essences.

One may say that, rather than constituting an approach to the broad questions of literature—such as the status of the narrator, the nature of fiction, the unity of the work, or the form of the pleasure of the text—this system of general reference among signs, faculties, times, and essences in aesthetic experience indicates a much older and fundamental preoccupation: the program of transcendental empiricism. Indeed, the *Recherche* is the great laboratory where one may discover this simultaneous genesis of the experience of art and its condition of possibility, where the condition is no larger than the conditioned, and the transcendental is not the form of a simple replica of the empirical. Which means that the Proust book can be understood only as the decisive chapter of this project of a new empiricism. And this project must be found elsewhere, in Deleuze's books on Hume (1953), Nietzsche (1962), and Kant (1963). The understanding of the architecture of signs and faculties in the Proust book passes through these three books. They are its speculative horizon.



## TRANSCENDENTAL EMPIRICISM: NIETZSCHE BETWEEN THE GENEALOGY OF MORALS AND THE GENEALOGY OF THE FACULTIES

From his first book, Deleuze believes that philosophy will never be responsive to its Kantian heritage unless it is recognized as a “transcendental” experience, that is, as the clarification of the conditions of experience. The object of philosophy, according to Kant, is not true knowledge, but the subjective conditions of the validity of science; not morality, but that which makes us capable of following imperatives; not the objects of art, but that which provides us with the faculty of being affected by a form in a judgment of beauty or the sublime. Following Maimon’s objections to Kant,<sup>9</sup> Deleuze wants, on one hand, to renew the transcendental program in a genesis of conditions, in their inscription in experience, and on the other hand, to prevent the transcendental from being a mere copy of the empirical. Deleuze defines his theoretical project as a “transcendental empiricism” in a double sense: as the search for the conditions, not of possibility, but of the actuality [*effectivité*; the French translation of Kant’s *Wirklichkeit*] of knowledge, and as the presentation of the transcendental plane, not according to a method of deduction of the faculties but according to a method of genesis.

The Proust book, in its complex architecture of signs, faculties, times, and essence, cannot be understood outside this project. Indeed, it represents a new response to the problem left open in the books on Hume, Nietzsche, and Kant. As we will attempt to show, it is only through a “transcendental” reading of the *Recherche* that Deleuze is able to form a genetic description of the conditions of the actuality [*effectivité*] of experience. Hence, we must briefly survey Deleuze’s readings of Hume, Nietzsche, and Kant in order to grasp the extent to which the Proust book represents the completion of the project of a superior empiricism.

The difference between transcendental idealism and transcendental empiricism is a difference not only of method, but also of object, of the modal determination of the object. Kant defines the program of a critical philosophy as the clarification of the conditions of possibility of experience. For Kant, the condition is that which renders something possible, that which possibilizes the conditioned. Kant ends up transforming the idea of a description of the conditions of possibility of knowledge into a description of the conditions of possible knowledge or better, of knowledge insofar as it is possible. Ultimately, Kant wants to understand the nature of the knowledge of the possible, the nature of the knowledge that has for its object, not the domain of the actuality [*effectivité*] of theoretical, moral, or aesthetic experience, but that of its existence as possibility, as existing in itself as a possible world.

In Kant, the ultimate explication of conditions, as the exposition of the possibility of the phenomenon, goes back to a quasi-psychology of the anthropological dimensions of possible experience. Kant traces the condition of possibility to an anthropological figure of the possible: that of the having-the-power-of, that is, the being-capable-of, and the having-the-faculty-of. Knowledge is possible because the subject of knowledge is determined by an ensemble of possibilities of knowledge and by an ensemble of “faculties” (*Vermögenheiten*).

It is this displacement instituted by Kant—which transforms the transcendental question of a theory of possibilities into a theory of faculties—that interests Deleuze. And all of his 1963 book on Kant is an exploration of both the architectural complexity and the simplicity of the theory of faculties in the three Critiques. From the distinction among faculties whose nature is determined by the diverse relations of a representation in general (faculty of knowing, faculty of desiring, and the feelings of pleasure and pain) and the distinction that designates the specific sources of representations (sensitivity, understanding, imagination, and reason), Deleuze moves to the relations among these two senses or series of faculties. The question will concern the type of legislation that is established among them. What is the faculty, as source of representations, that governs in the faculties as relation? This is Kant’s famous thesis that the understanding is the faculty that governs the formation of knowledge. “In each Critique understanding, reason and imagination enter into various relationships under the chairmanship of one of these faculties. There are thus systematic variations in the relationship between the faculties, depending on which interest of reason we consider. [. . .] In this way the doctrine of faculties forms the real network which constitutes the transcendental method” (KCP 10).

In taking up Kant’s transcendental project—even if he transforms the inscription of the conditions of possibility of experience into conditions of its actuality [*effectivité*—Deleuze thus takes up the most obscure theme of this project—precisely, the theme of the faculties. And up to *Difference and Repetition*—above all in this work—Deleuze never ceases to affirm that one of the tasks of philosophy is that of understanding the nature, the modes of usage, and the passion that are proper to each faculty. This task requires a transcendental empiricism, that is, a description of each faculty that does not make the transcendental a tracing of the empirical, but that grasps the faculty according to the manner whereby it apprehends that which in the world concerns it exclusively and which it gives birth to in the world. “Despite the fact that it has become discredited today, the doctrine of the faculties is an entirely necessary component of the system of philosophy. Its discredit may be explained by the misrecognition of this properly transcendental empiricism, for which was substituted in vain a tracing of the transcendental from

the empirical. [. . .] Our concern here is not to establish such a doctrine of faculties. We seek only to determine the nature of its requirements” (DR 143–4).

This project of a new understanding of the faculties is older than Deleuze’s work on Kant. Already in his 1953 book on empiricism, Deleuze sought to present Hume as someone who, through the role attributed to the imagination and to habit, inaugurated the transcendental point of view.<sup>10</sup> This was a small displacement, but sufficient to open a new territory of problems. In contrast to traditional empiricism, which dissolves subjectivity into the facts of experience, there is in Hume the discovery that experience always already goes back to something that makes it possible and that is not completely contained in experience—it thus goes back to a faculty of experience. In the case of Hume, that condition is habit, the synthesis of repetition, as activity of the imagination.<sup>11</sup> Kant may even be presented as a simple reversal of the Humean problem of the relation between the given and the subject.<sup>12</sup>

To return to Hume when considering the critical program is to construct in parallel a comprehension of the condition and a comprehension of the genesis of this same condition on the basis of that which it conditions. Between Hume and Kant, between, on one hand, the question of subjectivity and imagination in empiricism (the 1953 book) and, on the other hand, the theory of the imagination as center of the faculties in critical philosophy, ten years later, Deleuze always works on a double register. At the same time that he reconstitutes the general system of faculties in Kant, at the same time that he shows the articulations and the dissonances among sensibility, imagination, understanding, and reason in the manner each faculty refers back to and presupposes all the others, Deleuze prepares his empirical point of view on the transcendental field through his return to Hume and the objections that Maimon formulated against Kant.

If the condition possibilizes, and if the faculty is that which makes possible the appearance of something, the faculty is also made possible by the object that it makes possible. If the conditions of possibility in every representation, that is, the faculties of knowing, of desiring, and the feelings of pleasure and pain, are the subjective foundation of the appearance of an object, it is also this object, in its appearance, that makes possible the faculties that apprehend it. Thus, in Deleuze there is the idea of a new method for the transcendental program: the idea of a genetic description of the ensemble of faculties starting from the relation of every representation with something other. In a word, the faculty must be plastic, it must metamorphose with the object that it apprehends and the representation that it makes possible. It must itself be inscribed in experience as its condition—which means, tracing the genesis of the faculties, clarifying the conditions, no longer of the possibility, but of the actuality [*effectivité*] of knowledge, that is, thinking how the faculties, where the object appears, are themselves derived from the appearance of the object.

After his book on the theory of the imagination in Hume, Deleuze attempts a new approach to the idea of a superior empiricism through Nietzsche. In a completely surprising fashion, he makes the theory of the will to power the new principle for understanding the conditions of the actuality [*effectivité*] of experience. Defined as a plastic force internal to forces and to representations, the concept of the will to power offers not only a genetic approach, but above all a genealogical method, that is, a method that can determine the active or reactive origin of the faculties and their usage.

It is not evident that *Nietzsche and Philosophy* (1962) contains a new theory of the faculties. On the contrary, this book seems to be only an exaltation of new principles of the relation between sense and value and a new art of the affirmation of life. And we know that *Nietzsche and Philosophy* provides the great leitmotif that traverses the entire oeuvre of Deleuze: an ethic of joyous encounters founded on a vitalism of immanence. Yet, although in an almost secret fashion, the great question of the faculties is addressed here once more. Deleuze wants to know how imagination, memory, and reason are turned against life in order to curse it. His question will thus be: how can one build new faculties that will be the supreme benediction of the fundamental forces of each individual, of each event?

The starting point of his reading of Nietzsche is the most paradoxical. Before even showing the extent to which Nietzsche's works contain decisive elements for a new theory of experience, for a new understanding of the conditions of the actuality [*effectivité*] of knowledge, Deleuze recognizes in the theory of the "will to power" itself the status of a superior empiricism. In the apparently simple idea that in every event there is a conflict between forces struggling for the intensification of their power/capacity [*puissance*], Deleuze discovers a completely post-Kantian program—at the same time ontological, epistemological, and ethical. He underscores, in the concept of the will to power, its double condition as an extrinsic definition and a real definition of forces. The will to power expresses the fact that a force only exists in conflict with other forces in the combat for the augmentation of power. Yet on the other hand, the will to power is the internal dimension of every force, that which wills in force. As complement of force and as that something internal to the will—"force is that which can, will to power is that which wills (*La force est ce qui peut, la volonté de puissance est ce qui veut*)" (NP 50)—Deleuze can thus say that the will to power is at once an empirical fact and a transcendental thesis, at once a point of view of the relational nature of each force and a principle of explication of this relation as differential relation of domination among forces.

Deleuze attributes to the will to power the status of a principle that condenses the perfect realization of transcendental empiricism. "If [. . .] the will to power is a good principle, if it reconciles empiricism with principles, if it

constitutes a superior empiricism, this is because it is an essentially *plastic* principle that is no wider than what it conditions, that changes itself with the conditioned and determines itself in each case along with what it determines” (NP 50). This plasticity of the will to power derives from the fact that it plays a triple role in the determination of forces. It is a principle that is (a) differential, (b) genetic, and (c) genealogical, that is, a principle (a) that explains the simultaneous formation of relative differences of quantity among forces, (b) that explains the status of domination among them, and (c) that also explains the formation of the absolute differences of their respective quality. Every force is a quantity by which it establishes differences with other forces, and that quantity defines its condition as dominant or dominated. But this relation of domination is not indifferent to the type of force in question. There are active dominant forces. However, reactive forces, those whose only action is reaction, can also be dominant. And the difference between a dominant active force and a reactive dominant force is determined neither by the difference of quantity nor by the condition of domination. It is related to an absolute internal quality, to an essence, and to a lineage. Even when dominated, an active force does not become reactive because of this simple fact. The difference of quality is almost innate. As regards relations of domination, there is a hierarchy. That hierarchy has a genesis, but that genesis is much older than the relations of domination in which each force is engaged at each instant. As regards its genesis, there is thus a genealogy of forces, a principle of absolute differentiation between types of forces, between forces whose action is affirmation and forces that act through negation.

The will to power is thus a three-dimensional principle: it is the principle that determines the difference (strong or weak), the status (dominant or dominated), and the type (active or reactive) of each force. The will to power explains the genesis of differences, the relations of domination, and the genealogy of forces.<sup>13</sup> From an empirical point of view, the differential element engenders the genetic and genealogical elements. But from the point of view of principles, the genealogical dimension founds the genetic dimension of the will to power and its differential dimension. Because a force is active, it affirms its quality as power of domination in establishing differences of quality and of quantity with other forces. The birthplace of forces is thus the difference between forces, but this difference is determined by their genesis (dominant or dominated), which derives from the quality of their power (active or reactive).

But it is not solely by this condition of the plastic principle that Deleuze presents the will to power as the key principle of the project of a superior empiricism. The study of the will to power according to its manifestation contains a new theory of the faculties, a theory of their genesis, of their differentiation, and of their disorganization and their harmony.

Through its relational character, each force is already, in itself, a faculty. Because it is always, already, a power of being affected by other forces, each force is a sensibility. “The relationship between forces in each case is determined to the extent that each force is *affected* by other, inferior or superior, forces. It follows that will to power is manifested as a capacity for being affected” (NP 62). Hence, the first manifestation of the will to power is an affective power. Deleuze repeats Nietzsche’s affirmation that the will to power is “the primitive affective form” (NP 62). This power of being affected is not a strictly physical determination, is not the simple fact of receiving, in the quantity of its force, the inscription of the quantitative differences of other forces with which it is in relation. This power is a faculty, or better, it is the primordial faculty: it is sensibility, the faculty of sensation as active affectivity. “The power of being affected is not necessarily a passivity but an *affectivity*, a sensibility, a sensation” (NP 62; trans. modified). And Deleuze goes further in this equivalence between will to power and faculty, to the point of making the will to power nothing less than a faculty. According to Deleuze, sensibility is neither the effect of relations of forces nor something that is added to force in order to allow it to enter into a relation. Because every force is movement through the augmentation of power, it must have the power of sensing differences of power. Thus, the will to power is that which gives force its power of being affected, its sensibility; it is that faculty itself, and it is the sensibility of force: “the will to power manifests itself as the sensibility of force; the differential element of forces manifests itself as their differential sensibility” (NP 62–3). Hence, Deleuze can cite Nietzsche: “The will to power is not a being, not a becoming, but a *pathos*” (NP 62). The will to power is nothing more than the sensibility of force, nothing more than the power of being affected, nothing more than a *pathos*.

To mark more precisely the difference between this Nietzschean concept of the faculty and Kant’s, to indicate the fact that, in the description of faculties, it is a matter of a theory of the conditions of *actuality* [*effectivité*], and not the conditions of the *possibility* of experience, Deleuze says of each force’s power of being affected, “This power is not an abstract possibility, it is necessarily fulfilled and actualized at each moment by the other forces to which a given force relates” (NP 62; trans. modified). To each actualized instant, to each filled instant, and filled by that which affects it, the power of being affected does not thereby lose its condition as power, nor does it become the pure form of an omnipresent matter that it fills. It is the instantaneous filling of the power of being affected that gives the will to power its status as a condition that is no larger than the conditioned, its status as a plastic principle that changes with its object.<sup>14</sup> On the other hand, this instantaneous actualization proves that each faculty only comes into existence in the play, in the disaccord with other forces—which thus are only other faculties. There is no

exercise of sensibility that is not, at the same time, a dissonant accord with other sensibilities.

With this new concept of the faculty, at once primitive, presubjective, and actualized at each instant in its relation with other faculties, Deleuze has a naturalistic model of the post-Kantian project of a transcendental empiricism. And the entirety of the Nietzsche book is the description of the system of faculties starting from this primitive faculty, from this will to power as *pathos*. The big question thus will be typological: in each conflict among faculties, where the primitive degree of power is that of being affected by other forces/faculties, which is active and which is passive?

On the basis above all of a commentary on *The Genealogy of Morals*, Deleuze traces the long history of the metamorphoses of this primitive *pathos* that defines the will to power. The invention of the human is the long process of the production of new faculties such as memory, imagination, and reason. All these faculties have a simultaneous genesis, and always in a relation of conflict among forces, in relations of violence. There is no linear genesis of faculties. In the combat among wills to power, types are produced, which are differences of essence in the faculties. Like forces, there are active and reactive forces, or rather, active and reactive uses of faculties.

This genealogical approach affords the Nietzsche book a typological, or rather, “ethical,” perspective on the transcendental domain. According to Deleuze, up to this point reactive forces are forces that inscribe their negative will in the history of the faculties. Imagination, memory, reason—in a word, knowledge [*connaissance*—is above all an organ of *ressentiment*, of revolt against life. For this reason, the genetic description of faculties must itself be doubled by a genealogical description, by a symptomatology of forces, which is at the origin of certain reactive forms of knowledge. The program of transcendental empiricism becomes an essentially Nietzschean program: it must produce a transvaluation of values in the construction of thought, liberate the faculties from their reactive history, and make them become affirmations of life. Transcendental empiricism in Deleuze’s Nietzsche book is thus (a) a genetic description of the faculties starting from the primordial faculty, that is, starting from the will to power as *pathos*, (b) a genealogy of these faculties, that is, a typology of their usages, and (c) the program of a new image of thought.

*The Genealogy of Morals*—“Nietzsche’s most systematic book” (NP 87)—is presented by Deleuze as an immense genesis and genealogy, not just of morals, but of the faculties through which the moral and reactive forces have triumphed over life. And Deleuze treats each of the three essays of this book as relevant to the analysis of a specific faculty.

The first essay on the origin of the concepts of “good” and “bad” shows how the negative produces the imagination, as faculty of fiction, the

imaginary, and mystification. “We know that reactive forces triumph by relying on a fiction. Their victory always rests on the negative as something imaginary: they separate active force from what it can do. Active force thus becomes reactive in reality, but as a result of a mystification. From the first essay Nietzsche presents *ressentiment* as ‘an imaginary revenge’” (NP 87). Deleuze here introduces a thesis that will attain its full importance only in his book on Sacher-Masoch. The imagination has its origin in a gesture of negation of the real. It is not a matter of a simple process of the de-realization of the world of perception, as in Sartre, from whom Deleuze takes his inspiration. Here, the real is the object of a feeling of vengeance. The reactive forces, those that cannot stand the fundamental violence and cruelty of life, invent another world that they mythologize as the true and the good. It is in the name of this imaginary world that they can curse life. But even this vengeance is only imaginary. It is the displacement of vital forces onto a fiction. The faculty of the imagination, thus, not only has its roots in a reactive will, not only is it the organ of negation. But it also produces imaginary worlds, it invests the negative in the will to a nothingness, in the desire for a fiction.

The second essay, dedicated to the concepts of “bad conscience” and “*ressentiment*,” describes the genesis of memory. Memory also has a negative origin. It is at the root of *ressentiment*, a consciousness that never forgets the traces of the pains it suffers and that it wants to avenge in becoming reactive: “when the trace takes the place of the excitation in the reactive apparatus, reaction itself takes the place of action, reaction prevails over action” (NP 114). The inscription of traces, the retention of the past, the sedimentation of unhappy sensibility, of wounded sensibility—memory constitutes itself as reaction. It thus produces a fold of the will to power on itself, a movement of revolt against the will, in a word: consciousness as bad conscience. Memory comes to double imagination; it is this first movement of the fold in the interior of excitation that produces the reaction to the trace as mechanism of negation.

However, Deleuze underscores another usage that Nietzsche attributes to memory: an active use, affirmative. It is a matter of the cruelty of the body of man that is constitutive of all culture, as invention of a power of promising—man is the animal who remembers his debts and promises. Memory—as memory of the future—can therefore become, in the hands of active wills, the affirmative faculty par excellence. “Culture endows consciousness with a new faculty [. . .] memory. But the memory with which we are concerned here is not the memory of traces. This original memory is no longer a function the past, but of the future. It is not the memory of the sensibility, but of the will. It is not the memory of traces but of words. It is the faculty of promising, commitment to the future, memory of the future itself. [. . .] The faculty of promising is the effect of culture as the activity of man on man; the man who can



promise is the product of culture as species activity” (NP 134). This memory of the future becomes a fundamental instrument of creative wills. Superior men, those who have no need of articles of extreme faith, engage their action not in imaginary futures, not in fictions of imagination, but through promises that they want to remember. They invent the sense of their action through the memory of the will.

There is a second affirmative use of memory: as faculty of forgetting. When this memory becomes “a digestive, vegetative and ruminative system, which expresses ‘the purely passive impossibility of escaping from the impression once it is received’ ” (NP 112), it asphyxiates the movement of the will toward new possibilities of life. Memory can transform itself into a heavy mechanism, a spirit of gravity. A new power of the faculties is therefore needed, a new form of the will to power. “Psychology’s mistake was to treat forgetting as a negative determination, not to discover its active and positive character. Nietzsche defines the faculty of forgetting as ‘no mere *vis inertiae* as the superficial imagine [. . .] but a plastic, regenerative and curative force’ ” (NP 113). Memory is the most fragile of the faculties. It is doubly active: as faculty of promising and as faculty of forgetting. But, at the same time, it is at the origin of *ressentiment* and of bad conscience when it becomes the mnemonic mechanism of traces and excitations. Deleuze thus says: “this faculty is in a very special situation: although it is an active force it is delegated by activity to work with reactive forces” (NP 113). *Ressentiment*, that reaction which, at the same time, becomes sensible and ceases to be acted, is truly the inversion of the productive sense of this power of being affected that constitutes the will to power. Instead of the movement that goes from *pathos* to the invention of new possibilities of life as memory of the will that can promise, *ressentiment* is the reign of a fixed memory, frozen in *pathos*.

According to Deleuze, the third essay of *The Genealogy of Morals*, on the origin of the ascetic ideal, seeks to determine the mechanisms of the production of a third faculty: the faculty of rules and imperatives, and above all the faculty of the true, the faculty of knowledge [*connaissance*]. The third essay is thus the site for understanding the origin of reason. Deleuze establishes more than a genesis of reason; he establishes an opposition between reason and thought or between knowledge [*connaissance*] and thought.

Nietzsche was the first to establish an opposition between knowledge and thought. Knowledge has become a reactive faculty, determined by the myth of the true and the good. It condemns life, but as organ of a certain type of life, as instrument of wills that do not will to the extent of their limits. “Knowledge is opposed to life, but because it expresses a life which contradicts life, a reactive life which finds in knowledge a means of preserving and glorifying its type” (NP 100). The opposition between “knowledge” and “thought,” Deleuze recognizes, is Kantian. “(Here again, is this not where a

Kantian theme profoundly transformed and turned back against Kant?) When knowledge becomes a legislator, the most important thing to be subjected is thought. Knowledge is thought itself, but thought subject to reason and to all that is expressed in reason” (NP 100–1). Now, the question is: How should we define thought beyond knowledge, beyond reason? This is the first time Deleuze introduces his grand theme of a new *image of thought*. He presents it as a discovery of Nietzsche’s, as the last chapter of his typology of faculties. “A new image of thought means primarily that truth is not the element of thought. The element of thought is sense and value. The categories of thought are not truth and falsity but the *noble* and the *base*, the *high* and the *low*, depending on the nature of the forces that take hold of thought itself” (NP 104). The consequence of this typological image of thought is enormous. Because the genesis of the faculties has led to a genealogy of knowledge, that is, to a history of the triumph of reactive wills over reason, the new image of thought will designate the beyond of the faculties. Deleuze presents the Nietzschean image of thought as a second power/capacity [*puissance*], a second power [*pouvoir*], beyond the power [*pouvoir*] of the faculties. “Nietzsche proposes a new image of thought. Thinking is never the natural exercise of a faculty. Thought never thinks alone and by itself” (NP 108).<sup>15</sup> On the other hand, thought is the direct expression of an affirmative life that goes beyond the limits of knowledge, and goes beyond life itself. “Life goes beyond the limits that life fixes for it. Thought ceases to be a *ratio*, life ceases to be a *reaction*” (NP 101). And this affinity between thought and life, where life makes thought an active experience and thought transforms life into something affirmative, is, according to Deleuze, the essence of art. Art is the point where affirmation comes to confirm the activity of an active will. But Deleuze says virtually nothing about art in his Nietzsche book.<sup>16</sup> We must wait for his book on Kant, published the next year, and above all the Proust book, two years later, for art to be transformed as a fundamental perspective on transcendental empiricism. Art will be the laboratory for the description of the genesis of the transcendental field itself.

This absence of a theory of art in the Nietzsche book poses a question, perhaps one of the most fundamental among those that concern the first period of Deleuze’s development. How can we explain the fact that, immediately after the Nietzsche book, Kant becomes the center of Deleuze’s work? If it is true that, in the Nietzsche book, Deleuze often says that the idea of the internal genesis of the faculties from a genealogy of the types of forces they express makes *The Genealogy of Morals* the true realization of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, why write a new book on the faculties from the point of view of Kant?

The refutation of this Kantian point of view was definitive in 1962. What was lacking in Kant was the genesis of the faculties from the description of

the conditions of experience that are no larger than that which they condition, and the genealogy of the faculties from a typology of the forces they express. “Kant does not realize his project of immanent critique. Transcendental philosophy discovers conditions which remain external to the conditioned. Transcendental principles are principles of conditioning and not of internal genesis. We require a genesis of reason itself, and also a genesis of the understanding and its categories: what are the forces of reason and of the understanding? What is the will which hides and expresses itself in reason? What stands behind reason, in reason itself? In the will to power and the method which derives from it Nietzsche has at his disposal a principle of internal genesis” (NP 91). Nietzsche thus realizes the Kantian critical project: a true comprehension of transcendental principles as genealogical principles, and a genesis (and not a deduction) of the faculties. In *The Genealogy of Morals*, by way of an interrogation of the forces that are at the origin of the faculties of memory, imagination, understanding or reason, and the establishment of an alternative history of reason, which entails the affirmative use of the faculties (as active power of forgetting, of the fiction of gods who love cruelty, of thought), Nietzsche brings transcendental philosophy to completion, without reintroducing a psychological method or an axiomatic of principles of experience. Deleuze can therefore say: “When we compared the will to power with a transcendental principle, [. . .] our main aim was to indicate how they differed from psychological determinations. Nevertheless, in Nietzsche, principles are never transcendental; it is these very principles which are replaced by genealogy. Only the will to power as genetic and genealogical principle, as legislative principle, is capable of realizing internal critique” (NP 91).

A question remains: why, after *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, write a book on Kant? If Nietzsche brought to completion the project of a transcendental empiricism, what use is there in returning, only one year later, to an exposition of critical philosophy and its doctrine of faculties? Does Deleuze want to put forth a new refutation of the Kantian model? But we know that this is not the case. *Kant's Critical Philosophy* is, from beginning to end, an admiring presentation of the system of the faculties in the three Critiques. This 1963 book is perhaps the finest treatise on the transcendental method ever written. It contains the most complete analysis of the concept of “faculty” in Kant and the most rigorous exposition of the three types of relations among the faculties in each of the three Critiques. If the question of the faculties, as Deleuze will say in *Difference and Repetition*, is at the heart of his project of a transcendental empiricism and a new image of thought, then the Kant book remains Deleuze’s definitive explication of Kant and idealism. Deleuze even shows how, in the *Critique of Judgment*, through the introduction of a genetic point of view (possible in aesthetic experience), Kant finds the solution not only to the problem of the origin of the harmony among the faculties, but also

to the problem of the genesis of the faculties themselves—a solution lacking in the other two Critiques. The section “Point of view of Genesis,” at the center of the Third Chapter of the Kant book, which is dedicated to the relations among faculties in *The Critique of Judgment*, is exemplary in this regard. The reflexive judgment, as aesthetic judgment, contains the conditions of possibility that Deleuze designates as the four great geneses: the genesis of common sense, the genesis of the sense of the sublime, the genesis of the sense of the beautiful, and, in addition, the genesis of the free accord among the faculties (cf. KCP 52–4).

The 1963 Kant book seems to ignore completely the fundamental aspect of the Nietzsche book of 1962, that is, our debt to Nietzsche and his superior empiricism, as the only means of bringing the critical project to completion. Now, it is Kant himself who possesses the arguments for such an empiricism. How may we understand this radical change in the image of Kant? What is there that is new in the image that allows Deleuze to make Kant’s doctrine of the faculties not only the limit, but the point of completion of the transcendental project? To answer this question, we must return to Deleuze’s readings of Kant published before 1963.

### THE RETURN TO KANT: THE DISCOVERY OF THE DOCTRINE OF THE SUBLIME AS TRUE GENESIS OF THE FACULTIES

We have seen that the fundamental difference regarding Kant, that which makes Deleuze’s project not a transcendental idealism, but a transcendental empiricism, is, on one hand, the project of deriving the faculties, not from the possibilities of knowledge, but from their actuality [*effectivité*], and, on the other hand, of deriving them according to a method of genesis and not a method of deduction. The faculties cannot be taken as given, as a static *a priori*. They must be revealed as the result of the fact itself of knowledge. The faculties must meet their proper possibility in that which they possibilize; they must be engendered by experience itself, but in an experience of disorganization [*dérèglement*, translated as “dissolution” in DR].

This genetic approach is accomplished through a method of taking things to the limit: taking each faculty to the extreme of its disorganization “at which it falls prey to triple violence: the violence of that which forces it to be exercised, of that which it is forced to grasp and of which it alone is able to grasp” (DR 143; trans. modified). The new method returns, as first point, as originary source not to the apodicticity of the self, as ultimate principle of every synthesis in general in its primary possibility, but to the appearance of the object, in its irreducible actuality [*effectivité*] and the violence that it

exercises. And this appearance is of an involuntary order, of something that does violence to the faculties and forces them to think. It is this violence that explains the condition of the actuality [*effectivité*] of appearance. The experience is not the confirmation of a possibility, nor is it the fulfillment of a conceptual or categorical anticipation. It is neither a spontaneous desire to think, nor an opening to the true. One always begins with violence exerted on the faculties, and the faculties are nothing other than this relation that forces them to think. As Deleuze often says in *Marcel Proust and Signs*: “The mistake of philosophy is to presuppose within us a benevolence of thought, a natural love of truth. Thus philosophy arrives at only abstract truths. [. . .] They remain gratuitous because they are born of the intelligence that accords them only a possibility and not of a violence or of an encounter that would guarantee their authenticity. [. . .] There are few themes on which Proust insists as much as on this one: truth is never the product of a prior disposition but the result of a violence in thought” (PS 16). The question thus is displaced: what type of object, in the violence of its appearance, can be the origin of the faculties that make it possible as an object of experience? It is no longer a matter of starting from a general concept of experience as violence, as was the case in the Nietzsche book. The genesis of the faculties no longer returns to a thesis of the will to power as primitive plastic force, as that which gives each force, in its conflict with other forces, the power of being affected, that is, the faculty of sensing. In the most important texts published in 1963, *Kant’s Critical Philosophy* and “The Idea of Genesis in the Aesthetic of Kant,” the idea of a violence in thought is only understood from inside a certain experience: the experience of art when it does violence to thought.

It is precisely at this point of an experience not only originary but originating, in an experience that is at the origin of the conditions of the actuality [*effectivité*] of any experience, that Deleuze discovers the importance of the Kantian theory of the sublime.<sup>17</sup>

Deleuze admits that Kant, in his definition of the sublime, inaugurated a comprehension of the genesis of the transcendental field, without being fully aware of it. In the sublime, what is given to experience is precisely the absence of an object, what Kant designates as a “negative representation.” What appears is only the impossibility of the appearance of the object. In this impossibility of the figuration of ideas of reason by the imagination, the faculties are submitted to violence by an accord that is given as a tearing, as a fundamental dissonance among the faculties themselves; they are expelled from their object and, in this manner, fragmented in their plurality. The sublime is the site of the explosion of the faculties and, hence, the site of their engendering.

This is the central theme of the Kant book and the article “The Idea of Genesis in the Aesthetic of Kant.” Deleuze tries to show that already in Kant there

is the idea that a singular type of experience—the aesthetic experience of the sublime—can be the site of the engendering of every transcendental field.<sup>18</sup> We know that for Kant aesthetic experience is the place where the accord among the faculties is raised to its maximum expression. Moreover, aesthetic experience is no longer the free and indeterminate accord among faculties. It is aroused by the simple form (or absence of form) of the object of experience. It is in the free accord among faculties, which is manifest first in the experience of an object as beautiful or as sublime, that one finds the condition of possibility of the accord itself among the faculties, which is verified in theoretical knowledge or in practical knowledge. Art is thus the foundation, and it contains the possibility of science and morality. But, Deleuze asks, if the free accord of the faculties is the condition of possibility of every accord in general, how should one think of this free accord? How should one show that it is the foundation of the determined accord or the determining accord? “The free indeterminate accord of the faculties is the ground [*fond*], the condition of every other accord; aesthetic common sense is the ground, the condition of every other common sense. How could we be satisfied with supposing it, with giving it a merely hypothetical existence, if it must indeed serve as the foundation for all the other determinate relations among the faculties? How does one explain that while our faculties are different in nature, they still spontaneously enter into a harmonious relation? We cannot settle for presuming such an accord. We must engender it in the soul. This is the only solution to trace the genesis of the aesthetic common sense, to show how the free accord of the faculties is necessarily engendered” (DI 60; trans. modified).

According to Deleuze, in the *Critique of Judgment*, Kant is above all confronted with the problem of genesis—more than with the problem of the accord among the faculties, even more than with the harmony among the many planes of the possibility of experience. What orients Kant’s investigation is the mode of engendering this accord. Deleuze underscores the fact that it is through the difference between a deduction of the accord and a genesis of this same accord that the difference between the first two Critiques and the third emerges. Citing Maimon’s *Essay on Transcendental Philosophy* (1790), Deleuze asserts that the *Critique of Judgment* is a response to Maimon’s objection that in the first two Critiques Kant lacked a genetic method in his understanding of the accord among the faculties. With the theory of aesthetic experience, Kant incorporated the objections of Maimon and inaugurated a new dimension in transcendental philosophy.<sup>19</sup> This philosophy ceases to be a theory of conditioning, a theory of the conditions of possibility of experience, “to become a transcendental Education, a transcendental Culture, a transcendental Genesis” (DI 61).

The analysis of the accord among the faculties is thus an analysis of their reciprocal genesis. And this analysis is realized on two planes: in the Analytic

of the Beautiful (as free accord between the understanding and the imagination) and in the Analytic of the Sublime (as free and indeterminate accord between the imagination and reason). The incompleteness of the Analytic of the Beautiful, evident in the fact that Kant added, outside any architectonic equilibrium, an Analytic of the Sublime, is the result of the impossibility of the judgment of the beautiful to offer a genetic comprehension of the accord itself between the imagination and the understanding. The harmony in the judgment of the beautiful, in Deleuze's view, is itself derived, engendered, in the superior harmony that exists in the judgment of something as sublime. The accord between the imagination and reason that is realized in the sublime judgment thus offers a genetic description of the harmony between the imagination and the understanding of the judgment of the beautiful. The sublime judgment for Deleuze becomes the crucial experience. It explains both the sublime and the beautiful. It is to this experience that Deleuze dedicates nearly all of his text.

But what Deleuze above all wants to emphasize is the fact that the harmony produced with the experience of the sublime can play this originary role of source of all the faculties, and source of their accord, only because it is in itself a paradoxical harmony, a harmony that is constructed on a disharmony, a disaccord. "But this harmony of the sublime is truly paradoxical. Reason and imagination agree or harmonize only from within a tension, a contradiction, a painful rending. There is accord, but it is a discordant concord, a harmony in pain. And it is only pain that makes pleasure possible here" (DI 62; trans. modified). There is, as it were, an engendering of the faculties by a process of explosion starting from an experience of rending, of tension internal to thought. The genetic method is a method that derives the conditions of the possibility of experience neither from a possible experience, nor from an efficacious knowledge (of a knowledge that has taken place), but an impossible experience, which, however, requires its possibility. In the sublime, imagination, in its relation with reason, is forced to confront the limits not only of itself, but also of experience in general, the limits of representation. Reason invokes the imagination in order to apprehend its ideas in images. But, by their essence, rational ideas are impossible to present. "The imagination thus discovers the disproportion of reason, and it is forced to admit that its power is nothing compared to a rational Idea" (DI 62). For Deleuze, the sublime is precisely the originary point because it is the moment when all thought confronts the impossible and, through that impossible, constructs its possibility. On disharmony, it constructs a new harmony, the harmony of an impossible harmony. "As it undergoes violence, the imagination seems to lose its freedom; but at the same time, the imagination is raised to a transcendental function, taking its own limit as object. Surpassed on every side, the imagination itself surpasses its limits—true, in a negative fashion only, by

representing to itself the inaccessibility of the rational Idea, and by making this inaccessibility something present in sensible nature” (DI 62).

The sublime is exactly the experience of the impossibility of experience. We now understand why it is the impossible that engenders possibility, why it is the inaccessibility of the idea that is taken by Kant to be the genetic point of the faculties. As Deleuze says, the “passion” of the imagination, its rending, is the only means of showing its suprasensible destination, its vocation for the impossible, for the inaccessible. “Right when the imagination, suffering the violence of reason, thought it was losing its freedom, it frees itself from the constraints of the understanding and enters into an accord with reason to discover what the understanding has kept hidden, namely the suprasensible destination of imagination, which is also the origin and the destination of all its activities” (DI 79; trans. modified).

In short, the transcendental origin of the imagination, its point of genesis, is its destination of the impossible, its suprasensible destination, its movement toward that which goes beyond its power of presentation, its possibility. The impossible is the attractor of all possibilities; the inaccessible idea is, as such, the transcendental origin of all the faculties. Deleuze calls this impossibility a “point of concentration” of the faculties. And furthermore, he locates this point and recognizes the point as that which Kant identifies—the soul [*Gemüth*]. “The two faculties seem to enrich each other, discovering the principle of their genesis: the imagination discovers it in proximity to its limit; and reason, beyond the sensible—and together they discover it in a ‘point of concentration’ that defines what is most profound in the soul: the suprasensible unity of all the faculties” (DI 62–3).

The solution of the entire genetic method is thus found, paradoxically, beyond the faculties; it is found in this “soul.” The soul is not an additional faculty. It contains the transcendental origin of all the faculties, of all the potentialities of human knowledge, without being a potentiality, without being an additional faculty. It is a nonfaculty. It is the nonfaculty of all the faculties. It is defined here as an anticipation of the concept of the “empty place” [*case vide*] of *The Logic of Sense*. The soul is the “point of concentration” of all the faculties as destination of the impossibility of experience. It is the suprasensible unity of the conditions of the sensible. It is the empty impossible that engenders all possible, all conditions of possibility—it is, thus, this paradoxical condition of possibility that is, in itself, impossible. One may say: the condition of the impossibility of all the conditions of possibility. It is precisely because the soul is the impossible that it no longer belongs to a theory of the conditions of possibility of knowledge, of morality or of art, but a theory of geneses. The impossible can never be the condition of the possible, it is its point of concentration, its site of engendering. “The *Critique of Judgment* does not restrict itself to the perspective of conditions



as it appeared in the other two Critiques: with the *Critique of Judgment*, we step into Genesis. The three geneses of the *critique of Judgment* are not only parallel, they converge on the same discovery: what Kant calls the Soul, that is, the suprasensible unity of our faculties, ‘the point of concentration,’ the life-giving principle that ‘animates’ each faculty, engendering both its free exercise and its free accord with the other faculties” (DI 69; trans. modified).

With this reprise of the Kantian theory of the sublime, and through this reprise, with its interpretation of the concept of the soul as empty place, as concentration of all impossibilities, Deleuze is thus able to find the ultimate fulcrum [*point d’appui*] of his transcendental empiricism, of his theory of conditions, not of possibility, but of the actuality [*effectivité*] of experience (cognitive, moral, aesthetic). But because it is a matter of the actuality [*effectivité*] of experience and not its possibility, Deleuze cannot remain in the circle of possibles, as is the case in Kant. Deleuze denounces the *Critique of Pure Reason* because it deduces possibility from another possibility—the faculty, or better, the ensemble of faculties—as power [*pouvoir*], potentiality of the human spirit. In stressing the revolution of the *Critique of Judgment*, its displacement of a theory of conditioning to a genesis, Deleuze breaks with the infinite presupposition of possibles. It is no longer a matter of a theory of the condition of actuality [*effectivité*], but of the genesis of these conditions, that is, of their engendering. And what is the difference between a conditioning and an engendering? The first already presupposes the possible, and presupposes a constituted faculty. The second seeks the possibility of this ultimate principle of all possibilities. Is this a matter of finding a faculty of all faculties? No. The soul, finally, is not a faculty. It is a principle that is found not at the origin, but at the end; it is the final point of concentration of all potentialities, of all possibilities, of all faculties. Not that it is the possibility of all possibilities, but because the soul is, by contrast, the inaccessibility of all faculties. It is the impossible that all possibilities have as their ultimate common destination; it engenders the possible as its *telos*. In a word, it is the impossible that makes possible all possibles because it puts them in a condition of powerlessness [*impuissance*] in the face of the impossible. Deleuze cites Blanchot in regard to this powerlessness that founds all power/capacity [*puissance*]: “that point of which Maurice Blanchot speaks endlessly: that blind, acephalic, aphasic and aleatory original point which designates ‘the impossibility of thinking that is thought’, that point at which ‘powerlessness’ is transmuted into power” (DR 199).

Having arrived at this point, a new problem arises. Can one say that Deleuze, in this renewal of the genesis of the faculties in a suprasensible harmony that is realized in the impossible, is only following Kant? Is this simply a matter of the theory of the sublime that Deleuze only finds in the *Critique of Judgment*, or is this rather a matter of a very particular

interpretation of this theory of the sublime that one reads in the text of 1963? Because THE theory of the sublime does not exist in Kant, this question remains without an answer if one is unable to read Deleuze against himself. But such is not the case. Twenty years later, in the article “On Four Poetic Formulas That Might Summarize the Kantian Philosophy” published in the journal *Philosophy* in 1984, Deleuze once more confronts the Kantian theory of the sublime. And here one finds decisive differences. This time, he stresses the dissonance, the disaccord, the disharmony of the faculties. In the paragraph on Kant’s aesthetics, Deleuze uses a poetic formula of Rimbaud’s to summarize the Kantian idea of the sublime: “To attain the unknown by disorganizing all the senses [*par le dérèglement de tous les sens*] . . . a long, boundless, and systematized disorganization of all the senses” (CC 33). The question, once again, is that of the disorganized exercise of all the faculties. But, now, the sublime no longer leads to a superior harmony of the faculties. The sublime is itself the experience of the disharmony of the faculties. “The Sublime [. . .] brings the various faculties into play in such a manner that they struggle against each other like wrestlers, with one faculty pushing another to its maximum or limit, to which the second faculty reacts by pushing the first toward an inspiration it would not have had on its own. [. . .] There is a terrible struggle between the imagination and reason, but also between the understanding and inner sense, a battle whose two episodes will be the two forms of the Sublime. [. . .] There is a tempest in the chasm opened up inside the subject. In the first two Critiques, the dominant or fundamental faculty was able to make the other faculties enter into the closest possible harmonics with itself. But now, in an exercise of limits, the various faculties mutually produce the most remote harmonics in each other, so that they form essentially dissonant accords. The emancipation of dissonance, the discordant accord, is the great discovery of the *Critique of Judgment*. [. . .] An unregulated exercise of all the faculties, which was to define future philosophy, just as for Rimbaud the disorder of all the senses would define the poetry of the future” (CC 34–5). What Deleuze calls the “emancipation of dissonance” is what emerges in 1984 as the center of Kant’s aesthetics. In the play of faculties, there is no dominant or fundamental faculty, nor a superior harmony among faculties. Now, there is only the disorganization of the imagination’s relation with reason and with understanding, that is, the disorganization of all the senses.

This 1984 emancipation of dissonance in the understanding of the Kantian theory of the sublime requires that we be cautious in assessing the way in which Deleuze reads Kant in the early 1960s. Why does he stress the superior harmony that disaccord makes possible? Why the teleology of the transcendental field, where sensibility, imagination, memory, understanding, and reason only exist in order to make thought possible? Why the fundamental

role that he attributes to the soul as point of convergence of all the faculties in 1963?

Once more, the answer to all these questions may be traced through Deleuze's book on Proust. This work, written just after the book on Kant's theory of the faculties and the article on the concept of genesis in the aesthetic of Kant, introduces three new dimensions in the understanding of the work of art: (a) a theory of signs, (b) a theory of essence—as the point of convergence of all the faculties, and (c) a modal definition of that essence—essence is defined by the concept of the “virtual.” A semiotics, an ontology of essence, a metaphysics of the virtual. Three new layers for the analysis of aesthetic experience that are missing in Nietzsche and in Kant. And all these layers respond to the need to give a consistency, both epistemological and ontological, to this point of convergence of all the faculties, to this soul that Deleuze discovered in his teleological reading of the Kantian theory of the sublime as the source, the point of origin, the place of the genesis of the transcendental field.

The Proust book, above all its theory of signs as the site of essence, is thus the completion of the project of transcendental empiricism, its realization in the unity of a semiotics and an ontology within an aesthetics. *Proust and Signs* carries within it all the gains of transcendental empiricism, since its first formulation in 1953 in the book on Hume up to the texts on Kant in 1963, including the vitalism and will to power of Nietzsche.

## THE ONTOLOGY OF ESSENCE AS A MEANS OF CONSTRUCTING A KANTIAN THEORY OF LITERATURE

Although the sign is its central subject, the theory of essence is the great innovation that the Proust book introduces into the project of a transcendental empiricism. Absent from all earlier books, essence provides content for the point of convergence of all the faculties, for this superior accord, for this harmony beyond the disorganization of all the senses that Deleuze discovered in the Kantian theory of the sublime.

However, after the book on Nietzsche and the reversal of Platonism, and after the book on the critical philosophy of Kant, the concept of essence could have only a timid definition. One must await *The Logic of Sense* and its concept of the *event* for this ontology of essence to reach its full blossoming. In this book on Proust, Deleuze again takes up all the classical predicates of essence. On one hand, essence designates an autonomous reality. “Beyond designated objects, beyond intelligible and formulated truths, but also beyond subjective chains of association and resurrections by resemblance or contiguity, are the essences. [. . .] They transcend the states of subjectivity no

less than the properties of the object” (PS 37–8). Essence is independent of the objects it designates, of the truths it formulates, and of the subjects that apprehend it. It exists in itself. On the other hand, it is this autonomy vis-à-vis objects and subjects that makes essence the point of articulation between the two domains. Essence is that which ties the objective dimension to the subjective dimension of knowledge. The correlation between knowledge and its object, this central problem in the program of transcendental empiricism, that is, the correlation between the conditions of knowledge and the actuality [*effectivité*] of experience, is formed precisely by essence. Because essence is that which forms the unity of the sign, it is that which ties the physical dimension of the sign to its intelligible sense, and hence that which ties the subject of knowledge to its object. “It is essence that constitutes the veritable unity of sign and sense; it is essence that constitutes the sign insofar as it is irreducible to the object emitting it; it is essence that constitutes the meaning insofar as it is irreducible to the subject apprehending it” (PS 38; trans. modified). If signs designate objects and express subjective associations, it is because there are essences that constitute signs and that constitute the unity between sign and sense. Essence is the sufficient reason of the sign and of sense as well as their relation.<sup>20</sup> And if signs are or are not reducible to the object that emits them, or the subject that seizes them, it is because there are autonomous essences between the sign and the sense. Without essence, there would be no knowledge.

All signs express an essence, but all signs do not reveal an essence. This revelatory power belongs to a single type of signs. “The worldly signs, the signs of love, even the sensible signs are incapable of giving us essence; they bring us closer to it, but we always fall back into the trap of the object, into the snare of subjectivity. It is only on the level of art that essences are revealed. But *once* they are manifested in the work of art, they react upon all the other realms; we learn that they *already* incarnated, that they were already there in all these kinds of signs, in all the types of apprenticeship” (PS 38; trans. modified). Essence exists in itself, as autonomous reality, and it is incarnated in signs, in all types of signs. But essence reveals itself only in the signs of art. This privilege of the signs of art comes from their ontological condition: they are immaterial. All other signs are material. Sensible, worldly, and amorous signs are still held in the objects that carry them, in the mode of their emission. A face, a taste, and an odor always mark the apparition of their sense. Doubtless, artistic signs are also tied to matter. The famous little phrase of Vinteuil inevitably comes from a piano (or a violin). But, as Deleuze says, “the piano is merely the spatial image of an entirely different keyboard; the notes merely the ‘sonorous appearance’ of an entirely spiritual entity” (PS 39). Signs in the art of music are not sounds but musical phrases. The musical phrase exists in itself, as a nonmaterial entity, and it becomes “apparent,”

it appears in the sounds. It is a spiritual reality. This spirituality has nothing to do with the manner in which it is apprehended. The musical phrase is spiritual without being the content of any spirit. In itself, it has the reality of the spiritual. It's the same with the theatrical gesture. The actor uses his body and his voice to make visible something without body and without voice, something spiritual: what Deleuze calls a "transparent body"—"Berma, too uses her voice, her arms. But her gestures, instead of testifying to 'muscular connections,' form a transparent body that refracts an essence, an Idea" (PS 39). It is in order to stress this nonmaterial condition of the artistic sign that reveals essence that Deleuze gives it the most terrible name in the history of ontology: "Idea." He says the same in regard to the musical phrase. "Essences or Ideas, that is what each sign of the little phrase reveals (I, 349). That is what gives the phrase its real existence, independent of the instruments and the sounds that reproduce or incarnate it more than they compose it" (PS 40–1). This equivalence of *essence* and *idea*, though imbued with a Kantian tonality, is Platonic. In addition to affirming the nonsensible condition of the sign of art, its nonmaterial condition, this equivalence guarantees the absolutely objective status of essence. "Are we to conclude from this that essence is subjective [. . .]? This would be to overlook the texts in which Proust treats essences as Platonic Ideas and confers upon them an independent reality" (PS 43; trans. modified).

We now understand the "spiritual" dimension of the artistic sign. It is spiritual in that it is the site of the incarnation of an essence that is not the materiality of sounds coming from the piano, that is not the texture of the canvas of a painting, nor the density of the body or the voice of the actor. It is as a reality without matter that the signs of art are grasped. The "spiritual" condition of the artistic sign does not derive from the fact that it is grasped by a spirit, but the reverse. The individual who contemplates an art work becomes spirit. The subjective moment of essence, the impression that it produces in the subject who contemplates the work of art, is entirely without matter—"the very impression of the little phrase is *sine materia*" (PS 39). What a subjectivity apprehends in the work of art is an immaterial sign as the direct incarnation of an essence. In this way such a subjectivity acquires the condition of a spirit, of a pure thought. It becomes spirit in the knowledge of a spiritual reality. For this reason the fundamental correlation between art, essence, and pure thought as faculty of essences is found throughout Deleuze's book on Proust. This pure thought, the ultimate faculty (beyond sensibility, imagination, memory, intelligence), is possible only through the essences it grasps, and it can grasp them only in the work of art, only in immaterial signs, spiritual signs that immediately reveal essences.<sup>21</sup>

We have now arrived at what is perhaps the most difficult question. What is the mode of existence of essence? Deleuze gives multiple responses. First,

essence or the idea exists only as a component of the sign. It is that which ties the sign to its sense. “Essence is precisely this unity of sign and sense as it is revealed in the work of art” (PS 40; trans. modified). Next, essence is a point of view that differentiates the way in which the world appears to each subject. It individualizes each perspective. Being incarnated in the work, it is the singular expression of a world. “In this regard, Proust is Leibnizian: the essences are veritable monads, each defined by the viewpoint to which it expresses the world, each viewpoint itself referring to an ultimate quality at the heart of the monad” (PS 41). As a consequence, essence as monad is also incarnated in the subject who contemplates the work. The subject obtains its very individuality through the essence that expresses itself in the subject. Essence becomes a principle of individuation and individuality. “Essence is indeed the final quality at the heart of a subject; but this quality is deeper than the subject, of a different order. [. . .] It is not the subject that explains essence, rather it is essence that implicates, envelops, wraps itself up in the subject. Rather, in coiling round itself, it is essence that constitutes subjectivity. It is not the individuals who constitute the world, but the worlds enveloped, the essences that constitute the individuals. [. . .] Essence is not only individual, it *individualizes*” (PS 43).

There is an entire ontology of the nonmaterial and the nonactual that grounds Deleuze’s theory of essence. Immaterial and spiritual are the sign that reveals essence. For its own part, essence has an existence independent of all instances in which it is incarnated and to which it gives them their singularity. It is both Platonic idea in its ideality and Leibnizian monad in its individuality. Essence can have only a metaphysical condition that is itself nonmaterial and nonactual. Everything derives from a proposition of Proust’s that Deleuze frequently cites—“real without being actual, ideal without being abstract” (PS 61; trans. modified). And Deleuze establishes in a very explicit fashion the correspondence between these beings and his concept of essence: “This ideal reality, this virtual, is essence” (PS 61; trans. modified).

The Proust book, through the theory of essence, affords the first entrance of the concept of the “virtual” in Deleuze’s ontology. The virtual comes to guarantee both the nonactuality and the ideality of essence. But this concept of the virtual, which first appeared in 1956 in the two essays on Bergson [DI 22–51], and which only receives its fullest exposition in *Difference and Repetition* (1968) (and is almost completely abandoned thereafter until the year of his death, when it appears in the short text published posthumously in an appendix to *Dialogues*) receives in the Proust book of 1964 only a very fragile explication. Deleuze considers only its Bergsonian dimension: its temporal dimension. Essence is said to be virtual because it is coiled [*enroulé*] time, the birth of time, complicated time, in a pure state.<sup>22</sup>

Deleuze lets us trace the Bergsonian origin of this equivalence between his definition of essence as virtual and his ontology of pure time. He recognizes

that it is from Bergson that he receives his ontology of a time in itself, of a past in a pure state. And it is from Bergson that he takes the determination of this past as virtual.<sup>23</sup> What was not in this first major source of Deleuze was the definition of this pure past, of the virtual reality, as “essence.”<sup>24</sup>

In order to better mark this condition of a virtuality as pure time, as coiled, complicated time, but entirely independent of temporal faculties, of faculties that operate on time—sensibility, memory, or imagination—Deleuze presents essences as graspable only beyond this time that one touches as an expansion of the present. This time in a pure state can only be captured, actualized, in a particular situation, outside the rhythms and order of the movement of the future toward the past. Pure time, essence in its condition of virtual reality, is first given in a paradoxical state: sleep. There alone, time appears coiled, complicated in essence. “If we look for something in life that corresponds to the situation of the original essences, we shall not find it in this or that character, but rather in a certain profound state. This state is sleep” (PS 45). This is how Deleuze interprets the famous opening of the *Recherche*. “The sleeper ‘holds in a circle around him the thread of hours, the order of years and worlds’. [. . .] The artist-subject has the revelation of an original time, coiled, complicated within essence itself, embracing simultaneously all its series and dimensions” (PS 45–6). Past time, time in a pure state, is not an affair of memory. That would be to reduce it to the contingency of a subjectivity. In contrast to voluntary memory, Deleuze affirms the reality of sleep as the subjective state of pure time. Art reproduces this condition. But, in art, it is pure thought, not sleep, that allows access to complicated time, to time coiled up in essence. “But, like sleep, art is beyond memory; it appeals to pure thought as a faculty of essences. What art regains for us is time as it is coiled within essence, as it is born in the world enveloped by essence, identical to eternity” (PS 47). Beyond memory, and also beyond imagination and sensibility, it is pure thought. The sleeper grasps original time, coiled up in the pure past. Pure thought grasps it in art, as it is coiled within essence.

The theory of essence as theory of virtuality is the means of excluding voluntary memory, as well as imagination and sensibility, from the experience of pure time. Only pure thought, in art, captures pure time, captures essences beyond all the other faculties. “Art in its essence, the art superior to life, is not based upon involuntary memory. It is not even based upon imagination and unconscious figures. The signs of art are explained by pure thought as a faculty of essences” (PS 55). Time regained, this virtual time, this past in a pure state, grasped vaguely in sleep, is given in all its truth only in art, because only in art are essences revealed, those essences where pure time exists, coiled, complicated, and eternalized. “Here is the true sense of the expression ‘time regained,’ which is understood in the signs of art” (PS 46).

And the art par excellence of this pure time, the art of time regained, the art of virtual time, is literature. Literature alone grants us access to the pure past, and it alone leads us to a time regained in the story of ideal, complicated, and coiled temporal fragments. Literature alone, addressed to pure thought, offers thought the essence of a life, of a love, of a taste, in spiritual signs, in this sense that is incarnated in the materiality of a book. But this literature exists, as the quintessential art of time, only according to the Kantian model of the faculties and their harmony. A literature where memory, imagination, and sensibility do violence to thought in order to force it to think essences. A literature that exists only to provoke disharmony among the faculties and lead them to their ultimate point of convergence, to the soul, to pure thought, faculty of essences, faculty that grasps the virtual world, time coiled in the immaterial signs of the pure text, in the novel, as the idea that is incarnated in the material signs of the book.

One understands now in what sense the Proust book was not possible without the return to Kant beyond Nietzsche.

## NOTES

1. *Saggi e Ricerche di Letteratura Francese*, XII, Bulzoni ed., 1973

2. We obviously are also thinking of *Essays Critical and Clinical* as being another example of a book on literature that allows one to see its progression. Nonetheless, *Essays Critical and Clinical* is a group of texts on very different subjects that are collected after earlier publication in reviews, prefaces, and so on, whereas *Proust and Signs* is a work focused on the same object—the *Recherche*.

3. In the first part, Deleuze leaves implicit this parallelism (of Leibnizian resonance) with Kant: “implication and explication, envelopment and development, such are the categories of the *Recherche*” (PS 89; trans. modified).

4. It is interesting to note that in 1970 Deleuze already presented the future movement of his thought, that is, that he foresaw the disappearance of the problem of the unity of the *Recherche*. Thus, as if in a gesture of disenchantment, he confesses: “We have given up seeking a unity that would unify the parts, a whole that would totalize the fragments. [. . .] But there is, there must be a unity that is the unity of this very multiplicity, a whole that is the whole of just these fragments: a One and a Whole that would not be the principle but, on the contrary ‘the effect’ of the multiplicity and of its disconnected parts” (PS 163). In 1973, the question of unity completely disappeared: “The *Recherche* is not constructed like a cathedral or like a gown, but like a web. The Narrator-spider, whose web is the *Recherche* being spun, being woven by each thread stirred by one sign or another” (PS 182; trans. modified).

5. “From the worldly signs to the sensuous signs the relation between the sign and its sense is increasingly intimate. [. . .] When we have reached the revelation of art, we learn that essence was already there, in the lowest steps and stages. It is essence that, in each case, determined the relation between sign and sense” (PS 88–9; trans. modified).



6. “The sensuous sign does us violence: it mobilizes the memory, it sets the soul in motion; but the soul in its turn excites thought, transmits to it the constraint of the sensibility, forces it to conceive essence, as the only thing that must be conceived. Thus the faculties enter into a transcendent exercise, in which each confronts and joins its own limit: the sensibility that apprehends the sign; the soul, the memory, that interprets it; the mind that is forced to conceive essence” (PS 101).

7. “So that Essence is finally the third term that dominates the other two, that presides over their movement: essence complicates the sign and the sense; it holds them *in complication*, it puts the one in the other” (PS 90; trans. modified).

8. “The sign implies in itself a heterogeneity of relation. We never learn by doing *like* someone, but by doing *with* someone, who bears no resemblance to what we are learning” (PS 22).

9. On the importance of Maimon in the transformation of transcendental idealism into a transcendental empiricism, see Lebrun 1998: 207–33.

10. “We mean that the imagination, having been a collection, becomes now a faculty; the distributed collection becomes now a system. The given is once again taken up by a movement, and in a movement that transcends it. The mind becomes human nature” (ES 92).

11. “In fact, empiricism is a philosophy of the imagination and not a philosophy of the senses. We know that the question ‘how does the subject constitute itself within the given?’ means ‘how does the imagination become a faculty?’ According to Hume, the imagination becomes a faculty insofar as a law of the reproduction of representations or a synthesis of reproduction is constituted as the result of principles” (ES 110).

12. “Where does Kant’s critique begin? Kant, of course, does not doubt that the imagination is effectively the best possible terrain for raising the problem of knowledge. Of the three syntheses that he distinguishes, he himself presents the synthesis of the imagination as the foundation of the other two. But Kant reproaches Hume for having mistakenly raised the problem on this good terrain: the very way in which Hume posed the question, that is, his dualism, necessitated the notion that the relation between the given and the subject is an agreement between the subject and the given, of human nature and nature. But precisely, let us suppose that the given is not *initially* subject to principles of the same kind as those that regulate the connection of representations in the case of an empirical object. In this case, the subject could never encounter *this* agreement, except in an absolutely accidental way. It would not even have the occasion to connect its representations according to the rules whose corresponding faculty it nevertheless possessed” (ES 110–11).

13. “The will to power is the differential element of forces, that is to say the element that produces the differences in quantity between two or more forces whose relation is presupposed. The will to power is the genetic element of force, that is to say the element that produces the quality due to each force in this relation. [. . .] The difference in quantity and the respective qualities of forces in relation both derive from the will to power as genealogical element. Forces are said to be dominant or dominated depending on their difference in quantity. Forces are said to be active or reactive depending on their quality” (NP 52–3).

14. “We should not be surprised by the double aspect of the will to power: from the standpoint of the genesis or production of forces it determines the relation between

forces but, from the standpoint of its own manifestations, it is determined by relating forces. This is why the will to power is always determined at the same time as it determines, qualified at the same time as it qualifies" (NP 62).

15. "Thinking, like activity, is always a second power [*puissance*] of thought, not the natural exercise of a faculty, but an extraordinary event *in* thought itself, *for* thought itself" (NP 108).

16. Deleuze limits himself to defining what he presents as the tragic concept of art, according to two principles: (a) instead of being a disinterested operation, art is a stimulant of the will, and (b) art is the highest power of the false. This double determination depends on the fact that Deleuze approaches the problem of tragedy solely from its ethical side, as an experience of joyous affirmation of existence. "What defines the tragic is the joy of multiplicity, plural joy. This joy is not the result of a sublimation, a purging, a compensation, a resignation or a reconciliation. Nietzsche can attack all theories of the tragic for failing to recognize tragedy as an aesthetic phenomenon. *The tragic* is the aesthetic form of joy, not a medical phrase or a moral solution to pain, fear or pity. It is joy that is tragic" (NP 17). The question of art merges with a theory of affects in the stimulating powers of the will and the affirmation of the false. Art is not yet that which forces thought to think, that which does violence to thought, and which, for this reason, engenders the very conditions of its experience. Hence, it is not yet the vital center of the program of transcendental empiricism.

17. We may hypothesize that Deleuze's sudden interest in Kant and his doctrine of the faculties, after having demonstrated the failure of Kant's critical project in the Nietzsche book, is due to the discovery of the theory of the sublime. We know, for example, that in the chapter "Art" of *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, when Deleuze opposes Nietzsche to Kant in regard to the concept of disinterest, he refers only to the Kantian doctrine of the beautiful—"When Kant distinguished beauty from all interests, even moral ones, he was still putting himself in the position of the spectator, but of a less and less gifted spectator who now has only a disinterested regard for beauty" (NP 102). Deleuze seems to have no knowledge of the Kantian doctrine of the sublime, even when he analyzes the conception of the tragic in *The Birth of Tragedy*, which is, from the beginning, the prolongation of the theory of negative pleasure and the dissolution of all the faculties formulated by the *Critique of Judgment* and which Nietzsche had reprised in the chapters on the sublime of Schopenhauer's *The World as Will and Representation*. Deleuze's book on Nietzsche and the way in which the doctrine of the will to power can complete the idea of a genesis of the faculties would have been entirely different if Deleuze had already been familiar with the chapter on the "Analytic of the Sublime" of the third Critique. Indeed, if, one year after the presentation of the genealogical solution of the problem of the transcendental, Deleuze discovers that Kant already, in the concept of the sublime, had found the right path, what can be said about what becomes the superior empiricism of Nietzsche?

18. "The first two Critiques cannot resolve the original problem of the relation between the faculties, but can only indicate it and refer us to it as a final task. Every determinate accord indeed presupposes that the faculties are, at a deeper level, capable of a free and indeterminate accord (CJ para. 21). It is only at the level of this free and indeterminate accord (*sensus communis aestheticus*) that *we will be able to pose* the problem of a ground of the accord or a genesis of common sense. This is why we

must not expect from the *Critique of Pure Reason* or from the *Critique of Practical Reason* the answer to a question which will take on its true sense only in the *Critique of Judgment*. As regards a ground for the harmony of the faculties, the first two Critiques are completed only in the last” (23–4).

19. “Post-Kantians, especially Maïmon and Fichte, raised this fundamental objection: Kant neglected the demands of a genetic method. [. . .] If we recall that Maïmon’s *Transcendental Philosophy* dates from 1790, we must admit that Kant anticipated, at least in part, the objections of his disciples. The first two Critiques indeed invoke facts, seek out the conditions for these facts, and find them in ready-made faculties. It follows that the first two Critiques point to a genesis which they are incapable of securing on their own. But in the esthetic *Critique of Judgment*, Kant poses the problem of a genesis of the faculties in their original free accord. Thus he uncovers the ultimate ground still lacking in the other two Critiques” (DI 61; trans. modified).

20. In the final chapter of the first edition of *Marcel Proust and Signs*, Deleuze formulates this thesis in a clear fashion: “Sense itself is identified with this development of the sign as the sign was identified with the involution of sense. So that Essence is finally the third term that dominates the other two, that presides over their movement: essence complicates the sign and the meaning; it holds them *in complication*; it puts the one in the other. It measures in each case their relation, their degree of distance or proximity, the degree of their unity. Doubtless the sign itself is not reduced to the object, but the object still sheaths half of it. Doubtless the sense by itself is not reduced to the subject, but it half depends on the subject, on subjective circumstances and association. Beyond the sign and the sense, there is Essence, like the sufficient reason for the other two terms and for their relation” (PS 90–1; trans. modified).

21. As we will try to show, Deleuze will return, starting from *What Is Philosophy?* and above all in his reading of Beckett, to the understanding of art as the activity of the spirit (cf. Part III, chapters 1 and 3).

22. “The world enveloped by essence is always a beginning of the World in general, a beginning of the universe, an absolute, radical beginning. [. . .] But so defined, essence is the birth of Time itself. Not that time is already deployed: it does not yet have the distinct dimensions according to which it can unfold, nor even the separate series in which it is distributed according to different rhythms. Certain Neoplatonists used a profound word to designate the original state that precedes any development, any deployment, any ‘explication’: *complication*, which envelops the many in the One and affirms the unity of the multiple. Eternity did not seem to them the absence of change, nor even the extension of a limitless existence, but the complicated state of time itself” (PS 44–5).

23. Here, Deleuze reflects on the traditional view of Bergson’s influence on Proust’s poetics of temporality. “If there is a resemblance between Bergson’s conception and Proust’s it is on this level—not on the level of duration, but of memory. That we do not proceed from an actual present to the past, that we do not recompose the past with various presents, but that we place ourselves, directly, in the past itself. That this past does not represent something that has been, but simply something that is and that coexists with itself as present. That the past does not have to preserve itself in

anything but itself, because it is in itself, survives and preserves itself in itself—such are the famous theses of *Matter and Memory*. This being of the past in itself is what Bergson called the virtual. Similarly Proust, when he speaks of states induced by the signs of memory: ‘Real without being actual, ideal without being abstract’ (PS 58; trans. modified).

24. In the two 1956 texts on Bergson, the virtual is presented in several different ways: (a) as duration—“*Élan vital* is difference to the extent that it passes into act [. . .] and if *élan vital* is duration differentiated, then duration itself is virtuality” (DI 28); (b) as duration—“the virtual is not something actual but is for that no less a mode of being, and is, moreover, in a way, being itself: neither duration, nor life, nor movement is actual, but that in which all actuality, all reality is distinguished and comprehended and takes root” (DI 28); (c) as the past—“the past is therefore the in-itself, the unconscious or more precisely, as Bergson says, the *virtual*” (DI 29); (d) as pure recollection [*souvenir*—“the virtual is a pure recollection” (DI 44); and (e) as the pure concept of difference—“the virtual becomes the pure concept of difference” (DI 44). But the concept of essence never defines the virtual. Moreover, the concept of essence is not present at all in these texts. This move comes via Jean Hyppolite. In a 1949 text, Jean Hyppolite proposes an identification of the Bergsonian concept of the “past” and the concept of “essence.” “The German language allows us to bring the past and essence together (*gewesen* and *Wesen*). This is really how, it seems, we must understand pure memory in Bergson” (Hyppolite 2003: 122). It is interesting to note that in his 1954 review of Hyppolite’s *Logique et existence*, Deleuze underscores, as the great revolution of this book, the explication of the Hegelian concept of essence through the concept of sense. “Being, according to Hyppolite, is not *essence* but *sense*. [. . .] Hyppolite’s idea is this: essentialism, despite appearances, was not what preserved us from empiricism and allowed us to go beyond it. From the viewpoint of essence, reflection is no less exterior than it is in empiricism or pure critique. [. . .] On the contrary, the ontology of sense is total Thought that knows itself only in its determinations, which are moments of form” (DI 16–7; trans. modified). One can thus understand that Deleuze avoided the concept of essence up to the Proust book, replacing it with the concept of sense. So, why in 1964 this return to the concept of essence, first presented as the unity of sign and sense, and then as Bergson’s virtual?



## Chapter 2

# Sacher-Masoch

## *From the Phantasy to the Event*

### LITERATURE BETWEEN THE PHANTASM AND THE IMAGINATION

*Masochism: Coldness and Cruelty* appears to be the most classic approach to the question of literature in Deleuze's work. From the outset, this book concerns the nature and role of the literary work of art. The first sentence of the book is "What use does literature serve?," and Sade and Masoch are analyzed as examples of what Deleuze calls "literary efficacy."<sup>1</sup> The erotic functions of language—the process of negation in Sade, those of denegation, and suspense in Masoch—the roles of woman and the father in their novels, the narrative elements of the institution, and the contract, all these are approached within an effort to think the effects of the novel.

Yet the question of the efficacy of literature in Sade and Masoch relates to a specific function of literature, namely, the clinical one, that of giving a particular form to and rendering distinct the proper mechanisms of each perversion. Literary efficacy consists of the artistic and literary aptitude of Sade and Masoch to draw up the clinical chart of the signs of their respective perversions. In *Masochism*, Deleuze tries to think the zero point of literature. In his view, to understand the originality of Sacher-Masoch, one must return to a point outside the clinical framework within which he has long been misjudged. If it is possible to remove the effects of perversion from the works of Sade and Masoch, it is because, before anything else, they are writers, and because they were able to describe their perversions in an original and artistic manner. In Sade and Masoch, the relation between the critical and the clinical becomes very clear and almost transparent. Their literary work expresses the force of two types of sexuality and two types of signs or symptoms, which, according to Deleuze, have been misunderstood by medicine in

terms of syndromes, that is, in terms of a sadomasochistic unity. “Because the judgment of the clinician is prejudiced, we must take an entirely different approach, the *literary approach*, since it is from literature that stem the original definitions of sadism and masochism” (M 14). Thus, one must go back to the point where each one’s name led to the classification of an illness and contest the presuppositions of medicine, which Deleuze sees as haunting these two distinct modes of sexuality. One must also reverse the presupposition that there is a sadomasochistic unity. To understand the specificity of masochistic and sadistic signs, one must understand that they designate symptoms and not syndromes, that is, a perversion and not an illness.

Sacher-Masoch was able to describe the signs of masochism and thereby create a literary regime of signs. *Proust and Signs* in this regard constitutes the inverse viewpoint, the literary question being approached from the figure of the narrator. The problem of signs was formulated around the experiences of the narrator himself and always in relation to the construction of his proper fictional world. In *Masochism*, Deleuze changes perspective, and the problem of the symptomatology of signs now answers to the question of literary efficacy, that is, to the efficacy of literature in the domain of the clinic. The themes of the Proust book are repeated, but with a different formulation. The theme of apprenticeship is a striking example. *Proust and Signs* is a Bildungsroman, where what is described is the masochistic process of a narrator himself. *Masochism* does not recount the development of a narrator. It is a novel of dressage that describes the process of transformation of the beloved woman into the figure of the torturer.

The introduction of the concept of the phantasm within semiology provoked a displacement of perspective in Deleuze. It led him to approach an aesthetic experience as a clinical affair. Literary efficacy, as a critical problem, concerns the problem of the doubling of the world via the phantasm. But this doubling—the fictional process par excellence of this masochistic writer—leads one back to a larger clinical problem, that of the role of perversion in a theory of civilization. More than symptomatologists, more than eponyms of signs of perversion, that is, more than classifiers of two perversions, Sade and Masoch are also anthropologists. In recuperating the theses of Nietzsche, Deleuze here anticipates *Essays Critical and Clinical* and its definition of literature as a matter of health. *Masochism* is the first book where Deleuze takes a writer as a means of thinking the clinical problem as something essential to every artist, and not simply at the level of literary criticism but also at the level of the problem of minorities. “All his work is influenced by the problem of minorities, nationalities and revolutionary movements in the Empire: Galician tales, Jewish tales, Hungarian tales, Prussian tales” (M 9; trans. modified).

The question of the clinical efficacy of the literature of Sade and Masoch thus becomes the question of properly aesthetic experience. And this question is presented not simply at the level of sense, that is, the level of the reader's reception of the perverse signs of the author, but also at the level of institutions and contracts that the two perversions imply. The question of aesthetic experience becomes, for the first time in Deleuze, a political affair, or at least a juridical affair.<sup>2</sup> It is in *Masoch* that Deleuze first poses the political problem in its relation to aesthetics. In distinguishing the contract (as the masochist's sphere) from the institution (as the form of sadism), Deleuze is in the process of breaking with Kant and the entire contractualist lineage, according to which all institutions are founded on contracts among individuals. Kant asserts that all political experience is founded on a contract in which each is raised to the level of a universal subject. What the masochist allows one to think is the contract as private affair, individual, signed between the masochist himself and the woman-torturer. Masoch, Kafka, and Melville are the authors Deleuze chose in order to make more visible the way in which writers are able to reverse the established system in proposing the contract, the pact, or the alliance as a new form of fraternity.

Sade and Masoch are thus the laboratory that helps us see literature more clearly as a matter of symptomatology. In their works, they created new forms of life and new forms of thinking and feeling. In these works, language becomes active, literal, acting directly on the senses and on sensuality. Pornographic literature takes account of erotic violence through commands and demonstrations. But these two aspects of pornography are elementary. There is another plane, according to Deleuze, that of pornography. There, language becomes impersonal; it becomes a function of the idea of Reason in Sade and the ideal of the imagination in Masoch. "Sade expresses himself in a form which combines obscenity in description with rigor and apathy in demonstration, while the art of Masoch consists in multiplying the denegations in order to create the coldness of aesthetic suspense" (M 133; trans. modified). Sade creates a literature of Reason, of cold thought in which rigorous demonstrations show that reasoning is itself a form of violence. Obscene descriptions give the sadist the power of apathetically showing himself to be omnipotent. Masoch is the inventor of phantasms and the author of the imagination that multiplies denegations as process of his art of suspense. He denies the real to incarnate, in suspense, the dialectical, phantasmatic ideal. He proceeds via a multiplication of denegations as the path of ascent toward the intelligible. He creates pedagogical initiation tests in this path, in order to attain his ideal. The obscene language and detailed description of Sade on one hand, the suspense and suggestive decors of Masoch on the other, both serve to conjugate literature and sexuality, that is, the planes of the critical and the clinical.



Pornological literature shares with pornography the presence of commandments and descriptions. But it goes beyond pornography at the level of description and commandment through a nonlanguage, through a doubling of language, and through a relation of language to its own limit. This takes place on two planes. First, when language is put in relation to the senses, at the moment of the exposure of violence and sex, words act directly on the senses, surging forth as a function of efficacy on the reader. And then when language becomes an impersonal function, the demonstrative function of reason in Sade, the dialectical function of the imagination in Masoch.

If pornography is the literature of the explicit and the rudimentary, pornology is the literature of violence and eroticism traversed by the sphere of the faculties: the idea of reason and the ideal of the imagination. In the case of Sade, pornology passes through the plane of demonstration: pure demonstrations of ideas of reason, problems, or theorems. In the case of Masoch, pornology is constructed through an impersonal ideal of the dialectical spirit and through a pedagogical program of persuasion that aims to transform the beloved woman into a veritable torturer. "In Sade the imperative and descriptive function of language transcends itself toward a pure demonstrative, instituting function, and in Masoch toward a dialectical, mythical and persuasive function" (M 23).

The role and value of description differ in Sade and Masoch. If Sade uses obscene descriptions and invests in the acceleration and condensation of acts of violence, Masoch, by contrast, abstains from them.<sup>3</sup> He suspends violence and invests instead in the creation of decors, scenarios, and suggestive atmospheres. "How can we account for these two kinds of 'displacement' in Masoch's descriptions? We are led back to the question: why does the demonstrative function of language in Sade imply obscene descriptions, while Masoch's dialectical function seems to exclude them or at least not to treat them as essential elements?" (M 26). Deleuze's response involves the difference between "negation" and "denegation."

In his view, sadism is the conflict between two levels, the negative of a secondary nature and the ego, and negation as a pure idea of a primary nature. The sadist inhabits the absolute and total negation of the world. He creates a division between an original, primary nature that corresponds to his exigencies, that is, a nature of pure negation as an idea of reason, and a secondary nature in which the negative replaces negations and rises up as the reverse of a positivity and as a partial process of destruction. Primary nature is never given, and cannot be given, for it does not belong to the world of experience. Hence it can only be demonstrated; it can only be the object of description. The great problem that Sade posed is that of knowing whether a pain from the world of experience can by right be repeated infinitely in the world of primary nature.

For Deleuze, the sadist lives in the disjunction between these two natures and in permanent frustration because he is always confronted with the fact that the nature he idealizes can never be given in experience and the fact that real nature is manifest as less painful and cruel than originary nature. “Hence the rage and despair of the sadistic hero when he realizes how paltry his own crimes are in relation to the idea which he can only reach through the omnipotence of reasoning. [. . .] The task of the libertine is to bridge the gulf between the two elements, the element at his actual disposal and the element in his mind, the derivative and the original, the personal and the impersonal” (M 28).

The libertine thus creates a system in order to know if and how a pain in secondary nature can be reproduced infinitely in primary nature. This system involves two procedures. On one hand, acceleration or precipitation, which consists of the multiplication, of the incessant reproduction of victims and their sufferings. Sade constructed an entire detailed cartography of sufferings and victims, which must be minutely respected.<sup>4</sup> On the other hand, condensation, or accumulation, is the exigency of the coldness of violence, that is, the exigency of a rational, total, impersonal, and apathetic violence, which cannot deviate through any pleasure that would lead it to secondary nature. Sadistic violence derives from the annulling of secondary nature, from the sentimental ego that knows violence only in its limit of sensorial partiality. It is minutely descriptive to prolong, accelerate, and condense the partial pain of secondary nature. Sadistic violence is a rational act from which is derived an almost mathematical pleasure in the repetition of primary nature.<sup>5</sup>

The repetition in Masoch is completely different. It is no longer the relation to the negation of the world as secondary nature and infinite repercussion of pain in an original nature, but the relation to its denegation, that is, to its suspension in a phantasmatic ideal, the world as phantasm. “The aesthetic and dramatic suspense of Masoch contrasts with the mechanical, cumulative repetition of Sade” (M 34). Sadistic repetition is accelerating, but masochistic repetition is suspensive. It suspends the real to fix it in the phantasm. It is a repetition that involves the imagination because it repeats a denegation based on the ideal of the imagination. “It is not a matter of negating or destroying the world nor of idealizing it; it is a matter of denegating it, of suspending it in denying it in order to secure an ideal which is itself suspended in the phantasm. One contests the validity of existing reality in order to create a pure ideal reality” (M 32–3; trans. modified). The masochist denies the real world in such a way as to fix himself in an ideal of his imagination, he himself frozen and made incarnate in the phantasm. Masochism is thus a pure contemplation and a mystical contemplation of the real. Hence, masochistic repetition is a process of infinite retardation of this ideal, of the phantasm, and of pleasure. Pain is repeated in such a way as not to attain the

result, in order to suspend the moment of pleasure. “The masochistic process of denegation is so extensive that it affects sexual pleasure itself; postponed for as long as possible, pleasure is struck by a denegation that allows the masochist to deny the reality of pleasure at the very point of experiencing it, in order to identify with the ‘new sexless man’” (M 33; trans. modified). Hence the importance in masochism of fetishism, of rites of suffering with veritable physical suspension, frozen poses of the woman-torturer, which make her appear like a statue, portrait, or photo. Anticipating his analyses of repetition for itself in *Difference and Repetition*, Deleuze renews his distinction between “negation” and “denegation” in two forms of repetition: “Repetition in sadism and in masochism thus has two entirely different forms, depending on whether it finds its sense in sadistic acceleration and condensation, or in masochistic ‘freezing’ and suspense” (M 34; trans. modified).

This double form of repetition allows one to describe the pornological novel as a matter of perversion. Deleuze seeks to explain the act by which language goes beyond itself in reflecting a body of desire in order to form, with words, another body, a glorious body, which is full of new pleasures for pure spirits. This indeed concerns the act of describing the flesh and its transgression, but a transgression of language by language. In Deleuze’s view, the perverse mechanism in literature is confused with the very movement of the production of fiction. It is a fiction of the double, of repetition, and of the reiteration of facts, but as its impossible, excessive archive. This fiction acts directly on sensuality. It seeks to “spiritualize,” to produce a pure effect of language. Sade and Masoch fabulate worlds, as in all literature. But these are not possible worlds, more somber or more glorious worlds. These are detailed descriptions of this world, but as its excessive repetition. “With Sade and Masoch the function of literature is not to describe the world, since this has already been done, but to define a counterpart of the world capable of containing its violence and excesses. [. . .] And the words of this literature form in language a sort of double of language, capable of acting directly on the senses” (M 37; trans. modified).

The fundamental structure of this fiction of another world, which gathers the violence of the first and makes it act on the senses, must be found in the mechanism of doubling, in the process of the production of a perverse double of the world. This double is what Deleuze, in keeping with the psychoanalytic tradition, calls the “phantasm.” The phantasm occupies the center of Deleuze’s reading. In sadism, the phantasm is obtained through the process of the negation of laws; in masochism, it is the process of the denegation of the object of pleasure and the suspension of desire that leads toward this strange being, an object at once impossible and absolutely real.

But the concept of the “phantasm” has a paradoxical tradition in different approaches to perverse literature of the twentieth century.

## THE TRANSCENDENTAL OF PERVERSION

The question of perversion in literature is one of the obligatory subjects in twentieth-century French thought. Bataille, Klossowski, Blanchot, Foucault, and Barthes, all recognized in the art of writing and in literary fiction, a way into the universe of pleasures mixed with pain. But in Bataille's *Literature and Evil* and *Eroticism*, in Klossowski's *Sade, My Neighbor*, in Blanchot's *Lautréamont and Sade*, or, later in Foucault's "Sade, Sergeant of Sex," or in Barthes's *Sade, Fourier, Loyola*, perverse pleasure as model of the pleasure of the text and as instrument for entering into the nature of literature fiction is always approached from the vantage of Sade.<sup>6</sup>

Deleuze is the first to take Masoch as a point of departure. This is not a matter simply of going against the dominant tendency.<sup>7</sup> Perhaps one of Deleuze's most significant contributions to our understanding of the relation between literature and perversion derives from the fact that it is conceived primarily as a masochistic experience. And this privilege of masochism depends entirely on the inscription of the analysis of perversion in the project of transcendental empiricism through the concept of the "phantasm." Deleuze discovers an essential correlation between masochism and the faculty of the imagination. The masochistic phantasm, as an object par excellence of the imagination in its transcendent usage, is revealed as the point of genesis of the faculty of images.

This reading of masochism is not transcendental by the mere fact that it is a form of access to a new genesis of the faculties. The entire question of perversion is pursued by Deleuze in the register of an inquiry into the general conditions of experience—in this case, the experience of pleasure—as conditions, not of its possibility, but of its reality. Masochism, through its paradoxical usage of the pleasure principle, places us directly before its ultimate condition. One can even say that the great chapter of the program of transcendental empiricism is the one that is dedicated to the analysis of masochism.<sup>8</sup>

Deleuze explains the nature of perversion via an analysis he himself qualifies as "transcendental." Philosophical reflection must be called "transcendental" because it designates a way of considering the problem of conditions or principles. Deleuze takes up Freud's great text, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, precisely because, in his judgment, this is where Freud most directly engages in transcendental reflection. We know that in this text the question that is posed is: What is primary in the constitution of the form of desire? What has the condition of being a principle: pleasure or displeasure? There are no exceptions to the pleasure principle, but singular complications in pleasure itself. And here is the problem: If nothing contradicts the pleasure principle, if everything can be brought back to the law of the pleasure principle, that doesn't mean that everything derives from the pleasure principle.

The first step in Freud's solution is to posit that the pleasure principle reigns over all but does not govern all. If there is no exception to the pleasure principle, there is however an irreducible residue in the principle itself. There is a "beyond of the pleasure principle." Hence, it is necessary to introduce another type of principle, a second-degree principle. And it is this other principle that is truly transcendental, given that it is this principle that explains the submission of a domain to a principle. Pleasure is a principle, in that it regulates a domain. The pleasure principle, without exception, regulates psychic life. Pleasure is systematically sought, and pain avoided. Everything is pleasure, and everything is a search for pleasure.

But one must ask: What is the highest instance that submits psychic life to the empirical domination of the pleasure principle? What is the superior link that makes pleasure a principle, which gives it the status of a principle? It's not a matter of finding an exception to the pleasure principle, but rather of founding this principle itself. Deleuze stresses this point several times: we are in the presence of a transcendental problem. The next step in Freud's response is to take the link between excitation and its discharge in pleasure as that which makes pleasure possible, as that which founds the pleasure principle. Only the link of excitation—energetic link of excitation itself and biological link of cells—makes excitation tractable in pleasure, that is, makes possible the discharge of the excitation. Without the activity of forming a linkage, there would obviously be discharges and pleasures, but without any systematic value. What can make this link regular? What can found the connection itself between excitation and its discharge?

Here Deleuze's answer goes well beyond that of Freud. Through a minimal displacement, a subtle modification of the solution proposed in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, Deleuze introduces what is the main theme of the book he writes immediately after *Masochism*: the theme of repetition. Excitation would not be linked, and in this way, it would not find its resolution as pleasure, if the same power that directs the excitation toward discharge did not also tend to negate this same excitation. Deleuze takes up the Freudian concept of the compulsion to repeat and confers on it an absolutely originary, transcendental dimension. As he writes, "this constitutive link of Eros may, and indeed must be characterized as 'repetition'—repetition in respect of excitation, and repetition of the *moment* of life, and the necessary union—necessary indeed even in the case of unicellular organisms" (M 113; trans. modified). Repetition is before and after pleasure. It is the repetition that ties excitation to its discharge, and the repetition that extinguishes this link and that reintroduces the cycle of excitation.

Not only does the transcendental approximation of the question of the foundation of the pleasure principle repeat the style of Kant in its form, but also the answer itself is Kantian. If the pleasure principle finds its condition as

a link between excitation and its discharge, the founding of this link can only be the pure form of the link, the link itself as form of linkage. As in Kant, the general form of linkage is time, time as pure form, as internal sense. If it is in time that all linkages and all syntheses take place, time is the ultimate condition of possibility of synthesis in general. According to Deleuze, Freud is able to go further than Kant in this transcendental strategy. Through the idea of a repetition compulsion, repetition itself emerges as pure form of time. “Instead of repetition being experienced as a form of behavior related to a pleasure already obtained or anticipated, instead of repetition being governed by the idea of experiencing or reexperiencing pleasure, repetition runs wild and becomes independent of all previous pleasure. It has itself become an idea or ideal. Pleasure is now a form of behavior related to repetition, accompanying and following repetition, which has itself become an awesome, independent force [*puissance*]” (M 120).

However, in Deleuze’s view, what Freud adds to a transcendental theory of the syntheses of time that is fundamentally new, and is the mechanism of the negation of the linkage, the mechanism that erases repetition, the mechanism that, as a new repetition, constitutes the past and, thus, cuts the continuous flow of the past, present, and future. In short, Freud’s great revolution is to have introduced another power/capacity [*puissance*] beyond the pleasure principle, another force beyond Eros: Thanatos. “How indeed could excitation be bound [*liée*] and thereby ‘resolved,’ if the same power [*puissance*] did not tend to negate it? Beyond Eros, Thanatos. Beyond the ground [*fond*], the groundless [*sans-fond*]. Beyond the repetition-link [*la répétition-lien*], the repetition-eraser [*la répétition-gomme*]” (M 114; trans. modified).

But we must take a step beyond, beyond Freud himself, to keep from interpreting Eros and Thanatos as a difference in nature between union and destruction and between repetition that binds and repetition that erases and that cuts. Deleuze wants to retain the “transcendental” dimension of these concepts. Eros and Thanatos must be taken as pure forms of repetition. They can never be given in experience but constitute the condition of its possibility, or better, of its reality. Deleuze does give Thanatos the sense of “death instinct.” But, to mark its status as material a priori, its status as pure form of repetition, repetition that cuts, and that effaces linkages, he proposes to translate the Freudian concept of *Todestrieb* as “death instinct,” leaving the expression “death drive” to the effects and the representatives in the “Id” of two primordial principles.<sup>9</sup> He thus stresses that only a transcendental analysis of the Eros-Thanatos relation—inaugurated by Freud in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* but not carried to its final speculative consequences—can reveal the fundamental role of the death instinct in one’s understanding of masochism, as well as the role of masochism in the understanding of the transcendental nature of this transcendent and silent instance. With the introduction of the

concept of the “death instinct,” Freud granted masochism a more original status. He admits the hypothesis of an *Urmasochismus*, a primordial masochism, or an *ursprünglicher Masochismus*, an original masochism. Masochism must be seen as older than sadism. Sadism would be the death instinct oriented not toward itself, but toward the outside. Masochism thus becomes the psychic phenomenon that is closest to the transcendent and silent principle that Freud calls Thanatos.

The originary, and hence transcendental, character of repetition confers on the phenomena of perversion—on sadism and masochism—a status that is itself transcendental. In both cases, the link between pleasure and pain is made via a mechanism of reiteration. Evil, in Sade, is the absolute affirmation of the act of suffering, when it renders repetition free of anything hypothetical, of any redemption. As Deleuze says, “In Saint-Fond’s system, the value of punishment lies solely in its capacity for infinite reproduction” (M 119). Likewise, in masochism. Masochistic pain is subordinated to suspension, the sphere, and the function of repetition and reiteration in waiting. “This is the essential point: *pain only acquires significance in relation to the forms of repetition which condition its use*” (M 119). But before entering into the analysis of this originary condition of the experiences of sadism and of masochism, we must examine the concept that unifies them, that is, the concept of perversion. Here again, Deleuze largely follows Freud.

The passage from the plane of the groundless, which constitutes repetition, to the plane of the pleasure principle (the plane of the “instincts” of Eros and Thanatos), on the one hand, and the passage from the plane of the pleasure principle to the plane of drives (erotic and destructive drives), when the pleasure principle is realized (no longer on the plane of the Id, but on the plane of the ego and superego), on the other, implies a mechanism of desexualization. That means that a certain quantity of libido (the energy of Eros) is neutralized, becoming indifferent and hence displaceable. Freud identifies two processes of neutralizing displacement: the process of idealization, which constitutes the force of imagination in the ego, and the process of identification, which constitutes the power/capacity [*puissance*] of thought in the superego. Thus, this desexualization has two possible effects: it introduces functional perturbations into the application of the principle—which corresponds to neurosis—or it promotes a transformation of pleasure, which goes beyond pleasure itself to satisfactions of another order—sublimation.

Deleuze asks: “Is there no other solution besides the functional disturbance of neurosis and the spiritual outlet of sublimation? Could there not be a third alternative which would be related not to the functional interdependence of the ego and the superego, but to the structural split between them? And is not this the very alternative indicated by Freud under the name of perversion?” (M 117). Perversion is thus discovered as a paradoxical movement. It

is initially the equivalent of the process of desexualization that one finds in neurosis and sublimation. It acts as a force and a coldness much greater than that in these two cases of the neutralization of Eros. However, perversion is defined as desexualization that accompanies a resexualization. This second moment does not deny the first but potentiates desexualization itself. "It is as if the desexualized element were resexualized as such, but in a different manner. This explains why coldness, ice, is the essential of the structure of perversion; it is present both in the apathy of the sadist, where it figures as theory, and in the ideal of the masochist, where it figures as phantasm" (M 117; trans. modified). The essence of perversion is this paradoxical process: desexualization in order to resexualize the same object that was previously neutralized. Cancel pleasure in order to reinvest it with all the energy of its proper cancelation, making the pain of the cancelation of the pleasure the power/capacity [*puissance*] of a new pleasure. The sadist finds his pleasure in the pain of another, the masochist finds his in pain itself, pain playing the role of condition without which he would not obtain pleasure. The pleasure principle thus is not thereby dethroned. It retains all its power [*pouvoir*]: the power [*pouvoir*] of its paradoxical effectuation. But masochism touches more closely the pure form of this principle; it expresses in itself, directly, the essential relation Eros-Thanatos. Masochism in *Masochism* becomes increasingly the site of the genesis of this transcendental field. And the faculty of the imagination plays a founding role.

## DELEUZE'S CONTRIBUTIONS TO A THEORY OF MASOCHISM

With *Masochism*, Deleuze reconstructs psychiatry's vision of the phenomenon of pleasure in pain that had been evident since Krafft-Ebing and Freud. Deleuze believes that he offers a new understanding of masochism in terms of some of its most fundamental traits. Four aspects help schematize his contribution.

First, the refutation of the sadomasochistic complex as a unity. Sadism and masochism must be distinguished. The one who suffers in sadistic torture is not a masochist. And the one who tortures in masochistic rituals takes no pleasure in causing pain. To use the concept of "sadomasochism" is to take the complex "pleasure-pain" as a sort of neutral substance common to sadism and masochism. The task thus is to separate this complex from within and to discover two completely different substances or essence: the essence of masochism and the essence of sadism. In the singularization of each of these perversions, Deleuze invents a first version of his theory of the "event." The pain of the one who suffers in a masochistic relation possesses a completely



different essence of pain from that of the individual who suffers in a sadistic relation. This essence concerns not only the voluntary or involuntary character of the suffering, but the type of relation that is established between the torturer and the victim. This relation is a pure event, endowed with a haecceity, a singular essence, which is incarnated in each perverse relation. This relation hence can be defined neither as erogenous or sensual (as a pleasure-pain relation) nor as moral or sentimental (as a guilt-punishment relation). It is a pure dramaturgical relation. As Deleuze says: “Masochism is above all formal and dramatic; this means that its peculiar pleasure-pain complex is determined by a particular kind of formalism, and its experience of guilt by a specific story [*une histoire spécifique*]” (M 109). Although the theory of the event, as we have identified it, only appears for the first time with *The Logic of Sense*, Deleuze himself recognized that this dramatic structure of masochism anticipated the theory of the event of 1969.<sup>10</sup>

*Masochism* is filled with this need for proper distinctions, which range from the most literary aspects to anthropological questions of desire, of the nature of law or of the metaphysics of the negative. For example, as concerns the role of description in suffering, Deleuze shows to what extent the texts of Sade are demonstratives; they represent the pursuit of a complete exposition of bodies and movements; they are obscene in themselves. In Masoch, one finds an unusual decency. Masochism is not demonstrative but dialectical. Excitation is attained through expectation, through waiting, suspending something promised but never realized. This decency explains why “Masoch was not a condemned author but a fêted and honored one” (M 26).

Likewise, on the plane of a metaphysics of nonbeing. The two perversions depend on a process of negation, negation of immediate pleasure, and negation of the natural drive for the fusion of bodies. Deleuze distinguishes negation as a partial process and pure negation as a totalizing idea. These two levels of the concept are present in Sade. As we have seen, Sade establishes an opposition between two natures: the primordial and the pure, which is the foundation of life in itself; and a secondary nature, that of institutions, tied together by rules and laws. Sadistic violence is the process of negation of the secondary nature through transgression, through profanation, in order to reach original and pure nature. However, this negation of rules is only destruction and is only the reverse of creation. Here, the negative is a partial process, where disorder is another form of order. Negation as a totalizing idea can never be achieved. The operation that takes place in masochism, by contrast, is not a negation, but a denegation. This is the negation of a trait of negativity in the real—for example, when the fetishist invests the phallic characteristics of objects adjacent to the woman, all while saying “no, it’s not true that the woman doesn’t have a penis.” Denegation takes place on three

levels: (1) positive ideal denegation of the mother; (2) annihilating denegation of the father; and (3) denegation of genital sexuality.

At the same time that Deleuze traces the borderline between sadism and masochism, he seeks their points of complementarity. He can thus show the extent to which the two regimes of pleasure exhaust the field of perversion. The two essences of the experience of pleasure-pain, that is, the two perversions, reveal the most intimate structures of the psychic field, or better, the internal structure of the transcendental universe itself.

The second contribution that Deleuze offers to an understanding of this perversion is related to the role of the woman in masochism. Contrary to the interpretation that considers every perversion as a symbolic struggle against the father (every perversion is a *père-version* [father-version]), Deleuze argues that this privilege of the image of the father is valid only for sadism. To transfer the paternal and patriarchal theme of sadism to masochism; to assert in the understanding of the pleasure of the victim, the representation of a father and attempt to seize his virile potency [*puissance*], through a fear of castration as punishment, and to renounce this active goal and take the place of the mother in order to offer oneself to the father and his violence—is to remain enclosed in the prejudice of a sadomasochistic unity.<sup>11</sup> In Deleuze's analysis the central figure in masochism is the mother.<sup>12</sup> The father is indeed present, but in order to be canceled, ridiculed. "The masochist feels guilty, he asks to be beaten, he expiates, but why and for what crime? Is it not precisely the father-image in him that is thus miniaturized, beaten, ridiculed, and humiliated? Is it not his resemblance to the father, the resemblance of the father, that he expiates? Isn't the formula of masochism the humiliated father? To such an extent that the father is less beater than beaten?" (M 59–60; trans. modified). Contrary to Reich, who views the violent woman as the disguised father, Deleuze shows the directly matriarchal character of desiring to be beaten and to expiate. There are three fundamental images of the mother: the uterine mother, the mother of open spaces; the Oedipal mother, image of the beloved mother; and between the two, the oral mother, the mother of the steppes, the mother who nourishes and who brings death. All these images express a single movement of direct magnification of the mother as an object of love and, as such, impossible reality. The mother in masochism becomes identical with the law in its impossibility. All these roles of the mother are the counterpoint of roles of the father in sadism. "If it is true that sadism presents an active negation of the mother and an inflation of the father (who is placed above the law), masochism proceeds by a twofold denegation, positive, ideal denegation of the mother (who is identified with the law) and an invalidating denegation of the father (who is expelled from the symbolic order)" (M 68; trans. modified).

The autonomy of the role of the mother in masochism, which goes hand in hand with the autonomy of masochism as singular essence, may be viewed as the point of departure for the later disagreement regarding the role of the father (and hence of the Oedipal trinity) in the structure of desire, and, above all, the disagreement with Lacan and his concept of the symbolic.<sup>13</sup> Without saying it explicitly, Deleuze refers to Lacan when he complains about the way psychoanalysis “in its most advanced explorations” identifies the law with the name of the father.<sup>14</sup> Because his analysis of the role of the mother in masochism allows him to reject the attribution to the father of the exclusive role of representative of the law, Deleuze can propose a new explication of the emergence of symbolic structure. A new approach to the relation between desire and law, and, thus, a new approach to the distinction, proposed by Lacan, between the real, imaginary, and symbolic, here finds its first articulation. In *Masochism*, Deleuze critiques the Kantian aspects of the concept of the law. He accepts the Freudian interpretation of Kantian moral and juridical formalism, such as one finds in Lacan. According to Freud, the renunciation of instinctual gratification is not the product of conscience, is not the consequence of respect for the law; on the contrary, conscience itself is born of this renunciation. Conscience is the heir of the actions of repressed drives. In his famous text “Sade and Kant,” which Deleuze follows closely, Lacan concludes that the law is the same as repressed desire (cf. Lacan 1966: 765–90). One can only desire what the law prohibits. And the law is the real object of desire. According to Lacan, the law for Kant is a pure form, a pure experience of respect. The object of the law and the object of desire are a single and same thing, and they remain equally hidden. “So, it is demonstrated,” says Lacan, “that desire is the reverse of the law” (Lacan 1966: 787).

In masochism, the law receives a content, it is intra-maternal, and it is identified with the image of the mother, at once uterine, oral, and object of love. This law is no longer manifest as something to transgress, to profane, as in sadism, in order to reach a pure, primitive nature beyond norms and institutions, but as something impossible, untouchable. It is as impossible that the law becomes productive, that it induces desire. But a desire that can exist only in waiting, in the suspension of its effectuation. All the ritual scenes of physical suspension, crucifixion, taming in the novels of Masoch remain incomprehensible if they are not put in relation to the form of suspense, and in particular with the temporal form that makes them possible: delay, waiting, and postponement. As Deleuze puts it, “In fact, the form of masochism is waiting. The masochist is the one who waits in a pure state. [. . .] That such a form, such a temporal rhythm with its two flows, should be precisely ‘filled’ by a certain combination of pleasure-pain, is a necessary consequence. Pain comes to fulfill what is awaited, at the same time that the pleasure fulfills what one awaits. The masochist awaits pleasure as something

that is essentially late, and awaits pain as a condition that finally makes possible (physically and morally) the advent of pleasure” (M 71; trans. modified). Suspension and waiting have as their object the impossibility of the mother and, at the same time, they make the image of the mother, as fetish, the unique content of the law of this infinite delay. To the empty law of Lacan and to the cruel condition of the name of the father that must be transgressed, Deleuze opposes the full law as a frozen image of the impossible mother. To the symbolic that produces desire as lack, he opposes the symbolic that produces desire as suspense and awaiting.

This new concept of the law leads Deleuze to another opposition between sadism and masochism: the opposition of institution and contract. Sadism presupposes the invention of the institution as opposition to the law. Masochism follows the model of the contract and of submission. To realize the denegation that transposes reality into phantasm, the masochist needs to establish a contract with someone who adopts the function of the executioner, the torturer. This contract is antecedent to or even independent of the law. The contract presupposes in principle the consent of the contractual parties, and it determines a system of rights and reciprocal duties between them. The contract cannot involve a third party and it is valid for a limited time. The institutions of Sade, by contrast, determine a long-term state of things, which is both involuntary and inalienable. They establish a power or an authority that has an effect against a third party. The masochistic contract is the very site of the constitution of the law, whereas institutions, constructed counter to the law, established in order to be transgressed, make the law useless.<sup>15</sup> Deleuze can thus present sadism and masochism as two complementary kinds of relation to the law. The sadistic hero subverts the law through irony. He seeks something beyond the law—the institution and nature. Sadism is a dialectic of the search for a transcendent principle—anarchy or the idea of an absolute daemon. By contrast, masochism is a descending movement, which goes from the law to its consequences and from the phantasm to waiting and suspension. The sadist is ironic, and the masochist is humorous.

Masochistic suspension is the fusion with the object in its condition as an impossible object, in which the real and imaginary are united. In masochism, the fetish, that is, the fixed image, the petrified image of the mother, becomes at once the Lacanian symbolic, imaginary, and real. The frozen image is at once the law of desire, its impossible object, and the effectuation of the advent of pleasure. In opposition to Lacan and his equation of the role of the father and the empty structure of the law, Deleuze proposes, through the autonomization of the etiology of masochism, the equation of the role of the mother and the full structure of the law. And this law, because it is full, condenses in itself the three dimensions of the soul: the dimensions of the law, desire, and pleasure. To this new version of the Lacanian trinity, in which

everything is condensed in the reality of a single image, Deleuze gives the well-worn name “phantasm.” One can thus say that in masochism, everything is phantasm and everything is related to the phantasm. “The real, as we have seen, is affected not by negation but by a denegation that transposes it into the phantasm. Waiting represents the unity real-ideal, the form or the temporality of the phantasm. The fetish is the phantastic object par excellence. [. . .] We may speak less of masochistic phantasms than a masochistic art of the phantasm” (M 72; trans. modified).

## REASON AND IMAGINATION IN PERVERSION

To the reign of the norm and obligation, the sadist opposes the false experience of nature without laws that he obtains as the imperative of an idea of reason. To the conventional norm, he opposes new laws of reason that are nothing but the transgressions of earlier obligations. The sadistic novel is thus a novel of reason, and the fictional double of the world is only the negation of the world of experience by reason, starting from an idea. As Deleuze says, Sade’s novel is “pure negation, a delirium, but a delirium of reason as such” (M 27; trans. modified).

As we just said, the masochistic novel is constructed via another mechanism, the mechanism of denegation—that operation that consists of neither denying, nor even destroying a dimension of experience, but rather of contesting the merit of that which is, that which exists. The center of this denegation is the false castration of the woman. The masochist first says that the woman does not lack a penis, so that, in a second moment, he can produce the fetish, the image or substitute of the feminine phallus. The fetish thus belongs essentially to masochism; the fetish makes the woman, whose lack of a penis he denies, an instance of protective, idealizing neutralization. Hence, the fetish is constituted as an autonomous object. The question here is not one of denying the world or destroying it, but of idealizing it as a dream, as a phantasm into which the real itself is carried. Denegation leads to the suspension of the movement of desire in order to transfer it toward the phantasm and toward an idealized world that condenses frozen poses, photographic scenes, in eternal repetition. “In Masoch’s novels, everything culminates in suspense. It is no exaggeration to say that Masoch introduces into the novel the art of suspense as a novelistic source in its pure state: not simply because the woman-torturer adopts frozen poses that are like those of a statue, a portrait or a photo. Because she suspends the descent of the whip or the removal of her furs” (M 33; trans. modified). All is denegation, and all is suspension, because all, in the masochistic novel, is related to the phantasm. Masoch’s novel neutralizes the real and suspends the ideal in the interiority of pure frozen images that

are the very consequence of the denegation of this real. Both the real and the ideal are transferred into the fictional domain of frozen images. And the unity of this real and the ideal is obtained in suspense, in pure waiting, and in the petrification of time that defines the temporality of the phantasm. We understand that the fetish is itself petrified and phantasized: the masochistic fetish is indeed an image of the woman in suspension. Deleuze can thus say that the masochistic constellation revolves round the phantasm. "The real [. . .] is affected not by negation, but by a sort of denegation that transposes it into the phantasm. Suspense performs the same function in relation to the ideal, which is also relegated to the phantasm. The fetish is the object of the phantasm, the form or temporality of the phantasm. The fetish is the object of the phantasm, the phantasized object par excellence" (M 72; trans. modified).

It is not only from the point of view of fictional mechanisms that sadism and masochism may be distinguished. The sadistic negation of laws, on one hand, and the masochistic denegation of the real, on the other, correspond to different faculties. The first is the product of reason. The world of nature, the world without laws, which the sadist wants to reach through the transgression of all institutions, has the condition of a delirious fiction produced not by sensibility or by imagination, but by the faculty of ideas. By contrast, the process of denegation and suspension is the fundamental effect of the imagination. It is in the images of decors, of chiaroscuro boudoirs, that the art of suspense is built. The gesture is interrupted at the moment of the passage to action so that it may be frozen in the phantasm, as the equivalent of the timelessness of the ideal. The sadistic idea and the masochistic ideal. They are objects belonging to different worlds. The idea has its genesis in reason, the ideal in the imagination. Deleuze condenses the difference between Sade and Masoch precisely in this difference between pure reason and pure imagination. "In the work of Sade, imperatives and descriptions transcend themselves toward the higher function of demonstration: the demonstrative function is based on universal negativity as an active process, and negation as an *Idea* of pure reason; it operates by conserving and accelerating the description, which is overlaid with obscenity. In the work of Masoch, imperatives and descriptions also achieve a transcendent function, but of a mythical and dialectical order. This function rests on the ensemble of denegation as a reactive process and of suspension as an *Ideal* of pure imagination" (M 35; trans. modified). The sadistic idea is speculative. By contrast, the ideal of the masochist belongs to the domain of myth. The sadistic novel is presented as descriptive and analytic, whereas the masochistic novel is "imaginary" (M 35).

These two perverse forms of literature therefore offer a new formulation of the project of transcendental empiricism. They make evident not only how aesthetic experiences are at the origin of the system of the faculties, but also the extent to which this system has its ultimate condition in the forms of the

relation of desire to its objects: reason in the negation of the real through violence against the symbolic and the imagination in the denegation of the real through the suspension of desire in the ideal. And as in Kant, there is a harmonic correspondence between the faculties and their objects. Reason is the faculty of ideas, and imagination is the pure faculty of the ideal.

But the faculties do not have a disjointed use. It is true that sadism is above all an effect of pure reason. Beyond sensation and imagination, the violence against laws is conducted via other laws, those deduced from the idea. The phantasm, however, like the work of the imagination in the process of denegation and suspension that is essential to it, is not exclusive to the masochistic novel. There is an efficacy specific to the phantasm in Sade, a sadistic use of the imagination, as “violent power [*puissance*] of paranoid projection through which the phantasm becomes the instrument of a change” (M 73; trans. modified). In Sade, the mechanism of the negation of the world of laws transforms the imagination into a power [*pouvoir*] of the production of effects and into a power of realization. Through the sadistic phantasm, reason and imagination project the idea on the real and do violence to it. There is a realization of the phantasy for the sadist. By contrast, for the masochist it is a question of the phantasization of the real. The masochistic phantasm is the site of the suspension of the real. The real, in the masochistic experience, is introjected and is absorbed in the phantasm, investing all violence and all excess in these images in suspension and in these frozen scenes. Deleuze thus stresses the central, and at the same time opposed, role of the phantasm in Sade and Masoch. With Sade, “the phantasm acquires maximum aggressive power, systematization and capacity of intervention in the real: the Idea is projected with extraordinary violence. The masochistic use of the phantasm is totally different: it consists in neutralizing the real and containing the ideal in the pure interiority of the phantasm itself. [ . . . ] By contrast, the constitution of the fetish in masochism points to the inner force of the phantasm, its characteristic of patient waiting, its power [*puissance*] of suspense and freezing, and the way in which the ideal and the real are together absorbed by it” (M 71; trans. modified). Realizing or neutralizing, the phantasm always plays a decisive role in the perverse novel. In both cases, the phantasm is the instrument par excellence of this novelistic genre that creates a fictional double of the world. And in both cases, imagination is this world’s birthplace and its place of existence. One cannot exaggerate the importance of the role of the phantasm and the imagination in *Masochism*. Deleuze is able to establish a correlation of essence between, on one hand, the process of denegation and suspense, and on the other, the faculty of imagination. “Nor is denegation in general just a form of imagination; it is nothing less than the foundation of imagination, which suspends the real and incarnates the ideal in this suspense” (M 128; trans. modified).

Are we now faced with a new concept of the imagination? The definition of the imagination through the operations of denying and suspending was already present in his book on Nietzsche, when Deleuze showed the correlation between the faculty of nonreal images and the will to nothingness of bad conscience. And in the Proust book, imagination is always presented as the effect of nonrealization produced by an investment in sense (or sentiment) that fails to reveal essence. Nonetheless, nowhere before has Deleuze devoted such attention to the role of the imagination in his system of the faculties. The book on Masoch may be seen as presenting his great theory of the imagination. It is the moment where the question of nonactuality—in all the mechanisms of nonrealization such as denegation, suspension, and fiction—occupies for the first time the center of Deleuze’s labors.

Certainly, one could say that the association of masochism with an art of the phantasm and the activity of the pure imagination is inevitable. One could even believe that Deleuze merely develops the consequences, in his theory of the faculties, of his analysis of the mechanisms of suspension and denegation that characterize the novels of Sacher-Masoch. And yet, Deleuze himself later breaks this association of masochism with imagination. A decade after the publication of *Masochism*, Deleuze returns to the theme of masochism, but to define it against a theory of the imagination. Such is the case in *A Thousand Plateaus* (1980). The concept of masochism there proceeds precisely through the abandonment of this equivalence “suspension–imagination–phantasm.”

In *Anti-Oedipus*, the reference to masochism and sadism disappears completely. Deleuze and Guattari are no longer interested in perverse forms of desire. This evolution may be recognized in the disappearance of the theme of perversion in *Anti-Oedipus* and its replacement by the theme of schizophrenia (a form of psychosis that Deleuze had explicitly left alone in *Masochism*, for, as he explained, perversion remains precisely between neurosis and psychosis). It’s only in the 1973 appendix to *Anti-Oedipus*, “Balance-Sheet for ‘Desiring Machines,’” that one finds praise of a text from M’Uzan’s *Perverse Sexuality* (Payot 1971), where the author breaks with the Freudian reading of masochism showing that the perverse mechanism has nothing to do with phantasms, but only with programs.<sup>16</sup>

It is this same need to replace a theory of masochism as phantasm with a theory founded on the idea of the program that organizes *A Thousand Plateau’s* chapter “How to Make Yourself and Body without Organs,” the portion of the book that is most focused on masochism. After two long citations from William Burroughs’s *Naked Lunch*, in which Burroughs describes a masochistic ritual, Deleuze and Guattari write: “This is not a phantasm, it is a program: There is an essential difference between the psychoanalytic interpretation of the phantasm and the antipsychiatric experimentation of the program. Between the phantasm, an interpretation that must itself be interpreted,



and the motor program of experimentation” (ATP 151; trans. modified). And in a note, they refer to this same text of M<sup>U</sup>zan they had cited in the appendix to *Anti-Oedipus*, where the opposition between the phantasm and the program was first established.<sup>17</sup> The concept of the Body without Organs does away with the psychology of the phantasm and the explication of masochism. “The BwO is what remains when you take everything away. What you take away is precisely the phantasm, and significances and subjectifications as a whole. Psychoanalysis does the opposition: it translates everything into phantasms, it converts everything into phantasm, it retains the phantasm. It royally botches the real, because it botches the BwO” (ATP 151; trans. modified). This same critique of the use of the concept of the phantasm to understand masochism can be found in relation to the concept of the “plane,” as it occurs in the exposition of the concept of becoming (becoming-animal, becoming-intense, becoming-imperceptible). According to Deleuze and Guattari, psychoanalysis has often encountered phenomena of becoming-animal, above all in the case of fetishism and masochism, but it has always converted them into Oedipal metamorphoses of the human, all too human, anatomy of the parents. And this becoming-animal has nothing to do with a phantasm. It is a plane.<sup>18</sup>

From its introduction in *Anti-Oedipus*, the theory of the body without organs, then, depends on the critique of the correlation of masochism and the phantasm, which organized *Masochism* and *The Logic of Sense*. And what is most striking is the fact that this critique had no effect on the way in which Deleuze reads his own development. Deleuze denounces his own interpretation of masochism without recognizing it as his own. It is as if he were denouncing someone else and as if he were simply denouncing the psychoanalytic approach to the structure of perversion.

In the same fashion that he rids himself of the theory of the phantasm without recognizing that he has abandoned the most fundamental of his theories, he seems also to act as if he never shared with Freud and Lacan the concept of “death drive” as a means of explaining masochism. “Take the interpretation of masochism: when the ridiculous death drive is not invoked, it is claimed that the masochist, like everybody else, is after pleasure but can only get it through pain and phantasied humiliations whose function is to allay or ward off deep anxiety. This is inaccurate; the masochist’s suffering is the price he must pay, not to achieve pleasure, but to untie the pseudobond between desire and pleasure as an extrinsic measure” (ATP 155; trans. modified).<sup>19</sup>

Without the phantasm and the “ridiculous death drive,” how should we think of masochism? A significant part of *A Thousand Plateaus* is dedicated to constructing a new understanding of this pleasure that is “in no way something that can be attained only by a detour through suffering, but is something that must be delayed as long as possible because it interrupts the continuous process of positive desire” (ATP 155; trans. modified).

To measure the effects of this concept of masochism in the texts that follow *Masochism*, it is important to recognize the problematic character of the theory of the phantasm and the imagination that organizes the understanding of masochism in that book. One must accompany Deleuze in his path from the enormous privilege granted the faculty of imagination in his transcendental analysis of the pure conditions of the desire–pleasure relation to his radical refutation of the role of the faculty of images and phantasms ten years later. One may even say that to understand the role of the theory of masochism in his study of literature as perverse experience, it is necessary to take into consideration the fact that this theory goes across almost the entire oeuvre of Deleuze in various forms. Only this “panoramic” approach to the ensemble of paradigms associated with masochism that one finds in his understanding of the phenomenon of the absolute immanence of desire gives us access to the theoretical stakes of his reading of the literary techniques of Sacher-Masoch. Only recognition of the fact that Deleuze will abandon the concept of the phantasm and the psychology of the imagination and the imaginary allows us to determine in a rigorous fashion the specific theses of this 1967 book.

And in this passage, in this metamorphosis of the theory of masochism, we find a significant part of the merits of his approach to literature in *The Logic of Sense*.

### EVENT AND PHANTASM IN *THE LOGIC OF SENSE*

*The Logic of Sense* has two parts. The first is an immense metaphysics of the event, as that which makes language possible. The second is a physics of the phantasm, that quasi-reality, neither real nor imaginary, where the event becomes expression. One may say that the key chapter is the twenty-sixth, “Of Language.” Deleuze here draws up the balance sheet of the incorporeal characteristics of the event—it is the result of bodies, but it differs in nature from that of which it is the result; it is attributed to bodies, but only as an incorporeal attribute, as the expressible or the expressed of the proposition in which these attributes are enunciated. After this, Deleuze moves to the question of the incorporation of the event, the question of “the expressivity” of sense in a body. It’s a matter of moving from the plane of surfaces to that of the depths, to the plane that is not a plane of the state of things, but of the body–mouth, the body–breast where orality takes place. At this point Deleuze adopts the viewpoint of a dynamic genesis; he explores the story of that which liberates sounds and renders them independent of bodies in order to designate qualities, in order to signify subjects and predicates. The task of the new chapter, “Of Orality,” is thus that of understanding an expressive depth, a depth that makes visible the sense/event. This depth is defined as a

“theater of terror” (LS 187) where each of us, from the first year of life, is at once the stage, the actor, and the drama of a complete system of introjections of partial objects (the breast and all the body of the mother) and of projections of aggression on internal objects (alimentary and excremental).

Deleuze calls this world of introjected and projected objects the “world of simulacra.” From the perspective of Melanie Klein, whose work Deleuze uses here, this world corresponds to the paranoid–schizophrenic position of the infant. This is followed by the depressive position, where libidinal drives are organized around Oedipus, with its confirmation of the superego and its formation of the ego. The system introjection–projection, then, is succeeded by the system of the identification through symbolization with objects that are increasingly better organized. This reconstitution of a complete object on the mode of the *good* object wrests libido from the depths of the paranoid–schizophrenic position. The identification mechanism of the depressive position invests objects, not in the depths, but from on high. Schizophrenic subversion is replaced by depressive ascension or conversion. The world of *good* objects is not the world of the simulacrum, but of the “idol.” There is thus an ontogenetic recapitulation of the phylogenesis of occidental thought: “Schizophrenic pre-Socratic philosophy is thus followed by depressive Platonism” (LS 191).

But these two stages do not exhaust the genesis of expressivity. There is—and Deleuze once again takes up psychoanalysis—a third stage and a third position: the sexual-perverse. It is the investment of elective zones of the body, erogenous zones, in a relation of auto-eroticism. In this stage, the object of satisfaction is projected onto the territory that defines each erogenous zone. This projection is inseparable from an ego that is tied to the territory and that experiences satisfaction. As auto-erotic, the object can only be projected as “image.” The narcissistic ego thus inhabits a world of images, which are neither of the depths, like simulacra (correlates of sexual drives), nor of the heights, like the idols of the superego, but on the surface, as products of the connection of the ensemble of erogenous zones.

The archetypal image is that of the phallus. “The phallus, in this respect, does not play the role of an organ, but rather that of a particular image projected, in the case of the little girl as well as the little boy, onto the privileged (genital) zone” (LS 200). The phallus has the function of directly and globally integrating or generally connecting erogenous zones. It also has the function of pacifying schizoid aggression and depressive frustration. It has known the adventure of the depths (but as simulacrum in the body of the attacked and attacking mother), as well as the adventure of the heights (identified as an idol of the body of the father, as a good and complete object). This story of the phallus tied to the schizoid and depressive positions is the condition of possibility of the Oedipus complex. As an image of the mother (wounded

body) and an image of the father (good object drawn up into the heights), the phallus invests the cleavage of the two parents on the infant's own body. "The transition from the bad penis to the good is the indispensable condition for accession to the Oedipus complex in its strict sense, to genital organization" (LS 200; trans. modified). The phallus, as image, is hence an instrument of the surface. It is destined to repair the wounds of the drives of the depths and to reassure the idols from on high that are now on the surface of erogenous zones. For Deleuze, the Oedipal phallic phase is the triumph of the surface. Oedipus is a herculean hero, a hero of surfaces. And it is thus on the surface that the unconscious organizes its Oedipal family romance.

This conveyance of the depths and the heights to the Oedipal surface has as a correlate the conveyance of simulacra and idols to the plane of the image. Oedipus, and the entire family romance, is not only an image, but it is the image par excellence. It designates the great action—that of repairing the mother and evoking the father—but designates it as image. We all dream this image.<sup>20</sup> For Deleuze, it suffices to establish the equivalence between this concept of "action in image" and the concept of the "event," in order that the Oedipal family romance be presented as pure event, *eventum tantum*.<sup>21</sup>

We have reached the nuclear point of *The Logic of Sense*. The relation between incorporeal event and incorporeal expressivity is given through the Oedipal family romance as phantasm. The pure event is Oedipus; the pure event is the Oedipus phantasm. "Psychoanalysis is correct to recall the role of Oedipus as a 'nuclear complex'—a formula which has the same importance as Husserl's 'noematic core.' For it is with Oedipus that the event is disengaged from its causes in depth, spreads itself at the surface and connects itself with its quasi cause from the point of view of a dynamic genesis. It is the perfect crime, the eternal truth, the royal splendor of the event—each one of which communicates with all the others in the variants of one and the same phantasm" (LS 212).<sup>22</sup>

This equivalence between the phantasm and the event in *The Logic of Sense* is important to understand. Why is it necessary for Deleuze to insist on the condition of the pure event of the phantasm, on its condition of ideality? Why its neutral character, preindividual, and impersonal? The answer must be found above all in the contrast between the theory of the phantasm presented in *Masochism* and the theory we find in *The Logic of Sense*. Both the ideality and the neutrality of the phantasm correspond to the need to conceive of the literary power/capacity [*puissance*] of perversion beyond a theory of the perverse imagination. In contrast to *Masochism*, perversion as literary mechanism is no longer the work of denegation, no longer the creation of the imagination. We have seen in *Masochism* that the founding mechanism of the perverse phantasy of the masochist is denegation. And denegation—which always concerns castration—is the essence of the imagination. As Deleuze

writes in the 1967 book, “Nor is denegation in general just a form of the imagination; it is nothing less than the foundation [*le fond*] of the imagination, which suspends reality and establishes the ideal in the suspended world. Denegation and suspense are thus the very essence of the imagination” (M 128; trans. modified).

The book on Sacher-Masoch is built on a psychological equivalence between the act of suspending or denegating and the act of constituting the faculty of the imagination. There is imagination because one suspends and one denies the real in order to incarnate it in the ideal, and in a parallel fashion, one suspends the real in ideal images or phantasms because one imagines. This reciprocal explication of denegation and imagination, of suspension and phantasm, has a clearly Sartrean inspiration. In “The Imagination” and *The Imaginary*, Sartre defines the plane of images, in opposition to the plane of perceptions, in terms of the phenomenological act of negation or suspension of belief in the real. The imagination is a nonpositional consciousness of the world; it is produced through a neutralization of the thesis of the real.<sup>23</sup> In this way, Sartre presents literature as fiction, that is, as an imaginary double of the world obtained through negation of this same world. Without explicitly referring to Sartre, Deleuze takes up the Sartrean phenomenology of the negative act as constitutive of the imaginary. The only difference is the distinction between sadistic “negation” and masochistic “denegation” within this negative act. This difference does not exist in Sartre’s book on the imaginary. But that doesn’t mean that the idea is without Sartrean origin. It is decisive in *Being and Nothingness*. One finds it in the third chapter of part 3 (The For-Itself), in paragraphs 1 and 2, dedicated, respectively, to masochism and sadism (cf. Sartre 2003: 365–412).

In *The Logic of Sense*, Deleuze abandons the phenomenological perspective of negation. The sexual-perverse position no longer has anything to do with denegation. It’s true that the perverse position has a fundamental relation with castration. But *The Logic of Sense* conceives of this relation no longer as denegation of the lack of the mother’s phallus, but as the passage from the bad penis of the father to a good reparative penis of the maternal image. And this passage is achieved not through a mechanism of the imagination, but by accession to the Oedipus complex. It is the Oedipal family romance, this pure event of Oedipus, that produces the phallus as an image. And the image is not a product of the imagination. It is the correlate of a metaphysical instance, the correlate of the Oedipal phantasm-event. In the Masoch book, imagination constitutes the phantasm through suspension of the real. The perverse phantasm is thus on the side of the imaginary, it is the negative of the real. By contrast, in *The Logic of Sense*, the pure event that constitutes the essence of the phantasm is neither real nor imaginary. “The distinction is not between the imaginary and the real, but between the event as such and the

corporeal state of affairs which incites it or in which it is actualized” (LS 210; trans. modified). There is no distinction between a lived psychological state [*un vécu psychologique*] (denegation, suspension) and a physical exteriority. For this reason, “neither active nor passive, neither internal nor external, neither imaginary nor real—phantasms have indeed the impassibility and ideality of the event” (LS 211; trans. modified). Or again, “the phantasm, like the event which it represents, is a ‘noematic attribute’ distinguished not only from states of affairs and their qualities, but from the psychological lives and from logical concepts as well” (LS 211; trans. modified). The phantasm has characteristics that are still phenomenological, but those of a phenomenology that is no longer psychological but noematic. The phantasy is not the result of an act of negation or denegation of reality. It is an autonomous reality, a reality in itself. Deleuze defines it as impassible and as ideal. It is as ideal as the event it represents, and as real as the noematic kernel of a perceptive consciousness.

This displacement in the theory of the phantasm has enormous consequences for an understanding of the literary work of art. We have underscored the fact that the entirety of *Masochism* is an experiment in reading the art of the novel as a perverse affair. Sade and Masoch are always considered as writers and as great writers.<sup>24</sup> To approach the process of phantasmatic fiction, not from a theory of the imagination and the mechanisms of denegation and suspension, but as expression of a theory of the event, is to found fiction in an ontology, in an ontology of ideal events. The thought of the literary work of art becomes a description of epiphanies of events, a noematic phenomenology of novelistic configurations of the world.

## NOTES

1. “*Masochism: Coldness and Cruelty* opens with a Sartrean question: ‘What use does literature serve?’ We must take this question literally. Literature serves something, it has a positivity, a force of clarification: it produces something. In this 1967 text Deleuze already takes a very strong position in favor of a functionalism of literature which vigorously rejects the principle of an autonomy of literature, of a closure of the text. Art is not its own end, and it serves something, not itself or nothing at all” (Sauvagnargues 2005: 52).

2. “In Masoch [. . .] everything is persuasion and education. [. . .] We are dealing with a victim in search of a torturer and who needs to educate, persuade and conclude an alliance with the torturer in order to realize the strangest of schemes. This is why advertisements are part of the language of masochism while they have no place in true sadism, and why the masochist draws up contracts while the sadist abominates and destroys them. The sadist is in need of institutions, the masochist of contractual relations” (M 20; trans. modified).

3. “Indeed, the work of Masoch is on the whole commendable for its unusual decency. [. . .] Consequently Masoch was not a condemned author but a fêted and honored one. Even the blatantly masochistic elements in his work gained acceptance as the expression of Slavonic folklore or of the spirit of Little Russia” (M 25–6).

4. As Chantal Thomas explains, “six hundred passions, that is, in ‘libertine language,’ six hundred sexual manias, are thus catalogued and described according to a gradation that goes in the direction of a greater complexity and the breaking of all normative barriers. From the beginning of November to the end of February, the ‘quadrumvirate’ of masters must include all who fornicate in the secret of the alcoves. [. . .] Through their enunciated concern for exhaustivity and through the enumeration of the catalogue by which they align the narrations of the ‘historians,’ one can see in *The Hundred Days of Sodom* a precursor text to the works of the sexologist Kraft-Ebbing, in the 19th century” (Thomas 1994: 116–17).

5. “Hence the well-known *apathy* of the libertine, the self-control of the pornologist, with which Sade contrasts the deplorable ‘enthusiasm’ of the pornographer” (M 29).

6. Deleuze follows very closely the analyses of Sade in Bataille, Klossowski, and Blanchot. Cf. M 17, 19, 27, 39, 59, 72, and 129.

7. “It is unfair not to read Masoch, when Sade has been the object of such penetrating studies both in the field of literary criticism and in that of psychoanalytic interpretation, to the benefit of both” (M 133; trans. modified).

8. The program of transcendental empiricism is also constructed, as François Zourabichvili remarks, on the masochistic principle of suspension, the suspension of subjectivity. “There is more to ‘aesthetic suspense’ than the idea of making suspense a novelistic procedure. If after Kant and Schiller something like an aesthetic field establishes itself, it is within a gesture of suspense, suspense of interests and passions that creates the distance necessary to contemplate things in their true form or appearance. In Masoch, suspense is literary and always has the effect of transforming the scene into a painting. [. . .] In masochism, something intimately concerns aesthetics, as it is developed simultaneously in the wake of Kant and against Kant because of the aporia or dilemma Kant left his readers in the idea of a disinterested pleasure” (Zourabichvili 2006: 92).

9. “Our transcendental inquiry showed that while Eros is what makes possible the establishment of the empirical pleasure principle, it is always necessarily and inseparably linked with Thanatos. Neither Eros nor Thanatos can be given in experience; all that is given are combinations of both—the role of Eros being to bind the energy of Thanatos and to subject these combinations to the pleasure principle in the id. This is why Eros, although it is no more given in experience than Thanatos, at least makes its presence felt; it is an active force. Whereas Thanatos, the ground-less, supported and brought to the surface by Eros, remains essentially silent and all the more terrible. [Also, it seems necessary to retain the word ‘instinct,’ death instinct, to designate this transcendental and silent instance. As for drives, erotic and destructive drives, they must simply designate the components of given combinations, that is, the representatives in the given of Eros and Thanatos, the direct representatives of Eros and the indirect representatives of Thanatos, always mixed together in the id]” (M 116; trans. modified [the passage from “Also” to the conclusion of this citation is omitted in the English translation]).

10. “In my study on Masoch, and then in *The Logic of Sense*, I thought I’d discovered things about the specious unity of sadism and masochism, or about events, that contradicted psychoanalysis but could be reconciled with it” (N 144).

11. “Isn’t belief in the role of the father in the interpretation of masochism simply the result of a sadomasochistic prejudice, and solely of this prejudice?” (M 59; trans. modified).

12. This critique of the Lacanian vision (and the psychoanalytic vision in general) of the figure of the father within perversion may be read as a first critique of the Oedipal paradigm of psychoanalysis. In masochism, there is almost an expulsion of the father from the plane of desire and the law. We will return to the “Anti-Oedipus” *avant la lettre* when we open our discussion of the first volume of *Capitalism and Schizophrenia*.

13. For Lacan, the symbolic function is essentially tied to the paternal function. The law is always the name of the father. “The paternal function concentrates in itself imaginary and real relations, always more or less inadequate to the symbolic relation which essentially constitutes it. It is in the name of the father that we must recognize the support of the symbolic function which, since the beginning of historical times, identifies his person with the figure of the law” (Lacan 1966: 278).

14. “It is therefore surprising that psychoanalysis, even in its most advanced explorations, links the emergence of a symbolic order with the ‘name of the father.’ This is surely to cling to the singularly unanalytical conception of the mother as the representative of nature and the father as the sole principle and representative of culture and law. The masochist experiences the symbolic order as inter-maternal, and poses the conditions under which the mother, in this order, is one with the law” (M 63; trans. modified).

15. “The contract is truly the generator of a law, even if this law oversteps and contravenes the conditions which made it possible; the institution is of a very different order, rendering laws useless, and replacing the system of rights and duties with a dynamic model of action, of power and potency [*pouvoir et puissance*]” (M 77; trans. modified).

16. “In one of the finest texts ever written on the subject of masochism, Michel de M’Uzan shows that the perverse machines of the masochist, which are machines in the strict sense of the term, cannot be understood in terms of the phantasm or imagination, just as they cannot be explained in terms of Oedipus or castration, by means of projection. There is no phantasm, he says, but—and this is something totally different—a *programming* which is ‘essentially structured outside the Oedipal problem complex’ (at last, a little fresh air in the house of psychoanalysis, a little understanding for the perverse)” (Guattari 2009: 95).

17. “The opposition program-phantasm appears clearly in the work of Michel de M’Uzan, in relation to a case of masochism. See M’Uzan in *La sexualité perverse*, ed. Isle and Robert Barande et al. (Paris: Payot 1972), p. 36. Although he does not specifically discuss this opposition, M’Uzan uses the notion of the program to question the themes of Oedipus, anxiety, and castration” (ATP 531; trans. modified).

18. “We wish to make a simple point about psychoanalysis: from the beginning, it has often encountered the question of the becomings-animal of the human being: in children, who continually undergo becomings of this kind; in fetishism and in



particular masochism, which continually confront this problem. The least that can be said is that psychoanalysts, even Jung, did not understand, or did not want to understand. They killed becoming-animal, in the adult as in the child. They saw nothing. They see the animal as a representative of drives, or a representation of the parents. They do not see the reality of a becoming-animal, that it is affect in itself, the drive in person, and represents nothing. There exist no other drives than the assemblages themselves. There are two classic texts in which Freud sees nothing but the father in the becoming-horse of Hans, and Ferenczi sees the same in the becoming-cock of Arpad. The horse's blinders are the father's eyeglasses, the black around its mouth is his mustache, its kicks are the parents' 'lovmaking.' Not one word about Hans's relation to the street, on how the street was forbidden to him, on what it is for a child to see the spectacle 'a horse is proud, a blinded horse pulls, a horse falls, a horse is whipped. . . .' Psychoanalysis has no feeling for unnatural participations, nor for the assemblages a child can mount in order to solve a problem from which all exits are barred him: a *plan(e)*, not a phantasm. Similarly, fewer stupidities would be uttered on the topic of pain, humiliation, and anxiety in masochism if it were understood that it is the becomings-animal that lead in masochism, not the other way around" (ATP 259–60; trans. modified).

19. It is very surprising that Monique David-Ménard, in her chapter, "Éloge du masochisme. Critique de la notion de plaisir," uses the same passage to show, not a contradiction, but the total continuation of *Masochism in A Thousand Plateaus*. As she writes, "Masoch is thus, for Deleuze, the occasion for a critique of Freud on the role that he grants pleasure in the analysis of desire. Masochism, by contrast, is an organization of symptoms which, to be grasped in their specificity, require that one entirely recast the notion of pleasure, so that it no longer is content with its psychoanalytic obscurity. In *A Thousand Plateaus*, in 1980, this passage via the analysis of masochism will be resumed in its conceptual ramifications in a lucid fashion" (David-Ménard 2005: 34).

20. As Deleuze says, "in the unconscious, everyone is the offspring of divorced parents, dreaming of restoring the mother and bringing about the return of the father, pulling him back from his retreat: it seems to us that this is the basis of what Freud called the 'familial romance' and its linkage with the Oedipus complex" (LS 204).

21. "The very notion of Image, after having designated the superficial object of a partial zone, and then the phallus projected on the genital zone, and the pellicular parental images born of a cleavage, comes finally to designate action in general. The latter concerns the surface—not at all a particular action, but any action which spreads itself out at the surface and is able to stay there (to restore and to evoke, to restore the surface and to summon to the surface). But, on the other hand, the action effectively accomplished is no more a determined action which would oppose the other, nor a passion which would be the repercussion of the projected action. Rather it is something that happens, or something which represents all that can happen; better still, it is the necessary result of actions and passions, although of an entirely different nature, and itself neither action nor passion: event, pure event, *Eventum tantum* (to kill the father and castrate the mother, to be castrated and to die)" (LS 207).

22. “What is psychoanalysis talking about with its grand trinity of murder-incest-castration, or of devouring-eventration-adsorption, if not about pure events? *Totem and Taboo* is the great theory of the event, and psychoanalysis in general is the science of events. [ . . . ] As the science of pure events, psychoanalysis is also an art of counter-actualizations, sublimations, and symbolizations” (LS 211–12).

23. “We can now grasp the essential condition for a consciousness to be able to *image* [*imaginer*]: it must have the possibility of positing a thesis of irreality. But we must make this condition more precise. It is not a question of consciousness ceasing to be consciousness *of* something. It is in the very nature of consciousness to be intentional and a consciousness that ceased to be consciousness *of* something would there cease to exist. But consciousness must be able to form and posit objects affected by a certain character of nothingness in relation to the totality of reality. One can recall, in fact, that the imaginary object can be posited as nonexistent or as absent or as existing elsewhere or not be posited as existent. We notice that the common characteristic of these four theses is that they include the entire category of negation, though in different degrees. Thus the negative act is constitutive of the image” (Sartre 2004: 182–3).

24. “Masoch does not use the romantic dream, but the phantasm and all the powers [*puissances*] of the phantasm in literature. Literarily, Masoch is the master of phantasm and suspense; if only through this technique, he is a great writer” (M 133; trans. modified).



## Chapter 3

# The Proust of 1970

## *The Literary Machine*

### THE LAW

The second edition of *Proust and Signs* (1970), which includes the new chapter “Antilogos: The Literary Machine,” represents a unique moment in Deleuze’s thought. It’s almost an impossible text, constructed on theoretical planes that scarcely communicate with one another. It contains broad psychoanalytic themes that Deleuze had adopted in works written before, and it already works within the concepts that will produce the theoretical break that will be found in *Anti-Oedipus* two years later. One sees, side by side, worlds that grow increasingly separate. On one hand, we find the Lacanian trinity of the symbolic–imaginary–real. We also find the concept of the “death instinct” as transcendental principle that organizes the analysis of the mechanisms of denegation and suspense in *Masochism* and the three syntheses of time of *Difference and Repetition*. On the other hand, everything is organized around the concepts of “machine” and “transversality,” which, after 1972, will become the foundation of Deleuze’s vitalism of desire.

The most extreme point of this differing discontinuity, of this cleavage in suspense, is evident in the central concept of the second edition of the Proust book: the concept of “law.” Law functions on several planes. It is, at once, the mode of unity of numerous strata of the *Recherche*, the site of the engendering of the system of signs, and the real principle of the syntheses of time. In each plane, a single and sole thesis, the law is empty, it is pure form. The law determines what it unifies, what it engenders, or what it founds without ever giving itself as such. “The law becomes a primary power insofar as it controls a world of untotalizable and untotalized fragments. The law no longer says what is good, but good is what the law says; it thereby acquires a formidable unity: there are no longer laws specified in such and such a manner, but there

is *the* law, without any other specification. It is true that this formidable unity is absolutely empty, uniquely formal, because it causes us to know no distinct object, no totality, no Good of reference” (PS 131). The law produces connections, produces repetition, and produces erasure, but it has no matter that can be known, and it is the cause of nothing. In order to think this paradoxical character of the law, Deleuze defines it at the same time as death instinct and as machine. The law is forced movement without matter and, also, pure repetition without content. It punishes, it produces pain, and it writes its nihilistic will in bodies. In each case, if it functions in the void, it nonetheless applies the harshest sanctions on bodies. “Not causing us to know anything, the law teaches us what it is only by marking our flesh, by already applying punishment to us, and thus the fantastic paradox: we do not know what the law intended before receiving punishment, hence we can obey the law only by being guilty. [. . .] Strictly speaking unknowable, the law makes itself known only by applying the harshest punishments to our tortured body [*le corps supplicié*]” (PS 132; trans, modified). The law exists first in the tortured individual. The law is that individual’s guilt and that individual’s pain. Deleuze thus again takes up the Lacanian thesis of the paradox of the law. The symbolic stratum, which is opposed to the imaginary and the real, is the heir of the death instinct. The entire second part of *Proust and Signs* is hence a meditation on this relation between law and death, and between the order and the instinct of death.

## THE DEATH INSTINCT

Deleuze here returns to his analyses of *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, which he used as the foundation of his reading of masochism. But now, in order to flee the (Freudian) interpretation of the death instinct as qualitative and quantitative return of living matter to inanimate matter, Deleuze presents it in the form of pure repetition, repetition for itself, that is, in the form of the machine. If he can explain the injunctive force of the law through its character as instinct, but an instinct that moves beyond the pleasure principle, he can make visible the formal condition of the law through machinic repetition. Machine and death instinct become the two sides of the symbolic.

This same relation between machine and death instinct is resumed in the two other dimensions of the Lacanian trinity. The real is the machine *habitus*; the imaginary is the machine *Eros-Mnemosyne*. All we need do is impose this trinity on the three syntheses of time that Deleuze formulates in *Difference and Repetition* in order to rewrite Deleuze’s entire reading of Proust. The 1964 fourfold approach to time gives way to a ternary system. *Habitus* is the foundation of time upon a living present; *Eros* constitutes the continuous flow of the pure past; *Thanatos* is the third synthesis, time as pure form.

Thanatos takes on a central role. Thanatos is indeed only one of the machines, the machine that erases and the machine that effaces. The death instinct, hence, is only one of the three syntheses of time, that of the pure form of time. But, because it is the non-ground, it unites the two others in their unconditioned truth. Thanatos makes them function in pure form.<sup>1</sup> Thanatos is therefore the ultimate law, where all other laws converge. It is the ultimate law because it is pure form and pure machine.

The relation between “law” and “death instinct” as instrument for reading Proust may be summarily sketched in a simple note in the chapter “Repetition for Itself” in *Difference and Repetition*. Under the title, “Note on the Proustian Experiences,” and after having recapitulated the nature of two temporal series—that of a former present (Combray as it had been lived) and that of an actual present—Deleuze writes: “Moreover, the resonance of the series may give rise to a death instinct which overruns them both: for example, the ankle-boot and the memory of the grandmother. Eros is constituted by the resonance, but overcomes itself in the direction of the death instinct which is constituted by the amplitude of a forced movement (this death instinct finds its glorious issue in the work of art, over and above the erotic experiences of the involuntary memory). The Proustian formula ‘a little time in its pure state’ refers first to the pure past, the in-itself of the past or the erotic synthesis of time, but more profoundly to the pure and empty form of time, the ultimate synthesis, that of the death instinct which leads to the eternity of the return in time” (DR 122). The equivalence between the pure and empty form of time and the death instinct already forms the center of *Difference and Repetition*. It’s only the idea of the machine that is not yet present in this 1968 book. It appears for the first time in *The Logic of Sense* as a means of thinking the relation between the unconscious and sense as production.<sup>2</sup>

But its introduction in the 1970 text on Proust gives the concept of the death instinct, in its relation with the unknowable law, and the role of a new center of the *Recherche*.

## THE FIRST LITERARY MACHINE

The 1970 edition of *Proust and Signs* is the first text to establish the relation between the figures of the law, the syntheses of time, transcendental principles, and types of machines. Proust functions, once again, as the laboratory of Deleuze’s theoretical experimentation. The starting point for the replacement of a description of the syntheses of time, with the modes of the functioning of machines, is the attribution to the *Recherche* itself of the status of machine, a literary machine. And the inspiration for this attribution, as Deleuze reveals in *Anti-Oedipus*, is Blanchot.<sup>3</sup>

But it is still Lacan who inspires the most fundamental aspect of this reading: the triadic structure of the machines. There are three machines: the machine of the fragmented real; the machine of desire, which puts fragmented parts in resonance; and the machine of the symbolic, which produces forced movement through the idea of death. Deleuze calls the first, after Melanie Klein, the “machine of partial objects,” that which produces fragments without totality, noncommunicating vessels, and enclosed scenes. The second type of machine he calls a “resonance machine.” “The most famous are those of involuntary memory, which puts into resonance two moments, one present and one earlier” (PS 151; trans. modified). The third is the most complex. Deleuze has no simple name to designate it. Deleuze calls it the point of resolution of the two other machines, the two other orders of time. “This contradiction appears here in its most acute form: the first two orders were productive, and it is for this reason that their reconciliation raised no special problem; but the third order, dominated by the idea of death, seems absolutely catastrophic and unproductive. Can we conceive a machine capable of extracting something from this kind of painful impression and of producing certain truths? So long as we cannot, the work of art encounters ‘the gravest objections’” (PS 158).

It’s the idea of death that is revealed to be the third machine. And paradox of paradoxes, despite its catastrophic condition, it is not only productive, that is, not only is it possible to fashion sense and truths with pain and anguish in the face of death, but also that the very idea of death makes all the machines truly productive. According to Deleuze, the last volume of the *Recherche* can only illustrate the effect produced by the accumulation of past time in the faces of characters through the need to finish the book that is infinite in itself. In the salon of Mme. De Guermantes, death spreads over every glance and every gesture. It’s solely in the presence of a new type of signs, beyond sensible signs, amorous signs, worldly signs, and the signs of art (i.e., it is solely in the presence of the signs of aging, of sickness, and of death) that Marcel, the narrator, discovers the urgency—and the sense—of his novel. And in the same manner that, in the 1964 edition of *Proust and Signs*, essence, although only revealing itself in the signs of art, is retrospectively discovered to have always been present in the other signs, as being that which establishes the connection between the sign and its sense; so, in the 1970 edition, the idea of death, although being visible only in the signs of the journey to the tomb, is always already in all the other orders of signs.<sup>4</sup> The idea of death, this perception of a movement that pushes us, despite ourselves, toward dissolution, toward aging, toward illness, and toward nothingness, is hence the ultimate foundation of the very act of writing. Instead of being an objection, instead of raising a possible paradox against the sense of every effort, against the sense of the struggle for art, it is, on the contrary, the condition of the literary work

and its real genesis. “The idea of death ceases to be an ‘objection’ provided we can attach it to an order of production, thus giving it its place in the work of art. The forced movement of great amplitude is a machine that produces the effect of withdrawal or the idea of death. [. . .] A machine of the third order comes to join the preceding two, a machine that produces the forced movement and thereby the idea of death” (PS 159–60). And this idea of death has a name: the death instinct, Thanatos. Only this pure form of the law as anticipated nothingness that is written on each body and renders it guilty without ever giving itself as such, only this unproductive catastrophe, can produce the unity of the machines and put them into action. Thanatos is the ultimate and first machine.

Deleuze thus brings to completion his system of machines in Proust. He takes up the trinity of Lacan, term by term. “The entire *Recherche* sets three kinds of machines to work in the production of the Book: *machines of partial objects (impulses)*, *machines of resonance (Eros)*, *machines of forced movement (Thanatos)*” (PS 160). Having established this new transcendental field, where impulses, Eros and Thanatos, have acquired the nature of an ultimate *a priori*, Deleuze can hence propose a new deduction of the general conditions of experience, not possible, but real. To each machine he assigns a type of sign, a type of movement, a form of time, a way of functioning, a specific world as its transcendent corresponding use, a mode of essence, and a regime of decoding.

The partial objects machine produces essence as general laws, as truths of groups and series. The corresponding signs are “worldly signs and the signs of love—in short, whatever obeys *general laws* and intervenes in the production of lost time” (PS 149). It functions through cutting and through fragmentation. Its world is the transsexuality of the beloved, and its truth is not gained through deciphering or interpretation, but through translation. The faculty that interprets them is the intelligence. The resonance machine, also, has a specific regime. It produces essences that are “no longer a general law, of group or series, but a singular essence, a local or localizable essence in the case of the signs of reminiscence, an individuating essence in the case of the signs of art” (PS 152). The signs that correspond to reminiscence are the sensible or natural signs. The resonance machine also produces artistic signs as the incarnation of individuating essence. In reminiscence and in artistic essences, it produces regained time. It functions through the recording and the transmission of a code or a chain. It unfolds the possible worlds of the loved one. Its specific faculty is involuntary memory for natural signs in reminiscence and pure thought for artistic signs. Finally, there is the machine of forced movement. It still concerns art, “but is defined by *universal* alteration, death and the idea of death, the production of catastrophe (signs of aging, disease, and death)” (PS 149).



This is an entirely new group of signs. As we have noted, in the 1964 edition Deleuze identifies four types of signs: the sensible, the amorous, the worldly, and the artistic. The four-term structure respects the table of four faculties—in relation with the four forms of time and four types of essence. Now, to adapt his semiology to the Lacanian tripartite division, he groups the four signs of 1964 two-by-two. The sensible and artistic signs are placed on the side of Eros, the imaginary. The worldly and amorous signs now correspond to the partial objects machine, that is, to the domain of drives and the domain of the real. As regards the forced movement machine, Deleuze invents different types of signs, signs of aging, sickness, and death. These are the signs of Thanatos.

If the drive machine represents empty time as opposed to the full time of Eros, and lost time as opposed to time regained, with the Thanatos machine, “it is time itself that becomes sensible” (PS 160; trans. modified). Time itself is given several forms in Thanatos. It is first the horizon, the infinitely dilated time that the materiality of all contents acquires, where everything is mixed and confused, a time occupied as much by the living as by the dead. It is also the pure form of time, beyond the living present of partial objects and the pure past of resonances. Beyond *Habitus* and beyond Eros, beyond lost time and time regained, it is a new lost time, or better, a time of perdition, of disappearance, of forced movement toward the tomb. But this lost time of Thanatos becomes the pure form of the literary work and the law in its ultimate unity. There are thus three dimensions of time: “lost time, by fragmentation of partial objects; time regained, by resonance; lost time that has been lost in another way, by amplitude of the forced movement, this loss having then passed into the work and become the condition of its form” (PS 160).

The Thanatos machine functions by cutting flows and by erasing objects and resonances. It leads the lover to the discovery of impossible worlds, as closed vessels. Its sense is given, not in interpreting or translating, but in deciphering. Deleuze attributes no specific faculty to Thanatos nor any corresponding essence. The intelligence of the partial objects machine produces essences in series, generic essences. Involuntary memory accedes to singular essences. But Deleuze says nothing about what the death instinct produces. He remains silent as well about the mode of being affected by the death instinct. He timidly uses Heideggerian concepts. On one hand, he speaks of “an intolerable anguish [. . .] in a certainty of death and nothingness” (PS 157). On the other hand, the idea of death itself—although it founds the dimension of lost time, that is, although it makes sensible form appear as a horizon that is infinitely dilated—has its genesis, in an inverse fashion, in “a certain effect of Time” (PS 159).<sup>5</sup> Time itself, sensible time, produces the faculty adequate to its experience, produces this anguish not in the face of the representation of one’s death, but in the face of the certitude of death and of nothingness.

Deleuze finds himself between a transcendental aesthetics and a philosophy of Nature. He wants to think the unity of the *Recherche*, the system of its signs, the forms of time that traverse it. But he hesitates between his Kantian heritage and his Lacanian euphoria, between an anesthesiology as a new doctrine of the faculties and an anthropology of the law in its relation to desire and the impossible real. The concept of machine is indeed a compromise solution. Machines produce objects, produce desiring resonances between these objects and cut flows, erase time regained, in order to establish fragmentarity, closed vessels, and open boxes. Machines are already the expression of a vitalism. They function like pure forms of empty repetition, and, at the same time, they are the most universal matter of drives and instincts. For Deleuze, it's the same thing to speak of drives of the Id or partial objects, to speak of Eros, the pleasure principle of the ego or of resonances between disjunctive series. There is a permanent equivalence between the death instinct, the superego, the forced movement machine, and anguish in the face of death and nothingness. Machines produce reality and, at the same time, produce the mode of being affected by the objects produced, that is, signs, forms of time, essences, faculties, and, in a word, types of truths.

From the 1964 edition to the second part added in 1970, from a regime of four times to a generalized trinity, Deleuze puts his transcendental empiricism in variation in/toward a vitalism of machines. This text signals the advent of *Anti-Oedipus* and its entire politics of desiring machines.

Why place this 1970 text alongside the first part of *Proust and Signs*, as if it were simply a matter of completing the theory of faculties and essences? This question becomes more urgent when we recognize that the third part of *Proust and Signs*, published separately in 1973 and then added to the book in 1976, goes beyond the universe of *Anti-Oedipus* to open up the physics of collective assemblages of enunciation of *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*.

## NOTES

1. "The first synthesis expresses the foundation of time upon the basis of a living present, a foundation which endows pleasure with its value as a general empirical principle to which is subject the content of the psychic life in the Id. The second synthesis expresses the manner in which time is grounded in a pure past, a ground which conditions the application of the pleasure principle to the contents of the Ego. The third synthesis, however, refers to the absence of ground into which we are precipitated by the ground itself: Thanatos appears in third place as this groundlessness, beyond the ground of Eros and the foundation of *Habitus*. [. . .] In one sense the third synthesis unites all the dimensions of time, past, present and future, and causes them to be played out in the pure form" (DR 114–5).

2. Deleuze says that Freud is “the prodigious discoverer of the machinery of the unconscious by means of which sense is produced. [. . .] Today’s task is [. . .] to produce sense” (LS 72–3).

3. “Maurice Blanchot has found a way to pose the problem in the most rigorous terms, at the level of the literary machine: how to produce, how to think about fragments whose sole relationship is sheer difference—fragments that are related to one another only in that each of them is different—without having recourse either to any sort of original totality (not even one that has been lost), or to a subsequent totality that may not yet have come about?” (AO 42).

4. “Everywhere the approach of death, the sentiment of the presence of a ‘terrible thing,’ the impression of an ending or even of a final catastrophe upon a déclassé world that is not only governed by forgetting but corroded by time. [. . .] Beneath the ecstasies, was there not already lurking the idea of death and the slipping away of the earlier moment? Thus when the narrator leaned down to unbutton his boot, everything began exactly as in ecstasy, the present moment set up a resonance with the earlier one, resuscitating the grandmother leaning down; but joy had given way to an intolerable anguish, the pairing of the two moments had broken down, yielding to a sudden disappearance of the earlier one, in a certainty of death and nothingness” (PS 156–7).

5. “Of what, then, does this idea of death consist, which is so different from the aggression of the first order (somewhat as, in psychoanalysis, the death instinct is distinguished from partial destructive impulses)? It consists of a certain effect of Time” (PS 159).

## Chapter 4

# The Proust of 1973

## *The Madness of the Narrator*

### FROM THE GENESIS OF THE FACULTIES TO THE GERMINATION OF MADNESS

In the last edition of *Proust and Signs*, there are only two regimes of signs: discursive signs and nondiscursive signs. The difference is made within two levels of reality: on one hand, the surface of normality, where discourse is possible, and, on the other, the depths of madness, where there is only non-language. Deleuze also tells us that the signs of logos are divided into the voluntary and involuntary, and that the involuntary signs are further divided into the signs of violence and the signs of madness, the latter related either to the delirium of interpretation or to the delirium of an erotomaniacal or jealous type of demand. Charlus is considered the greatest emitter of signs, and Deleuze's entire analysis of discursive signs is related to this character. It's in terms of these signs that the successive transformation of Charlus must be understood: as a master of logos, that is, as possessing an imperial individuality,<sup>1</sup> Charlus is traversed by two singular points, the eyes and the voice, that break this nebulous primary character and reveal a mystery to be disclosed.

The singular points are heterogeneous elements that introduce intensity into the system, that is, that function like a differential. These points (which can also be called aleatory points or zero points) are points of germination and points of genesis. In the analysis of the three speeches [*discours*] of Charlus, it is the program of transcendental empiricism that is always at play. But here, it's no longer a matter of the genesis of faculties, but of the germination of madness. These points serve to explicate the production of madness, and of antilogos. This genesis is involuntary, because it is provoked by the intensity of madness. When Charlus is speaking, his eyes and his voice reveal another order within the organized order of logos. The singular points are discordant

series that, from within and through their molecular intensity, make the molar machine of logos fragile. Charlus functions like a molar machine of discursive signs. He therefore moves from being a vertical galaxy of logos to a galaxy that presents itself “as an enormous blinking sign, a huge optical and vocal box” (PS 172; trans. modified).

Hence, the analysis of the three great speeches of Charlus, the master of logos, as the most striking example of the rending of logos and the genesis of madness within his character. It’s less a matter of the description of the speeches than of their deformation and their corruption by forces that traverse them from outside. And this is the expressivity, the domain of nondiscursivity, and the sphere of the visibility of tensions, which affects thought.

The three exchanges [*discours*] Charlus maintains with the narrator are delivered in a relation that, Deleuze suggests, is like that of a prophet or a priest with his disciple or student. According to Deleuze, Charlus offers these speeches in his guise of being a galaxy-box, where a series of discourses (voice) pulsed by a vacillating gaze (eyes) proliferates—the two singular points, which are at the base of the difference of intensity among the three speeches. All the speeches reveal a power/capacity [*puissance*] that breaks them and that is the sign of a new order that already functions within them. From the beginning, the apparent mastery of logos is disturbed by involuntary signs that ruin it. Such is the case with the speech in which a “virile content of what is spoken coexists with an effeminate manner of expression” (PS 172; trans. modified). Thus, if the first speech is said to be “filled with a noble tenderness,” it nevertheless reaches an “aberrant conclusion” in a “coarse and prophetic remark,” when he says, “You don’t give a damn about your old grandmother, do you, you little snout” (PS 173). The second speech begins with the attestation of an infinite distance that Charlus wants to maintain with the narrator, but it finishes with the suggestion of a contract between the two that guarantees an intimate contact, during a fantasy of Charlus. This speech corresponds to the time of distancing. The third speech is the one where “logos goes haywire” (PS 173). The time that corresponds to it is the time of the unexpected. It’s the discourse of disorganization, of the eruption (unexpected) of madness. “It is this pathos that will now reveal itself as such, in Charlus’s appearances where he speaks less and less from the summit of his sovereign organization and increasingly betrays himself in the course of a long social and physical decomposition” (PS 174).

The two times still belong to the universe of psychoanalysis, to the extent that they are the times of masochism (contract of distancing and denegation) and sadism (negation). The time of these speeches varies according to their intensity, speed, and rhythm (time of denegation and time of distancing for a discourse that is still that of logos). The third time, the time of the unexpected, is the sign of Deleuze’s rupture with psychoanalysis. The first

time of denegation is that of *Difference and Repetition* and *Masochism*; the second time of distancing belongs to the universe of *The Logic of Sense*; and the unexpected time of madness corresponds to a new paradigm, that of *Anti-Oedipus*; it is the time of madness and of anti-logos. Hence, there are three geneses of madness according to three forms of time: the time of denegation of the speech of Charlus-prophet; the time of distancing of Charlus-disciple who offers a contract; and the unexpected time of Charlus-master of logos.

The singularity of the third edition of *Proust and Signs* is thus the application of the theory of schizophrenia of *Anti-Oedipus* to the theory of signs that Deleuze finds in Proust. The return to the question of signs is conducted in the light of the 1972 theory of schizoanalysis, which conceives of the relation of the individual to the real as being formed through delirium.<sup>2</sup> On the basis of *Anti-Oedipus*'s theory of delirium, Deleuze asks whether, in the *Recherche*, there is not also a delirium, in this case, a delirium of signs. His answer is in the affirmative. Now, Deleuze sees Charlus and Albertine only as examples of the dichotomy of the delirium of signs. To understand this dichotomy, Deleuze uses *Anti-Oedipus*'s distinction between schizophrenia and paranoia. He knows that the duality of the delirium of signs in the *Recherche*, from the beginning, is marked by the psychiatry of Proust's time. If Deleuze focuses on Charlus and Albertine, among the more than a thousand characters of the *Recherche*, it's because they are the only ones who embody the age's psychiatric distinction between two deliriums of signs: deliriums of a paranoiac type of interpretation and deliriums of an erotomaniacal or jealous type of demand.<sup>3</sup> The distinction between the two types of delirium of signs is made between paranoia, as pursuit by the other, and erotomania and jealousy, as pursuit of the other.

In taking Charlus and Albertine as the objects of his study, Deleuze is able to think the presence of madness in them as a kind of general law of the composition of the *Recherche*. The great problem is that of reconciling the theory of the first two editions of the Proust book with that of *Anti-Oedipus*. We must not forget that when Deleuze speaks of the signs of madness in the conclusion of *Proust and Signs*, it is after already constructing a "schizophrenic" theory of signs with Guattari in *Anti-Oedipus*. How may one reconcile Proustian signs with schizz-signs? And, why did Deleuze adopt such an imposing title as "Conclusion" for this 1976 return to Proust, written and published separately in 1973? A conclusion that is nothing less than a battlefield, a conceptual cleavage, in short, a veritable plane of composition in full operation? Why not simply add it as a supplement, as he had done earlier in the appendices of *The Logic of Sense*? Does the designation of this return to *Proust and Signs* as a "Conclusion" indicate a question left open in 1970, or is it the consciousness of a revolution to come? Or, should one consider

this return as a kind of nonrecognition of Deleuze's change in theory. Or yet again, is this return to Proust simply an effect of a post-*Anti-Oedipus* moderation? We cannot say. These questions inevitably lead us into a sort of psychological interpretation of Deleuze's psyche.

At any rate, we believe that there is an opening, a subterranean path between the 1970 *Proust and Signs* and its conclusion of 1973 (1976). In effect, the two parts of the 1970 book lacked a conclusion. And if it is true that the great change from a semiology and a theory of expression took place in *Anti-Oedipus*, where signs are conceived of as nonsignifying in a schizophrenic chain within which desire produces discourse, already in 1970, in the second part of *Proust and Signs*, Deleuze introduced for the first time and from the first page, the theme of schizophrenia in the opposition of logos and pathos. The first chapter of the second part has the title "Antilogos." There, logos is placed on the plane of "the dialectic as Conversation among Friends" (PS 105), that is, on the plane where the organism is thought in terms of totalizing communication. Logos is the rational dimension that is furthest from the Proustian world. The world of pathos is characterized by the non-logical and disjointed use of the faculties against their logical or conjoined usage.<sup>4</sup> Deleuze characterizes the secondary characters who belong to logos (Saint-Loup, Norpois, and Cottard) in order to show the bankruptcy of logos, that is, to show that, behind the apparent logos of these characters, there is a nonlogical or allogical force stronger than the forces that have traversed them from the beginning.

This evident opposition goes hand in hand with another new opposition. It is at the end of the chapter "Antilogos" that Deleuze formulates, for the first time, the opposition between the organic and the nonorganic.<sup>5</sup> However, the opposition is drawn, on one hand, in terms of the fragmentary and the crystal, and on the other, in terms of the vegetal, with the organic identified with the animal. The idea of the body without organs appears only in the third edition, precisely to show the total absence of the unity of the work of art. But in the second part of *Proust and Signs* of 1970, even though he is already wary of the idea of unity, Deleuze still believes in a unity of the multiple and fragments, a unity not conceived of as a principle, but instead as the effect of machines.<sup>6</sup> He finds this unity in the "formal structure of the work of art" (PS 168), that is, in transversality, which gives the parts and the style a singular unity, individual and hence irreducible to all totality and unification.

But what must be stressed is that it is only in the third edition of 1973 that we are completely submerged in the apotheosis of desire. Deleuze now speaks only of schizophrenia, of the signs of madness, and of the two regimes of thought (discursive and logical/nondiscursive and pathological). Communication itself, as produced by transversality, becomes "aberrant" (PS 177).

It is Deleuze himself, already in 1972 in *Anti-Oedipus*, who discloses the leitmotif of this enormous theoretical change that occurs in the third part of *Proust and Signs*: “We live today in the age of partial objects, bricks that have been shattered to bits, and leftovers. [. . .] In the literary machine that Proust’s *In Search of Lost Time* constitutes, we are struck by the fact that all the parts are produced as asymmetrical sections, paths that suddenly come to an end, sealed boxes, noncommunicating vessels, watertight compartments, in which there are gaps even between things that are contiguous. [. . .] It is a schizoid work par excellence” (AO 42–3). Abruptly the *Recherche* is presented as the very monument of a schizoid literary object. One can see the extent to which, in understanding the third (and final) edition of the Proust book, we must approach it through the program of a schizoanalysis formulated in this 1972 book. But that means above all that we must direct our gaze toward what is, perhaps, the most fundamental aspect of *Anti-Oedipus*: its philosophy of nature. The question posed from the beginning of the first edition of *Proust and Signs*, concerning the form of the unity and composition of the *Recherche*, derives now from a new form fundamental to life: no longer the vegetal of the first edition, nor even the metaphor of the cathedral or the dress, but something that was first enunciated in *The Logic of Sense*: the body without organs. This is what we find in the third part of the Proust book, when Deleuze says clearly that the *Recherche* is not constructed like a cathedral, but like a spider web in the process of being woven, and its web is a body without organs (PS 182).

The *Recherche*, as schizoid work par excellence, offers Deleuze and Guattari the model of a philosophy of nature of desiring machines. We read further in *Anti-Oedipus*: “Hence Proust maintained that the Whole itself is a product, produced as nothing more than a part alongside other parts. [. . .] As a general rule, the problem of the relationships between parts and the whole continues to be rather awkwardly formulated by classic mechanism and vitalism, so long as the whole is considered as a totality derived from the parts, or as an original totality from which the parts emanate, or as a dialectical totalization. Neither mechanism nor vitalism has really understood the nature of desiring-machines, nor the twofold need to consider the role of production in desire and the role of desire in mechanics” (AO 43–4). Artworks in general and the *Recherche* in particular are not fashioned through mechanism or vitalism, but are constructed through a machinism in which desire is already present.<sup>7</sup>

Already in the two editions of the Proust book that preceded the final edition, the notion of transversality functions as a machine, as the aleatory point in the *Recherche*. Indeed, the idea of the machine, the idea of the modern art work as machine, is introduced in 1970. The second part of *Proust and Signs* is the world of transsexuality, of hermaphroditism, and of vegetal innocence,



“where homosexuality and heterosexuality cannot be distinguished any longer” (AO 319). It’s also the world of the machine and transversality.

But only in the third part do this transversality and this machine have a name: madness. Madness as a “conclusion” of the growth of nature along with the universal history of the artistic machine. Madness thus functions as a motor piece of this fusion. The literary machine that is the *Recherche*, thus, is madness. Deleuze and Guattari have already explained in *Anti-Oedipus* that schizophrenia is the very reality of desire and that desire is production. Desire is first of all a machine, production of desire not as lack but as superabundance of desire. We must stress that in *Anti-Oedipus*, when presenting schizoanalysis, Deleuze and Guattari were confronted with the need to define the theoretical basis of this new method of analysis—and this basis is none other than a new philosophy of nature. Schizoanalysis corresponds to a functionalism, which is above all an alternative to vitalism and to mechanism.

According to *Anti-Oedipus*, in the literary machine of the *Recherche* one can discern three fundamental differences in madness: the distribution of madness, its function, and its use. We find the same approach in the third part of *Proust and Signs*. The presence of madness is first thought through these three questions: What distribution of madness? What use of madness? What function of madness? These questions can be included in the more general question: What functionalism? It is this basic plane that is at work in what Deleuze and Guattari call “the real question of schizoanalysis: What drives your own desiring-machines? What is their functioning? What are the syntheses into which they enter and operate? What use do you make of them?” (AO 290).<sup>8</sup> Schizoanalysis, functionalism, madness, signs. An entirely new semiological system is drawn up, and an entirely new philosophy of nature is in play. “Finally some relation to the outside! A whole alphabet, an entire axiomatic done with photos of mad people” (AO 290). Sense, sign, and interpretation are less important than their use, their function, and their distribution. Functional semiology on a molecular scale. The sign invested from inside, in a genetic chain: the sign that is economic, social, political, historical, cultural, and religious. Sign of the outside. Desiring sign, delirious sign. The question of *Anti-Oedipus*, “How does a delirium begin?,” serves perfectly as a way of understanding the stakes of the third edition of *Proust and Signs*, that is, the stakes of the delirium of signs, of the delirium of interpretation of the narrator-spider. Once more, the return to *Proust and Signs* in 1973 takes shape as the literary exemplification of the theory of desire and schizophrenia of *Anti-Oedipus*.

In the question of the presence of madness in the *Recherche*, we are concerned no longer with the theme of apprenticeship and truth, as in the first part, nor with the theme of the law of the fragmentary world, as in the second. True, from the first edition, one can perceive a very subtle movement toward

the gradual appearance of madness.<sup>9</sup> The characterization of logos is a very suggestive example ad contrarium. In 1964, Deleuze makes no distinction between the sphere of logos and that of pathos, and if he conceives of the apprenticeship in truth as the interpretation of hieroglyphs, it is not to introduce a delirious perspective, but rather to provide a necessity for the process of apprenticeship. Logos is here understood as the good will of a thought that thinks through love of the true, through a natural inclination toward the true. Logos belongs to logical and possible truth, which constitutes abstract knowledge and which derives identity only through resemblance.

It is in contrast to the status of this thought that Deleuze identifies the hieroglyph and chance as the elements of a necessary thought, a thought constructed on the matter of signs, and a matter that always introduces difference. These signs in themselves imply heterogeneity and essence, defined as alogical or supralogical.<sup>10</sup> This is ultimate and absolute difference. Thus, Deleuze can say that all apprenticeship takes place in time, the apprentice being a carpenter and a lover who suffers. It's not a matter of imitation, of acting *like* someone, but *with* someone while always working with the matter of signs. Isn't this precisely what defines becoming, nonresemblance? We are, in fact, in the presence of an intensive theory of the faculties, which no longer bears resemblance as the rational activity par excellence of consciousness. It's a matter of delirious faculties that become one with the matter which they bear. The faculties thus become nondiscursive and their machinic function is impersonal: no longer faculties of an ego, even without consciousness (second part of the Proust book), but the "facultied" event that makes multiplicities out of the matter that they perceive.

As for the problem of the distribution of madness, Deleuze distinguishes the discursive madness of Charlus from the madness of individuation of Albertine. Charlus emerges as a given individuality, but an individuality so superior and imperial that he makes perceptible, as a secret to be disclosed, his aberrant communication, his speeches that are both virile and effeminate. By contrast, there is Albertine: her communications being given, her secret resides rather in her individuality itself. The question no longer concerns the violence of nondiscursive signs that emerge in the speech of Charlus, but bear on Albertine's individuation itself: "which of the girls is she? How to extract and select her from the undifferentiated group of *jeunes filles*" (PS 178).

The problem of essence—so important in the preceding editions—is now reduced to the question of individuation and individuality. Charlus is "imperial individuality" that functions like a galaxy constructed around two singular points: eyes and voice. This galaxy contains secrets, unknown parts. It's a matter of a primary, superior individuation, whose trouble is that of communication. Albertine, by contrast, presents a secondary individuation in relation to the primary communication that characterizes the galaxy of the

group of young girls in which she is mixed. If Charlus possesses a superior, singular individuation, Albertine possesses an inferior individuation, that of a group, a mixed individuation that only becomes singular through imprisonment. What's interesting is that Deleuze is in the process of considering Charlus and Albertine as singularities such as they are conceived in *The Logic of Sense*, as emitters of series and as entities constructed by singular points (see LS 52–7). However, in place of the concept of the “event,” Deleuze now proposes the concepts of “galaxy” and “machine.” He can thus consider the relations of language as modes of the use of madness. The investments of Charlus-master of language are verbal, that is, even if his speeches are in “beautiful language,” their content is empty. What matters in his speeches is form—expression, not content. Things are presented as involuntary signs, counter to discourse. Hence, in all his speeches, his eyes and his voice make evident elements of a domain other than that of logos. If in Charlus “everything happens by means of words, but on the other hand nothing happens in words” (PS 178), in Albertine, by contrast, “everything can happen in language (including silence) precisely because nothing happens by means of language” (PS 178). Thus, Albertine can lie, because, in her case, things impose on language a discourse subject to the involuntary.

The final difference between Charlus and Albertine concerns the function of madness, which is made via the distinction between two types of delirium of signs. The Charlus-madness is manifest as paranoia in deliriums of interpretation, whereas the Albertine-madness is expressed as erotomania or jealousy in deliriums of revenge. The differences between the types of delirium may be summed up in six ways. By their nature (delirium of ideas in paranoia, delirium of the act in erotomania); by their onset/commencement/appearance (insidious for the deliriums of interpretation; abrupt for those of revenge); by their development (progressive; successive); by the form/production (radiating circular sets; finite linear processes); by their investment (verbal; of the object); and by their formation (dependent on endogenous forces; tied to real or imagined external circumstances).<sup>11</sup> It is possible to see a seventh aspect of the distinction between two deliriums of signs, one that concerns their modality, that is, the type of belief that accompanies the assignment of madness to certain of its aspects. Thus, Charlus's madness begins by being a simple “probability” and becomes a “quasi-certainty” at the end of the novel, whereas Albertine's madness is presented retrospectively, as being a “post-humous likelihood” (PS 171).

## PHILOSOPHY OF NATURE I: SEXUALITY

In the third part of the Proust book written in 1973, a new question informs the work on madness: What *mélange* is madness—crime—irresponsibility—sexuality?

The theme of sexuality becomes the operative force in forming the relation between a philosophy of nature (which is expressed above all in the concept of territory) and a theory of madness. We have stressed that the two characters Deleuze analyzes, Charlus and Albertine, are exemplary of the mode of construction of the *Recherche* as law of the interpretation of the signs of madness. Charlus and Albertine function as a sign, which requires interpretation. To understand this construction of the *Recherche*, Deleuze anticipates in this 1973 text a concept that will have a decisive destiny in his philosophical vocabulary: the concept of “composition” (or of “decomposition”), or, toward the end of his career, the concept of the “law of composition.”<sup>12</sup>

The composition of the two characters takes place in three (asymmetrical) moments, always different.<sup>13</sup> In the first, the characters function as unifiable, totalizable, and apparently circumscribed organization, what Deleuze calls “nebula” [*nébuleuse*; translated as “galaxy” in the English translation of *Proust and Signs*, but as “nebula” in *Anti-Oedipus*]. The concept of the nebula immediately suggests the idea of a normality of the surface that hides a different depth, one of a nonnormality. The characters are like “statistical wholes [*ensembles*] whose outlines are blurred *molar* or collective formations comprising singularities distributed haphazardly” (AO 68–9). However, in a second moment, one or several series break this organization. They take this organization into another domain, that of the transversality of lines of flight. In this domain, “‘sides’ take shape, series are arranged, *persons* figure in these series, under strange laws of lack, absence, asymmetry, exclusion, noncommunication, vice, and guilt” (AO 69). The final moment of composition is presented as the result of the action of the series. A new nebula, this time decentered or made excentric by the series, is made of closed whirling boxes and disparate mobile pieces; that is, it functions in transversality. “Next, everything becomes blurred again, everything comes apart, but this time in a *molecular* and pure multiplicity, where the partial objects, the ‘boxes,’ the ‘vessels’ all have their positive determinations, and enter into aberrant communication following a transversal that runs through the whole work” (AO 69).

The composition (or decomposition) of the *Recherche* and its characters is already conceived of as a movement of “deterritorialization.” It goes from the molar to the molecular, from structures to partial objects, and from verticality to transversality. Everything becomes blurred in a new way, this time not in a totalizing organization, but in a multiplicity, that is, in the domain of the molecular. This composition is thus like the inverse movement of actualization and of individualization. One starts with imperial individualities, such as that of Charlus, or groups of young girls, as that of Albertine, and one arrives at preindividualizations, series that microscopically work over these individualities. The *Recherche* thus functions like the unveiling of a universal secret, the apprenticeship of pure multiplicities primary to every individual.<sup>14</sup>

Deleuze tells us that this composition of characters and the whole [*ensemble*] of the *Recherche* is nothing other than the law of loves and sexuality. This composition functions as a universal plane of nature, as what Deleuze later calls a “plane of immanence.” This is the way one may understand how the series that break the molar structure form a part of the structure itself, for this apparent structure functions like a machine, whose proper nature is to create lines of flight. It’s a question of the very functioning of machines. Everything functions in this manner, according to the machinism of the plane of immanence. The law of sexuality constitutes the secret-to-be-disclosed beyond every nebula, beyond every molar organization. This law determines the microscopic and molecular universe that is present in every love. Love begins by having a statistical form, that is, a heterosexual content (first moment of the law of composition), and it then becomes homosexual love (second moment), and finally becomes a hermaphroditic love, that is, transverse and molecular (third moment).

The law of sexuality invokes the theme of guilt and innocence as opposing degrees of moral conscience. Hence, intersexual love corresponds to surface, statistical normality; homosexual love is the sphere of neurosis, anguish, and Oedipal suffering; finally, transsexual love is the reign of madness and its innocence beyond all responsibility. At the level of microscopic transsexuality and of initial and universal hermaphroditism, madness is presented as beyond all guilt, and it becomes innocence. Guilt exists only in the molar ensemble. It is a concept projected by individuating empires with the objective of maintaining surface normality. Guilt only serves to hide the lost vegetal condition, whose transversality, which spans discordant series, restores innocence (third moment of the law of composition). The law of composition, if it presents itself as deterritorialization, is thus nothing other than the restitution, that is, the recomposition, of that regained innocence.

Beyond territorial guilt, there is the innocence of nature and the innocence of madness. And Deleuze (and Guattari) already articulates this innocence discovered by Proust in *Anti-Oedipus*: “guilt, the declarations of guilt are merely a sort of joke. [. . .] For the rigors of the law are only an apparent expression of the protest of the One, whereas their real object is the absolution of fragmented universes. [. . .] This is why in Proust’s work the apparent theme of guilt is tightly interwoven with a completely different theme totally contradicting it, that of vegetal ingenuousness in the compartmentalization of the sexes [. . .] where flowers blossom in profusion and the utter innocence of madness is revealed” (AO 43; trans. modified).

In the third edition of *Proust and Signs*, the law has the same status that it will have in *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*. It is only there as a joke. Hollow and empty, the law is traversed by the madness that undoes it. In itself, the law is nothing, and it is pure representation. The law is corrupt in all

regards; it is covered by a transversality that ruins all its former verticality. In the Chinese empire, no one knows the one who dictates the law, the emperor. In the offices of justice or even in the dwelling of the one who undergoes the trial, no one knows the law. In Kafka, there is only a blind respect for the law.<sup>15</sup> Likewise, in the third edition of the Proust book, the law exists only to be ridiculed, overturned, and destroyed. The law of composition of the *Recherche* hides only an enormous microscopic network that works from inside every binary machine of closed boxes and lines of flight that produce the ruin of the giant edifice, the cathedral, and its ogives. This law explains all the other laws, and it is thus that sexuality is only the reign of the transsexual. Love is only intersexual. Guilt is only vegetal innocence. Charlus is only a collection of violent and a-signifying signs. Albertine is only a blurred landscape. And the narrator is only the universal schizophrenic. The truth of innocence. The nebula. The secret of Charlus and Albertine.

What is the mixture madness—crime—irresponsibility—sexuality? The answer resides in the discovery of Charlus's great secret: a vegetal universe of nonlanguage, where madness is presented as the madness of flowers, universal madness of innocence, and crime. The irresponsibility of Charlus is justified by madness, which Deleuze describes as "criminal madness." This is a madness beyond immorality and perversion, which remains at the level of bad manners, which determines a fault or a responsibility for a crime. The madness of Charlus is hence in another sphere, more frightening, beyond all responsibility, which makes him an innocent. "More than vice, says Proust, it is madness and its innocence that disturb us. If schizophrenia is universal, the great artist is indeed the one who scales the schizophrenic wall and reaches the land of the unknown, where he no longer belongs to any time, any milieu, any school" (AO 69). Innocence is elsewhere, at the limit of responsibility, for it belongs to the sphere of pure contingency. Charlus's madness signifies a cut, discontinuity, chance, and as a result, innocence. Beyond Chronos, madness attains the Aion of universal history, which is written by one's own body without organs. The unknown country is the transsexual universe of the innocence of flowers, a primordial universe this side of and beyond necessity, which, alone, accuses criminals.

## PHILOSOPHY OF NATURE II: THE MADNESS OF THE NARRATOR AND THE BODY WITHOUT ORGANS

By relating Albertine's delirium to the narrator's behavior toward her, Deleuze seems to propose that this character's delirium is a third delirium: a kind of delirium of the narrator. To absorb the delirium of Albertine within the delirium of the narrator is above all to harmonize the dichotomy between

schizophrenia and paranoia. The intermediate delirium of Albertine (erotomania or jealousy) is the name psychiatry of that era gave to what Deleuze recognizes as the schizophrenic delirium of the narrator. Albertine is not schizophrenic. Rather, she is the product of the narrator's schizophrenic delirium in relation to her. Albertine's erotomania is *above all* a construction of the narrator, who, in his delirium, absorbs the delirium of erotomania. Albertine's deliriums are *above all* the manifestation of the narrator's schizophrenia. It is he who invents a jealous and erotomaniacal Albertine. What, then, is the delirium that is proper to the narrator? It's schizodelirium. The narrator absorbs all deliriums, not only Albertine's, but also Charlus's and those of all the other characters. In showing that Albertine is the grand passion of the narrator and that the investments of the narrator are those of Albertine, Deleuze ends up distinguishing Charlus from Albertine rather than distinguishing Charlus from the narrator. What Deleuze wants to show, above all, is that Albertine's delirium is the delirium best absorbed by the schizophrenic delirium of the narrator. Given the idea that literature is a process of schizophrenic investment in a plurality of the ego, what is important is to understand who the narrator is: he who invents characters and multiplies himself in them.

The deliriums of the characters are deliriums of signs, for the characters create signs from discourse, as is the case with Charlus, or from things and objects, as is the case with Albertine. The deliriums of signs are only of two kinds: paranoid (Charlus) and jealous or erotomaniacal (Albertine). The delirium of the narrator is different. It also is a creation, but instead of a creation of signs, it is a creation of characters, who, in turn, have deliriums of signs [*délirent des signes*]. The narrator's delirium is not a delirium of signs. It is described as a certain type of delirium that reacts with signs. A delirium of signs is when there is a delirious investment in signs: things are transformed into signs via the paranoia or the jealousy of the one who has the delirium. Hence, we have a signifying investment with characters, and a fictional investment with the narrator. On one hand, the delirium of characters (as delirium of signs), and, on the other, the delirium of the narrator (as reaction to signs, a delirium of the fictional investment in characters). The narrator's delirium is thus a delirium of fiction and the creation of characters. But this difference results from another difference, present in *Anti-Oedipus*: the discursive madness of Charlus is the madness of molar investments, and the object-related madness of Albertine is one of molecular investments. The schizo-narrator is delirious with his characters; he makes them the puppets of his own desire. In making the characters of Charlus and Albertine delirious, the narrator himself has each delirium of signs that he has created for the characters.<sup>16</sup>

The moment has come to consider the third question that orients the 1973 conclusion of *Proust and Signs*, the question that bears on the status and

nature of the narrator: “Jealous of Albertine, interpreter of Charlus—what is the narrator, ultimately in himself?” (PS 181).

The question of the status of the narrator gains a new importance in the third part of *Proust and Signs*. Deleuze asks, in regard to this near fusion of the narrator and his characters: “whence comes the necessity of these partial identifications and what is their function in the *Recherche*?” (PS 181; trans. modified). The narrator is not distinguished from the hero. Deleuze calls him the “narrator-hero” to deny that this refers to any form of subject.<sup>17</sup> Of course, this question is central to all classic analyses of the *Recherche*, stemming from the conception of the *Recherche* as the Bildungsroman of either the narrator or of Proust the writer.<sup>18</sup> Deleuze himself never forgets this question throughout his book on the *Recherche*. But one may say that the third part of the Proust book is only the final revelation of the status of the narrator. Here, everything converges on the narrator. He is the center, the nerve of the *Recherche*; he is the producer of all the feelings of the characters; it is he who provokes all the loves and all the jealousies.

It is in order to respond to the new formulation of the question of the narrator in the *Recherche* that Deleuze invokes the concept, borrowed from *Anti-Oedipus*, of the body without organs. The narrator is an immense network, “the universal schizophrenic who will send out a thread toward Charlus the paranoiac, another thread toward Albertine the erotomaniac, in order to make them so many marionettes of his own delirium, so many intensive powers of his body without organs, so many profiles of his own madness” (PS 182; trans. modified).

Deleuze makes the narrator a highly active body in its very passivity, in its capacity for receiving signs. One could say that the narrator is above all a site,<sup>19</sup> a site of capture, a spider web that awaits signs in order to turn them into impressions. Deleuze calls it a “body without organs” because it is an enormous apparatus for the reception of signs, sensations, scents, sounds, and tastes. “Actually the narrator has no organs or never has those he needs, those he wants. He notices this himself in the scene of the first kiss he gives Albertine, when he complains that we have no adequate organ to perform such an action that fills our lips, stuffs our nose, and closes our eyes. Indeed the narrator is an enormous Body without organs” (PS 181).<sup>20</sup> The body without organs has a liquid state, which allows it to blend with things, with the universe in its totality. It is the body in a pure state, with no molar or territorial actualization. It’s a machine for capturing the external world by creating it in its own delirium. To make one’s own body without organs is to construct a universal and original becoming. It is to discover oneself as an element of primary nature, empty of all form and actualization; it is to become animal, flower, or river. Without organs, the narrator becomes more blind than a spinning top, deafer than a flower, muter than a stone. The narrator is hence a



sponge of the world, an existence of absorption, capture, and assimilation of signs. His delirium is the discovery of a multitude that constitutes him, a multitude of preindividualities and singularities that inhabit him and that make him an element of this primitive nature. His delirium is also the discovery of essence as the unity of the singularity and the multitude of an individual. It's the understanding of the paradox of original existence: in being unique and singular, I exist as a multitude, and this multitude makes me an element of the immanence of nature. To become is the experience of absolute alterity, absolute stripping-naked of oneself, of all the traits that characterize one as a particular and stratified individual. To become a body without organs is to make oneself nature, it is to people oneself with nature, and it is to make one's body a fragment of the universal cosmos. It's the difference between a singular trait and a particular trait, and it's a nonpersonal trait, which cannot form a part of consciousness, but rather something vague and inexplicable common to all the fragments of nature. A body without organs is a body without qualities. The narrator-hero is a body without organs; he possesses no organs for seeing, hearing, or remembering. He is pure response to signs that, through chance encounters, are deepened with him. The body of the narrator-hero functions like a spider web, like an intensive wave that vibrates with signs.

The concept of the body without organs facilitates the closure of the project of transcendental empiricism, the long search for a genesis of the faculties that traversed the entire first edition of the Proust book. The grand thesis—the faculties have their genesis within the experience of the work of art—is confirmed by the analysis of the delirium of the narrator. It's through the fictional work of the narrator—the “narrator-spider,” at once voyeur, jealous lover, interpreter, and criminal—that the faculties are constructed and put into operation. The narrator's body without organs is the condition of a pathos, of a power of being affected before sensibility, before memory, and before perception. It is a pathos that is affected only by signs, that is, by intensive vibrations, like those of a spider web. “But what is a body without organs? The spider too sees nothing, perceives nothing, remembers nothing. She receives only the slightest vibration at the edge of her web, which propagates itself in her body as an intensive wave and sends her leaping to the necessary place. Without eyes, without nose, without mouth, she answers only to signs, the merest sign surging through her body and causing her to spring on her prey. The *Recherche* is not constructed like a cathedral or like a gown, but like a web. The narrator-spider, whose web is the *Recherche* being spun, being woven by each thread stirred by one sign or another: the web and the body are one and the same machine” (PS 181–2; trans. modified). Because the signs of the third part of *Proust and Signs* are no longer signs endowed with a form and a sense, they are thus no longer signs to interpret, but simple intensives wave and vibrations; they can be captured, and they can affect

a body before the intervention of any faculty. Better, the vibrations are the genesis of the faculties. Signs are those which do violence to the body and which force the engendering of the faculties. The faculties are exercised only through this involuntary movement that comes from the outside through affective intensities.

The faculties deepen with signs according to the type of delirium (thought for the delirium of interpretation, perception, and imagination for the delirium of an erotomaniacal or jealous type of demand). On the faculties of the narrator, Deleuze is very clear: the narrator is deprived of all voluntary and organized use of the faculties. Sensibility, memory, and thought are the only faculties referred to in regard to the narrator, and they only function in an involuntary regime. The narrator has no organs, which means that he is incapable of seeing, hearing, remembering, understanding, and so on. As body without organs, the narrator is pure response to signs. His is a body without production, but, on the contrary, a body of pure passivity toward signs. In short, a body without organs is “nonproductive; nevertheless it is [. . .] the identity of producing and the product. [. . .] The body without organs is not the proof of an original nothingness, nor is it what remains of a lost totality. Above all, it is not a projection; it has nothing whatsoever to do with the body itself, or with an image of the body. It is the body without an image” (AO 8). Signs are what produce, and what invoke in him the faculties adequate and specific to receive signs. Pure consequences, the faculties have only a haphazard and disorganized use.

From the moment we are informed that Charlus and Albertine have only the status of threads in the web of the narrator-spider, or marionettes of the delirium of the narrator, we understand that the involuntarism of the narrator’s faculties extends to his characters. The faculties thus have only an involuntary use, through the violence of encounters and accidents that characterize the world of transversal communication.

Through the concept of the body without organs, Deleuze is able now to think this pathos without faculties. And in attributing the condition of the body without organs to the narrator of the *Recherche*, he is able finally to transform this book on Proust into a great laboratory of a genetic theory, not simply of the work of art, but above all of the conditions of actuality [*effectivité*] of its experience.

The Proust book is indeed the site of the explication of the program of transcendental empiricism. The first part, of 1964, proposes a solution to the problems posed in the books on Hume, Nietzsche, and Kant. This implies a theory of the faculties in their relation to the world of essences as fragments of the pure past. The second part, of 1970, is the explication of a primary Nature as hermaphroditic and homosexual originary world of essences, where the faculties arise in the discovery of the private universe of the loved one.

The third part, of 1973, offers a completely new response. With the concept of the body without organs, attributed to the narrator of the *Recherche*, Deleuze sees in Proust the solution to the problem of the genesis of the faculties: all that is necessary is to think the transcendental field on the basis of the experience of literary fiction according to the model of the schizoid work.

### PHILOSOPHY OF NATURE III: THE CONCEPT OF THE “ASSEMBLAGE”

The third part of *Proust and Signs* marks another revolution in Deleuze's thought. It is the birthplace of the application to the literary question of a concept that will become fundamental in the writings of the 1970s: the concept of the assemblage. This concept had its cautious birth in *Anti-Oedipus*.<sup>21</sup> In *Proust and Signs*, the assemblage arises to address the problem of the status of the narrator of the *Recherche*. As we have seen, his status is a particular problem in regard to the relation between the narrator and two of his characters. First, there is the narrator's jealousy of Albertine, who is herself described as jealous of her own object. Then there is the erotomania of the narrator toward Albertine, erotomania that is confirmed as the secret that arouses the narrator's jealousy. This same mechanism of fusion between the world of the narrator's affects and the construction of characters is found in the case of Charlus. According to Deleuze, it is impossible to distinguish Charlus's delirium of interpretation and the narrator's interpretation of that delirium. We must hence reject the distinction between the narrator and the hero as two subjects, subject of enunciation and subject of the statement. It is in order to name this indistinction that Deleuze first comes to invent the concept of an “assemblage.” As he writes, “There is less a narrator than a machine of the *Recherche*, and less a hero than the *assemblages* by which the machine functions under one or another configuration, according to one or another articulation, for one or another purpose, for one or another production” (PS 181; trans. modified; emphasis Pombo Nabais). The assemblage is the singular configuration of a fictional agency operating within the story. In the same way that there are no narrators but only machines for producing sense, so there are no heroes or characters, but only the functioning of these machines, whose configurations are assemblages.

This status of the narrator constitutes a first step toward thinking the concept of the assemblage. Deleuze only uses the concept one time, and without giving it any determination other than that of a literary device. However, although appearing only once, this concept is at the center of an enormous change in Deleuze's thought. It already belongs to the theoretical world of his collaboration with Félix Guattari, inaugurated with *Anti-Oedipus*. As we

have shown, the narrator in Proust, as a machine of the *Recherche*, has no organs. Deleuze underscores this fact in regard to the scene of his first kiss with Albertine. The narrator complains that he has no organ adequate to the kiss. To enjoy the kiss, he must puff up his lips, stop up his nose, and close his eyes. But this absence of an adequate organ for kissing causes his entire body to become the site of the inscription of the smallest erotic vibration. Deleuze describes this full body as a body without organs. He presents it via the analogy of the spider. “But what is a body without organs? The spider too sees nothing, perceives nothing, remembers nothing. She receives only the slightest vibration at the edge of her web, which propagates itself in her body as an intensive wave and sends her leaping to the necessary place” (PS 181–2). The kiss itself becomes an assemblage, a configuration of sense on a fictional narrator who exists only as a body without organs.

The third part of *Proust and Signs*, thus, must be read as a first anticipation of the philosophy of nature that will serve as the foundation of *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*, published two years later. This book, perhaps the most fundamental that Deleuze (with Guattari) wrote on the nature of certain literary texts, is an immense theory of writing as theory of assemblages. As we will see, it is in *Kafka* that we find the first systematic approach to the concept of the assemblage. Although the question “what is an assemblage?” only appears in the final chapter, the entirety of the book is a long preparation for an answer to that question.

The conclusion of *Proust and Signs*, published first in the form of an article in 1973 and then included as the conclusion to the Proust book in its third edition in 1976, thus offers an opening to this reading of Kafka that Deleuze published with Guattari in 1975. The concept of the assemblage, which is formulated there as a means of conceiving of the status of the narrator in the *Recherche*, will serve as the most speculative center of the idea of a “minor literature.”

From 1964 to 1976, Deleuze returned twice to his book on Proust—to alter his thought on literature in each new formulation, and at the same time, to make the literary universe of Proust the laboratory of new concepts that he never stopped inventing. But each time he blurred the discontinuities of his thought; he promoted the fiction of the unity of a book that, nevertheless, is traversed by the most important ruptures in his development. To reconstitute the vertical cuts in time and thought that compose this book is to open the entirety of his approach to literature to the way in which it is marked by other theoretical programs. The Proust book, in its three-phase metamorphosis, allows one to read in the text three moments of its outside. First, the program of a transcendental empiricism that orients all his early books. Then, the complex debate with Freud and Lacan that begins to take form in the introduction of the death drive as law of the unity of the *Recherche*. The critique of

Oedipus, which one finds at the center of the combat against psychoanalysis in 1972, is already evident in this second consideration of Proust. Finally, the entire philosophy of nature of the 1970s and 1980s finds its first version in the question of the status of the narrator in the *Recherche*. With the introduction, however cautious, of the concepts of the body without organs and the assemblage, Deleuze invokes for the last time the world of Proust as testimony of a new understanding of life. If the first “literary machine” appeared in 1970 as machine of the *Recherche*, the first literary “assemblage” appeared in 1973 as the assemblage of the life of the narrator who inhabits, in a nonplace, this literary machine. The seed of the immense machinism of *Anti-Oedipus* had already begun germinating in the second part of *Proust and Signs*. The third part bears the embryo of the physics of collective assemblages of enunciation of *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*.

We have finished this vertiginous exploration, almost a decade in length, of Deleuze’s work on literature. *Proust and Signs*, with its slices of time/thought that correspond to its three editions, is a seismograph of the most intimate ruptures in Deleuze. The result of this exploration is fragile: it has given us a brief reconstitution of the most pronounced concepts in Deleuze’s approach to the art of the novel, in their inscription within the horizon of a transcendental empiricism, as Kantian model of the faculties, or as Lacanian structure of the law, or as philosophy of nature. Perhaps the global landscape of Deleuze’s aesthetics between 1964 and 1973 is now a bit less obscure.

The book on Kafka, written with Félix Guattari in 1975, seems to be the end of this long journey across Proust. But, as we will see, this book is the most radical refutation of that journey. *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature* must be understood as the systematic demolition of each premise of the reading of the *Recherche* that Deleuze put forth in the 1964 and 1970 editions. And the illusion of continuity is total. The third edition of *Proust and Signs* is published in 1976. One year after the Kafka book, Deleuze issues a new version of the Proust book, adding, as a conclusion, the text of 1973, which contains the major theses of the new theoretical territory opened up by *Anti-Oedipus*. The reader who employs the schizoanalytic instruments of Deleuze and Guattari to enter into the literary world of Kafka can only recognize them in revisiting Proust one year later, in this conclusion with the concepts of the body without organs and the assemblage of enunciation. This proximity obscures the major points of rupture that the Kafka book initiates.

## NOTES

1. It is worth noting that in *Anti-Oedipus*, when Deleuze and Guattari analyze the relation between writing and capitalism, they qualify the discourse of Lacan as “imperial” (cf. AO 240).

2. The main lines of the third part of *Proust and Signs* are already found in the references to Proust in *Anti-Oedipus*. The themes of homosexuality without relation to the law, the theory of the signs of delirium, the concept of the narrator as a spider web, and body without organs are articulated for the first time in the chapter “Psychoanalysis and Familialism,” especially pp. 68–71.

3. This distinction was in fact the dominant one at the date of the composition of the *Recherche*, schizophrenia being a concept formulated only during the final phase of Proust’s work. The term “schizophrenia” was invented by Eugen Bleuler in 1911. Of course, Proust had the time to learn about developments in psychiatry, but it is also true that the same developments remained largely restricted to the circle of psychiatric professionals. It is for this reason that Deleuze in 1973 read the *Recherche* in terms of these two deliriums recognized in Proust’s era. “At the end of the nineteenth century and at the beginning of the twentieth, psychiatry established a very interesting distinction between two kinds of sign-deliriums. [. . .] We are not saying, of course, that Proust applies to his characters a psychiatric distinction that was being elaborated in his era. But Charlus and Albertine, respectively trace paths with the *Recherche* that correspond to this distinction, in a very specific fashion” (PS 179; trans. modified).

4. “Everywhere Proust contrasts the world of signs and symptoms with the world of attributes, the world of pathos with the world of logos, the world of hieroglyphs and ideograms with the world of analytic expression, phonetic writing, and rational thought. What is constantly impugned are the great themes inherited from the Greeks: *philos, Sophia, dialogue, logos, phone*” (PS 108). Deleuze then systematizes the opposition of the signs of logos from five points of view: parts, the law, use, unity, and style. (For this opposition, see PS 106–8.)

5. “One would look in vain in Proust for platitudes about the work of art as organic totality in which each part predetermines the whole and in which the whole determines the part. [. . .] As we shall see, it is no accident that the model of the vegetal in Proust has replaced that of animal totality, as much in the case of art as in that of sexuality” (PS 114–5).

6. They are monad-machines: “Philosophically, Leibniz was the first to raise the problem of a communication resulting from sealed parts or from what does not communicate. How are we to conceive the communication of the ‘monads’ that have neither door nor window? Leibniz answers meretriciously that the closed ‘monads’ all possess [. . .] different viewpoints toward the same world that God causes them to envelop. Leibniz’s answer thus restores a preceding totality in the form of a God [. . .] who sets up among their solitudes a spontaneous ‘correspondence’” (PS 163–4; trans. modified).

7. Like every machine, the reading of the *Recherche*, in the third edition of *Proust and Signs*, is organized in a binary fashion, in keeping with the structure of machines in *Anti-Oedipus*: “Desiring-machines are binary machines, obeying a binary law or set of rules governing associations: one machine is always coupled with another” (AO 5).

8. The production of the machine has a triadic structure; it implies three operations: production, consumption, and recording. We believe that in the 1973 analysis of the *Recherche*, Deleuze applies these operations to madness as the creative process of the narrator. Hence, he says that since the presence of madness is the heart of

analysis, one must understand its three fundamental differences. Charlus and Albertine have this function, that of making visible the three differences of madness, or, in anti-Oedipal terms, the three operations of production of the *Recherche*. Hence, respectively, we think that the function is production properly speaking; the usage, or form, is consumption; and distribution is recording.

9. The only moment where Deleuze touches on the problem of madness and the clinical in the first edition is in the conclusion to the chapter “Pluralism in the System of Signs”: “Every symptom is a word, but first of all every word is a symptom. [. . .] It will come as no surprise that the hysteric makes his body speak. He rediscovers a primary language, the true language of symbols and hieroglyphs. His body is an Egypt” (PS 92–3).

10. “Beyond designated objects, beyond intelligible and formulated truths, but also beyond subjective chains of association and resurrections by resemblance or contiguity, are the essences that are alogical or supralogical” (PS 37). For a complete approach to this opposition of logos-possible and hieroglyph-necessary, see PS 4, 16–7, 22–3, 20–30, and 92–3, and the entire chapter “The Image of Thought.”

11. Cf. PS 179–80. On the system intensive/extensive, see AO 155–6, 157–61.

12. When Deleuze later describes the plane of composition, he returns—necessarily, he says—to Proust: “If we return to Proust, it is because he more than anyone else made the two elements, although present in each other, almost follow one another; the plane of composition, for life and for death, emerges gradually from compounds of sensation that he draws up in the course of lost time, until appearing in itself with time regained, the force, or rather the forces, of pure time that have now become perceptible” (WP 188–9). In *A Thousand Plateaus* as well, to exemplify the plane of composition, it is to Proust that Deleuze and Guattari go to find an example: “*Swann’s Love*: Proust was able to make the face, landscape, painting, music, etc. resonate together” (ATP 186).

13. For the description of the composition of the *Recherche* in general, see PS 175–8. We cite passages from *Anti-Oedipus* to show the symmetry and continuity between that 1972 work and the 1973 text included in the third edition of *Proust and Signs*.

14. “The problem of ‘making multiplicities’ or ‘constructing multiplicities’ is therefore a problem of life—of ‘a life,’ as Deleuze puts it, an indefinite life. But such a life is not to be confused with ‘the life’ of the corresponding individual. It is a potential or virtuality that exceeds our specification as particular individuals. [. . .] Such for Deleuze is the force of the ‘problem of subjectivity’ formulated by Hume—our selves or ‘identities’ are never given, indeed our very idea of ‘the self’ is a kind of philosophical fiction” (Rajchman 2001: 83).

15. As Deleuze and Guattari explain in *Anti-Oedipus*, “No one has equaled Kafka in demonstrating that the law had nothing to do with a natural, harmonious, and immanent totality, but that it acted as an eminent formal unity, and *reigned accordingly over pieces and fragments* (the wall and the tower)” (AO 198).

16. As one may read in *Anti-Oedipus*: “*In Search of Lost Time* as a great enterprise of schizoanalysis: all the planes are traversed until their molecular line of escape is reached, their schizophrenic breakthrough; thus, in the kiss where Albertine’s face

jumps from one plane of consistency to another, in order to finally come undone in a nebula of molecules. The reader always risks stopping at a given plane and saying yes, *that* is where Proust is explaining himself. But the narrator-spider never ceases undoing webs and planes, resuming the journey, watching for the signs or the indices that operate like machines and that will cause him to go on further" (AO 318).

17. "To accept the necessity of distinguishing the narrator and the hero as two subjects (subject of *énoncation* and subject of *énoncé*) would be to refer the *Recherche* to a system of subjectivity (a doubled, split subject) that is alien to it" (PS 181; trans. modified).

18. In speaking of those who do not know how to read his work ("those who believe that my novel is a sort of collection of reminiscences, linked according to fortuitous laws of the association of ideas"), it is Proust himself who declares the enigma of the status of the narrator: "Pages in which a few pieces of a 'madeleine,' dipped in an infusion, brought to my memory (or at least brought to the memory of the narrator who says 'I' and who is never me) the entirety of a time in my life, forgotten in the first part of the work" (Proust 1999: 328).

19. "The concert began; I did not know what was being played; I found myself in a strange land. Where was I to place it? Who was the composer [. . .] all of a sudden, I found myself in the midst of this music that was new to me, right in the heart of Vinteuil's sonata" (Proust 1992: v. 5, 331–2). Georges Poulet comments on this passage: "Now to recognize oneself in a place, in a piece of music, in a sensation, is more than to regain this sensation; it is to rediscover there one's own being. [. . .] For what has one been except what one has felt, and how shall there be any recognition unless one feels it anew? Perhaps the greatest difficulty of the Proustian enterprise consists in the fact that for him knowledge can never cease to remain impression. [. . .] For Proustian thought the *knowing* as well as the *being* finds itself bound to a world essentially ephemeral and intermittent, the very affective or emotional world" (Poulet 1952: 312).

20. This presentation of the narrator as body without organs was first formulated in *Anti-Oedipus*: "It is clear that the narrator sees nothing, hears nothing, and that he is a body without organs, or like a spider poised in its web, observing nothing, but responding to the slightest sign, to the slightest vibration by springing on its prey. Everything begins with the nebulae, statistical wholes whose outlines are blurred, *molar* or collective formations comprising singularities distributed haphazardly (a living room, a group of girls, a landscape)" (AO 68–9).

21. It arises first at the end of the chapter "Savages, Barbarians, and Civilized Men" (AO 271; translated as "machinic arrangements") and a second time in the chapter "Introduction to Schizoanalysis" (AO 296).





*PART II*

**KAFKA AND BENE**

*The Power of Literature*



## Chapter 5

# Kafka—Of the Real in Order to Have Done with the Law and the Imagination

### INTRODUCTION

#### Kafka Contra Oedipus

*Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature* is a tortured book. Deleuze and Guattari are well aware that Kafka is the great touchstone for the psychoanalytic theory of literature. In his letters, short stories, and novels, Kafka confirms, in an almost obscene fashion, all the clichés of a desire that is displaced, fantasized, symbolized, and perverted. In contemporary literature, Kafka is the most emblematic example of the construction of an Oedipal imaginary. The asphyxiating scenarios of *The Trial* and *The Castle* or the entomological figures of “The Metamorphosis” are inevitably part of our representations of the body (political or erotic) and of our experiences of the equivocal power of the paternal figure. His female characters, who lead us to the theme of the seductive mother, or, like the sister Greta, to forbidden incest; his correspondence, which reveals his status of a bastard or a foundling; all this invites us to accept typical classifications of the novel in terms of psychoanalysis. Kafka himself is a figure who allows one to think of him as the biographical site for the construction of an Oedipal imaginary. We know that in his private life he worked in an insurance company, that he was in permanent conflict with his father, and that he never brought his amorous relations to a conclusion—in short, he is likely to be thought of as the clichéd author who escapes from the social, bureaucratic, and political system.

The analyses of Marthe Robert as well as those of Maurice Blanchot, for example, present Kafka as the paradigmatic author of fiction as a means of salvation through archetypes of the imaginary. They read his work as a reaction to situations in his real life, as symptoms of a typical unconscious.

Hence, Marthe Robert treats literary creation as the restoration of a lost reality. She presents Kafka as always radically lost, “but with the difference that the sovereignty of decision, which he so cruelly lacked in reality, was amply restored to him in the realm of literary creation.”<sup>1</sup> For Maurice Blanchot as well, Kafka’s work becomes “something like a means of psychological (not yet spiritual) salvation” (Blanchot 1982: 62). Kafka seems to confirm point by point the unconscious tormented by the law that finds refuge in the literary phantasm. He already belongs to the realm of psychoanalysis.

To disrupt this psychoanalytic reading requires that Kafka be freed of Oedipus and all psychological approaches to his fictional universe. But this is an almost impossible project. One would have to free Kafka from the *procès* [process; trial] of the imaginary, symbolic, and impossible real in which Kafka can only declare himself guilty. One would also have to reject all interpretations through archetypes, free associations, and structural formalizations. In sum, one would have to make a change in theoretical universes. This is indeed the fundamental project of Deleuze and Guattari’s book. And they declare as much at the beginning in a truly agitprop tone: “We won’t try to find archetypes that would represent Kafka’s imaginary, his dynamic, or his bestiary (the archetype works by assimilation, homogenization, and thematics, whereas our method works only where a rupturing and heterogeneous line appears). Moreover, we aren’t looking for any so-called free associations (we are all well aware of the sad fate of these associations that always bring us back to childhood memories or, even worse, to the phantasm, not because they fail to work but because such a fate is part of their actual underlying principle). We aren’t even trying to interpret, to say that this means that. And we are looking least of all for a structure with formal oppositions and a fully constructed Signifier” (K 7).<sup>2</sup>

This is an immense program but one that is not completely honest. At the same time that it breaks with models of literary criticism of the 1970s, it is also the radical abandonment of the theoretical universe Deleuze constructed in his books on Proust and Sacher-Masoch—something Deleuze never acknowledges. Perhaps the enthusiasm of this theoretical combat expresses an internal crisis. Perhaps Deleuze’s understanding of the abysses of the Freudian aesthetic comes from his own experience. But this we cannot know. In any case, something major begins with this book. It implies a refusal of the fundamental concepts of Lacanian aesthetics and its trinity of the imaginary, symbolic, and real. It also implies an abandonment of Jungian archetypes, of the method of free association and every psychology of the phantasm and its relation to the hidden law. Finally, it implies a rejection of the idea of interpretation itself, either in the Romantic version of a deep spiritual sense or in the structuralist model of formal oppositions. But what makes this project truly impossible is the fact that Deleuze and Guattari want to impose it on

Kafka from the inside, in other words, through a voyage into the labyrinth of the author most favorable to a psychoanalytic reading. How can one refute Oedipus through Kafka? The answer is given on the same page as its programmatic formulation: “We believe only in a Kafka *politics* that is neither imaginary nor symbolic. We believe only in one or more Kafka *machines* that are neither structure nor phantasm. We believe only in a Kafka *experimentation* that is without interpretation or significance and rests only on tests of experience [*protocoles d’expérience*]” (K 7). Three deformations of Kafka to save him from any Oedipal reading. From a political perspective, one must refuse the concepts of the imaginary and the symbolic. Literature must be an affair of the production of the real through a minor community that experiences strangeness and foreignness in their own language. From a machinic perspective, one must oppose the concepts of structure and fantasy. The labor of writing is not a mirror relation between sense as form and sense as content, and between laws and their effects in images. The literary machine, this system of cut-flows that is recorded on the writer’s body without organs, and that forms assemblages on the social and historical real, is defined by its work on the materiality of language, on its rhythms, its spaces, and its stuttering. The idea of the literary work as machine lets us conceive of Kafka’s universe as the opposite of an aesthetics. Expression is not related to subjectivity and to an *aisth sis*, but to multiple social connections. As Deleuze says, “No one knew better than Kafka to define art or expression without any sort of reference to the aesthetic. If we try to sum up the nature of the artistic machine for Kafka, we must say that it is a bachelor machine, and, as such, plugged all the more into a social field with multiple connections. Machinic definition and not an aesthetic one” (K 70). Finally, from the perspective of experimentation, one must put an end to interpretation and signification. There is nothing to decipher in Kafka’s texts, nothing to make manifest. Kafka’s pages are only “protocols of experience,” making literature a matter of health.<sup>3</sup>

In these three approaches to Kafka, Deleuze and Guattari also condense their schizoanalytic program. The inaugural declaration from *Kafka* quoted earlier reminds us of the following passage from *Anti-Oedipus*: “Schizoanalysis [. . .] sets out to explore a transcendental unconscious, rather than a metaphysical one; [. . .] schizophrenic rather than Oedipal; nonfigurative rather than imaginary; [. . .] machinic rather than structural [. . .] molecular, micro-physical, and micrological rather than molar or gregarious” (AO 109–10). The *Kafka* book is precisely the laboratory of the schizoanalytic program in the domain of the literary unconscious. Not only because the book is the first written after *Anti-Oedipus* as a kind of case study for testing the validity of a non-Oedipal method, but also because the literary object is schizoanalysis’ practical object par excellence. In *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari will even suggest that “schizoanalysis is like the art of the novella. Or

rather, there is no problem of application: the lines it brings out could equally be the lines of a life, a work of literature” (ATP 203–4; trans. modified). *Kafka* will thus become not only the proof of the failure of psychoanalytic literary theory, but above all the inaugural argument for the validity of the schizoanalytic method. The very way of entering into this approach already functions like a protocol of the new method.

### The Kafka-Rhizome

The theme that orients *Kafka* is the mode of existence of a minor literature, that is, the literary work that a minority performs in a major language. Such is the case of the Jewish and Czech communities that Kafka belonged to. In Prague, at the turn of the century, these communities had to write in German, and within a literary tradition based on the great myths of Christianity. According to Deleuze, such a labor implies three mechanisms: (a) displacement of the language from its originary realm so that it may function in any territory whatsoever; (b) inscription of every individual affair (family, conjugal life, and so on) in an economic, bureaucratic, and juridical context; and (c) collective investment of literature, where every statement has the value of a communal action. Deleuze and Guattari define these mechanisms as “the deterritorialization of language, the connection of the individual to a political immediacy, and the collective assemblage of enunciation” (K 18). The key mechanism is the last: the work that a minor community develops within a dominant literary tradition. They call this work a “collective assemblage of enunciation,” that is, the transformation of literary work into an affair of the people, making literature a “collective machine of expression.” According to Deleuze and Guattari, the collective assemblage of enunciation displaces language in relation to its territory and inscribes individual history within a collective horizon. To understand the mode of existence of a minor literature is thus to understand this assemblage.

Its fundamental determination is its relation with the question of sense. Like the concept of the event, the concept of the assemblage belongs to a theory of enunciation or a theory of expression. But in the case of the assemblage, the stated or expressed sense is no longer conceived in its relation to states of things nor its ontological status. The question of sense in the theory of the assemblage is no longer a matter of what it says or what it is, but how it is produced. The answer involves a theory of multiplicities. Sense is always the work of divergent and singular series. However, whereas the theory of the event approaches this multiplicity via things, via that which is stated, the theory of the assemblages, as we will see, conceives of the multiplicity from the perspective of the work of discourse, from the perspective of enunciation. This multiplicity is the becoming-other, the becoming-collective of the person who writes, in this case, Kafka. The theory of the assemblage aims to

understand the status of Kafka, or of K., the “hero” of his three best-known novels. The “K” assemblage, and not the hero “K,” is the object of each novel. The Kafka assemblage, and not Kafka, is its site of enunciation. K. forms a part of social, juridical, and bureaucratic machines. This assemblage produces desire, a desire that ceaselessly forms machine within machine. The Kafka assemblage forms a part of literary machines and processes of writing. The assemblage is the work of the production of desire and its expression. It is thus always a double reality: it is desire and enunciation. There is no stated sense that is not a work of desire, and no desire that is not expressed in a statement. As Deleuze and Guattari say, “an assemblage [. . .] is a collective assemblage of enunciation; it is a machinic assemblage of desire” (K 81). This reciprocal conversion is always the effect of a technique, of a bureaucratic system, of an administration, that is, it is always a social affair. Desire is social and enunciation exists only as the product of a community. Desire and enunciation are always collective. The concept of assemblage is precisely this double articulation of “one” [*on* as in *on pense*, “one thinks”]: impersonal like a machine, impersonal like the affairs of many people. Desire is itself impersonal because it is social. Thus, it is desire that puts the machine in the statement, in a movement that goes from machinic activity to desire and from desire to enunciation. There is only one assemblage, because “there is no machinic assemblage that is not a social assemblage of desire, no social assemblage of desire that is not a collective assemblage of enunciation” (K 82). Kafka exists only in the work of dismantling this complex assemblage and its expression. The singularity of Kafka’s literary work is in making evident the very nature of the assemblage. “Not only is Kafka the first to dismantle these two sides, but the combination that he makes of them is a sort of signature that all readers will necessarily recognize” (K 81).

The concept of the assemblage first allows the reformulation of the figures of the subject in the literary work. In a minor literature, the writer, deprived of his territory of origin and his site of discourse, renounces the principle of the narrator and the mechanism of the hero. These two traditional figures of the subject in the literary work are replaced by a literature without subject. “There isn’t a subject; *there are only collective assemblages of enunciation*, and literature expresses these assemblages” (K 18; trans. modified). No longer the author and hero, narrator and character, but a community, a “literary machine” that tries to express a community to come.

To say that there is no subject but assemblages, as block of desire and expression, is at the same time to make the literary work a transcendental laboratory, a site of experimentations of the conditions of the possibility of the birth of intensive singularities and expressive enunciations. Kafka’s oeuvre provides this laboratory as its most transparent condition. It shows how the assemblage takes the place of the subject, in all these fundamental figures where “either it is a transcendental, reified machine that keeps the form of a



transcendental subject or it is a becoming-animal that already has suppressed the problem of the subject but that does no more than point ahead to the assemblage or it is a molecular becoming-collective that the animal indicates but that still seems to function as a collective subject (the mice people, the dog people)” (K 84). Reified machine, becoming-animal, becoming-collective, forms of the assemblage that Kafka deconstructs as conditions of literary productivity.<sup>4</sup>

Second, the concept of the assemblage leads to a reformulation of the concept of expression. We know that this concept was the greatest development in *Expressionism in Philosophy: Spinoza and The Logic of Sense*. In the first, the concept of expression has a decisive hermeneutical role in the establishment of parallelism, which traverses the *Ethics*, from the domain of demonstrative rationality to the plane of affects.<sup>5</sup> *The Logic of Sense*, for its part, approaches expression via the sense–event relation. The event is the mode of existence of sense, and both are expressed by the proposition.<sup>6</sup> In *Anti-Oedipus*, the theme of expression disappears and is replaced by a theory of repression.<sup>7</sup> This theme returns only with *Kafka*. The concept of the assemblage reintroduces expression into the center of Deleuze’s work. In replacing the figures of the subject by that of the assemblage, he can reconstruct the principal theory of expression: the primacy of enunciation vis-à-vis the statement [*l’énoncé*]. “The enunciation precedes the statement, not as the function of the subject that would have produced it but as a function of an assemblage [ . . . ] it is the expression that precedes or advances—it is expression that precedes contents, whether to prefigure the rigid forms into which contents will flow or to make them take flight along lines of flight or transformation. But this primacy doesn’t imply an idealism. Because the expressions or the enunciations are no less strictly determined by the assemblage than are the contents themselves. And it is one and the same desire, one and the same assemblage, that presents itself as a machinic assemblage of content and as a collective assemblage of enunciation” (K 85; trans. modified). The total univocity of the assemblage is: a single and same assemblage that produces desire and that is expressed in the literary work.

If the concept of the collective assemblage of enunciation is the focal point of Deleuze and Guattari’s approach to Kafka’s oeuvre, at the same time this concept is what provides Kafka’s text with multiple entries. As double, as assemblage of enunciation and machinic assemblage, it reveals the entire literary oeuvre of a minor community as itself a machine, as a body without organs, as a rhizome. We now understand one of the first questions that Deleuze and Guattari pose: “How can we enter into Kafka’s work?” (K 3). And we have a better understanding of their answer: “This work is a rhizome, a burrow. [ . . . ] We will enter, then, by any point whatsoever” (K 3).<sup>8</sup> In each story, each novella or novel, there are not points or positions, as is the case with the radical-book or the root-book, but intensities and speeds.

Kafka's book is a rhizome-book, which has neither subject nor object. His texts are a machinic ensemble, which is made of differently formed matters, of dates, and very different speeds. It is a collective assemblage. It is a matter of what Deleuze calls a "perceptual semiotics" (ATP 23). As Deleuze says in *A Thousand Plateaus*, "A book is an assemblage of this kind, and as such it is unattributable. It is a multiplicity" (ATP 4). In this rhizome-book, there are only lines, which make the book proliferate in a multiplicity. One of the most important characteristics of the rhizome is that it always has multiple entries. It is in this sense that "The Burrow" can be called an animal rhizome. In "The Burrow," the animal explains that the burrow has multiple entrances and passages: "Apart from this main exit I am also connected with the outer world by quite narrow, tolerably safe passages which provide me with good fresh air to breathe. [. . .] Every hundred yards I have widened the passages into little round cells; there I can curl myself up in comfort and lie warm. [. . .] There are more than fifty such rooms in my burrow" (Kafka 1971: 356).

As a rhizomatic book, Kafka's book is the war machine-book that opposes the State apparatus-book. Kafka and his fantastic bureaucratic machine realize this idea of the book that is directly constructed as the machinic connection between the mechanisms of writing and social machines (juridical and political). The clearest example of this assemblage is *The Castle*. This novel has multiple entries, and, says Deleuze, "Only the principle of multiple entrances prevents the introduction of the enemy, the Signifier and those attempts to interpret a work that is actually only open to experimentation" (K 3).

How, then, should we enter Deleuze and Guattari's book on Kafka? To take up their own method, "We will enter, then, by any point whatsoever; none matters more than another, and no entrance is more privileged even if it seems an impasse, a tight passage, a siphon. We will be trying only to discover what other points our entrance connects to, what crossroads and galleries one passes through to link two points, what the map of the rhizome is" (K 3). However, we believe one must privilege three entrances: the entrance "Literature and Law," which bears on the dimension of the symbolic; a second, "The Statement and Desire," which bears on the dimension of the real; and a third, "Without Imagination," which bears on the dimension of the imaginary. All three, we will show, are attacks on the psychoanalytic canon.

## ENTRANCE I: LITERATURE AND LAW (DIMENSION OF THE SYMBOLIC)

### *Two Versions of the Relation between Kafka and the Law*

The second edition of *Proust and Signs* (1970) is almost obsessed with the problem of the law, which constitutes the new center of Deleuze's reading of

the *Recherche*. Instead of understanding the unity of the work via the system of signs as a table of categories of essence in harmony with the faculties—as he had done in 1964—Deleuze shows the existence of divergent series and noncommunicating levels in the *Recherche*. And these levels no longer revolve around faculties or the forms of time, but around the amorous experience of Marcel. In the 1970 edition, the disparate regime of the narrator's love provides a new unity to the work. And this amorous experience produces unity only because it has an essential tie to the law. In this case, it is not the law as Greek *logos* that collects all the fragments in order to attach them to a whole. The law that traverses the *Recherche* is not the thread of intelligibility of an order hidden beneath chaos. The law that Deleuze introduces in the 1970 edition is that law of the imperative in its Lacanian version, that which founds the symbolic/imaginary/real within desire. It is an unrepresentable law, one that inscribes guilt in love and that makes love, and its relation with the imaginary innocence of the being one loves, the principle of the unity of the entire *Recherche*.

The theme of the law is introduced in Chapter 3 of this second part, under the title “Levels of the *Recherche*.” It resolves the problem of the architecture of Proust's work that was enunciated in the preceding two chapters. In this third chapter, Deleuze takes up all the attributes of the law in its Lacanian psychoanalytic formulation: “Not causing us to know anything, the law teaches us what it is only by marking our flesh, by already applying a punishment to us, and thus the fantastic paradox: we do not know what the law intended before receiving punishment, hence we can obey the law only by being guilty. [. . .] Strictly speaking unknowable, the law makes itself known only by applying the harshest punishments to our agonized bodies” (PS 132). Deleuze distinguishes two forms of consciousness of the law: the depressive and the schizoid. The first is that which appears in a paradigmatic way in Kafka. The second organizes the work of Proust. “Modern consciousness of the law assumed a particularly acute form with Kafka: it is in *The Great Wall of China* that we find the fundamental link between the fragmentary character of the wall, the fragmentary mode of its construction, and the unknowable character of the law, its determination identical to a punishment of guilt. In Proust, however, the law presents another figure, because guilt is more like the appearance that conceals a more profound fragmentary reality, instead of being itself this more profound reality to which the detached fragments lead us. The depressive consciousness of the law as it appears in Kafka is countered in this sense by the schizoid consciousness of the law according to Proust” (PS 132).

Kafka and Proust are the paradigmatic keys to the modern consciousness of the law. This modernity, in opposition to the Greek tradition, inverts the relation between the Good and the Law: “The law no longer says what is good,

but good is what the law says” (PS 131). Kafka illustrates this inversion on the tortured body where the law is made known as sanction. Proust makes it visible in the experience of love, as experience of the primordial division of the gaze of the lover on the beloved. For Proust, says Deleuze, to love presupposes the guilt of the beloved. Every love is an investigation, a search/research, and a discussion of the proofs of the innocence of the woman one knows nonetheless to be guilty. “Love is therefore a declaration of imaginary innocence extended between two certitudes of guilt, one that conditions love a priori and makes it possible, and one that seals off love, which marks its experimental conclusion. Thus the narrator cannot love Albertine without having grasped this a priori guilt” (PS 132–3). Deleuze can thus extend the unity of the *Recherche* to forms of guilt. According to Deleuze, there are three levels of amorous guilt: the guilt of heterosexual series, that of homosexual series, and that of transsexual series. To these three levels of guilt correspond three levels of the *Recherche*. The first expresses the logic of jealousy. It is manifest as sequestering and enclosing the beloved. The second is the entire movement of the discovery of homosexuality as the original sin of the beloved, which one punishes by sequestering it. This is the series of voyeurism. The third prevents communication in the transversal dimension, the dimension of the contiguity between the sexes and partial objects, rendering that communication possible only through profanation.

What Deleuze in 1970 calls the Proustian trinity—sequestration, voyeurism, and profanation—is only the Lacanian trinity of the relation between desire and law as distinction among the real, imaginary, and symbolic. And this trinity, as judgment of the innocence of the beloved one knows to be guilty, explains the great mystery of the noncommunicating organization of the *Recherche*.

But what we want to make evident in this long metaphysics of the law—which Deleuze introduces in the 1970 edition of *Proust and Signs*—is the role it comes to play in the approach to modernity in literature. The two great monuments of the twentieth century—Kafka and Proust—may be understood as two versions of the modern consciousness of the law: the depressive and the schizoid. But what is most significant is that the demonstration of the role and the presence of the law in Proust (in the version of the imaginary innocence of the beloved and not as tortured body) is made on the apparent evidence of a modern consciousness of the law and, moreover, on the apparent evidence of a novelistic laboratory of the modern consciousness of the law in Kafka. That the invisible and unknowable law, which doesn’t exist before punishment, is the mechanism that engenders the stories and novels of Kafka, is seen by Deleuze to be a stable inheritance of our literary experience. As he says, “Modern consciousness of the law assumed a particularly acute form with Kafka” (PS 132). It is the depressive Kafka who offers the instruments

for understanding a schizoid Proust and who legitimates the analysis of the *Recherche* according to the levels of the consciousness of the law and guilt.

This diagnostic would not be paradoxical if Deleuze himself had not put it into question. The Kafka book, published in 1975 with Guattari, would be the most savage refutation of this canonical vision. We will try to show the extent to which *Kafka* is an attack on the premises of this version that dominated a significant part of the literary theory of the 1960s, and of which Deleuze himself was one of its “victims” in the 1970 addition to *Proust and Signs*.

The theoretical center of *Kafka* is found in Chapter 5, “Immanence and Desire.” There one comes closest to the principle that explains all the theses on the “minor” nature of the letters, stories, and novels of Kafka. This chapter begins in a critical fashion, by a reference to what Deleuze and Guattari call the “dominant themes of so much Kafka interpretation” (K 43). And what is surprising is not only that these themes are all related to the question of law and guilt, but above all, that they are formulated in the very terms in which Deleuze presented them in 1970—with a single difference: now they are no longer recognized as his own theses. We must reproduce the entire first page of Chapter 5. Faced with this complete text, one sees clearly the reversal Deleuze makes in the interior of his own thought. “Negative theology (or the theology of absence), the transcendence of the law, the a prioriness of guilt are the dominant themes of so much Kafka interpretation. The famous passages in *The Trial* (as well as in ‘The Penal Colony’ and ‘The Great Wall of China’) present the law as a pure and empty form without content, the object of which remains unknowable: thus, the law can be expressed only through a sentence, and the sentence can be learned only through a punishment. No one knows the law’s interior. No one knows what the law is in the Colony; and the needles of the machine write the sentence on the body of the condemned, who doesn’t know the law, at the same time as they inflict their torture upon him. ‘He will learn [the sentence] on his body.’ In ‘The Great Wall of China,’ ‘[I]t is an extremely painful thing to be ruled by laws that one does not know. . . . [T]he essence of a secret code is that it should remain a mystery.’ Kant constructed a rational theory of the law’s reversal from a Greek conception to the Judeo-Christian one. The law no longer depends on a preexistent Good that would give it a materiality: it is a pure form on which the good such as it depends. The good is that which the law expresses when it expresses itself” (K 43).

This page is exemplary. Present here are the four traits of what Deleuze in 1970 calls the “depressive consciousness of the law” in Kafka’s works. (1) The law is unknowable; (2) it is manifest only in the a priori of guilt; (3) it is deciphered in the tortured body; and (4) it no longer depends on the Good but, after Kant, it is pure form, which founds the Good.

However, here everything changes. These four traits of the law are evoked, but now, in order to be distanced from what is taken to be Kafka’s view of

the law. According to Deleuze in 1975, the current interpretation of Kafka as a thinker of the law is false, and it is false because it takes Kafka at the letter of his word. As Deleuze and Guattari assert, “One might say that Kafka situates himself as part of this reversal. But the humor that he puts into it shows an entirely different intention. For him, it is less a question of presenting this image of a transcendental and unknowable law than of *dissecting the mechanism* of an entirely different sort of machine, which needs this image of the law only to align its gears and make them function together with ‘a perfect synchronicity’” (K 43). Suddenly, Kafka’s work is no longer the place where “modern consciousness of the law assumed a particularly acute form” (PS 132). On the contrary, Kafka is not included in this reversal inaugurated by Kant. He does not want to illustrate this image of an empty and unknowable law. Instead, he wants to undo this image of the law, because he knows that this image is what makes the mechanism of repressive machines function.

But how can we explain Deleuze’s being mistaken about Kafka’s text? How can he in 1970 take “The Great Wall of China,” “In the Penal Colony,” *The Trial* and *The Castle* to be illustrations—through guilt and tortured bodies—of the Kantian reversal of the relation between the law and the good?

Deleuze never confronts this radical change in his own point of view over these five years. He simply restates this perspective, and all at once, denounces it as the current interpretation of Kafka. And, at the moment of explaining this error in reading—which he attributes generically to readers of Kafka—he takes on the role of the rhetorician. According to Deleuze, the reception of Kafka is erroneous because of a lack of intelligence. The readers of *The Trial* have missed the fact that everything is only an immense trope: humor. “One might say that Kafka situates himself as part of this reversal. But the humor that he puts into it shows an entirely different intention” (K 43). Kafka does indeed speak of the law and guilt. But he doesn’t take it seriously.<sup>9</sup>

Can one conclude that Deleuze himself, in 1970, took Kafka to be the modern consciousness of the law because he didn’t understand that *The Trial* and all the other stories and novels were only for laughter? Was it through a new hermeneutical disposition, by an increase in intelligence, that Deleuze’s view changed between 1970 and 1975? Or, must one admit that the entrance of Félix Guattari in Deleuze’s writing is what brought a new sensitivity to the humor of Kafka? This seems hardly likely. Guattari no doubt played a determining role in the change of perspective. But this change has nothing to do with a new rhetorical sensitivity. It’s a question of a fundamental theoretical transformation. And this transformation involves the root of the concept of the law. Deleuze discovers, with Guattari, that this depressive image of Kafka is the symbol par excellence of the psychoanalytic reading of the questions of desire in the literary experience. This is why this discovery is manifest for the

first time in *Anti-Oedipus* where, also for the first time, Guattari collaborates with Deleuze, this key book dedicated to the denunciation of the concept of Oedipus and the role that this concept plays in the psychoanalytic understanding of the relation between the law and desire. To destroy the Oedipal hypothesis is to destroy the definition of the law through the guilt of desire. If in 1975 Deleuze (and Guattari) shows that Kafka does not belong to the Kantian reversal of the condition of the law, it is because Deleuze has earlier shown that desire does not have its origin in its relation to the law.

Much has been written about the new concept of desire in *Anti-Oedipus*. This book is said to explain the political turn of Deleuze's view of literature, which is manifest in a privileged fashion in the Kafka book. We propose, however, another archeology of the concept of "minor literature." Is it not possible to find the origin of the change of Deleuze's position regarding the concept of the law in Deleuze's reading of Foucault? Is it not the transformation of the problem of the law in *Discipline and Punish* that offered Deleuze new perspectives on Kafka?

### *The Statement and Power*

It's become a cliché to attribute to Deleuze propositions he discovered in other thinkers. And despite our distaste for such reductionism, we have been a bit guilty of this trait throughout this study. We have gone over the books on Hume, Nietzsche, and Kant to stress the earliest formulations of Deleuze's program of transcendental empiricism as the horizon of intelligibility of the theory of faculties that organizes different editions of *Proust and Signs*. And if we have almost ignored the books on Bergson and Spinoza of this same period, it wasn't in order to renounce this method of reading Deleuze through others. There is a large network of concepts and theoretical decisions of Deleuze's whose truth cannot be determined without reference to his characterizations of Bergson and Spinoza. And each time one tries to explain the most singular of Deleuze's theses, such as those concerning the plane of immanence, or those of the virtual, the syntheses of time, the univocity of being, sense, or the event, one is immediately forced to fall into the abysses of Deleuze's *Bergson* or his *Spinoza*, or better, that *mise en abyme* of the Deleuzian method of recounting "a real book of past philosophy as if it were an imaginary and feigned book" (DR xxi-ii). If we have not made an intensive study of Deleuze's books on Bergson and Spinoza, it's only because they constitute the permanent, immutable ground of all his thought. As such, thus, they clarify nothing in the conceptual discontinuities, the inner twists that alone help us in understanding the diversity of perspectives, and even the contradictions, between Deleuze's different views of literature.

It seems evident that during the 1970s, the time of Deleuze's collaboration with Guattari, Deleuze's writings on the works of other philosophers were interrupted, and that only after *A Thousand Plateaus* did Deleuze return to his passion for the great theoretical texts of others.<sup>10</sup> It is true that only in 1981 does he revise and augment his *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy* of 1970. *Foucault* is published in 1986, and *The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque* in 1988. And because these books are largely polished versions of seminars given at Paris VIII during the 1980s, the false impression arises that during Deleuze's intensive collaboration with Guattari during the 1970s he dropped the method of "collage" in the history of philosophy that made possible "a philosophically clean-shaven Marx, in the same way as a moustached Mona Lisa" (DR xxi). Deleuze devoted the decade of the 1970s to work on political economy, sociology, linguistics, literature, psychoanalysis, and biology, that is, the entire vertiginous mélange of visionary perspectives on the becoming of desire and capitalism, on the impasses of the revolution, and on war machines, from which emerged *Anti-Oedipus*, *Kakfa*, and *A Thousand Plateaus*.

But this frozen vision erases a decisive chapter in Deleuze's relation with the great texts of his philosophical heritage—that which concerns his reading of Foucault in two essays published in the review *Critique*. Although modified and augmented for inclusion in his 1986 book on Foucault, these studies, published, respectively, in 1971 and 1975, have a rare archeological value. They teach us about Deleuze's singular reception of *The Archaeology of Knowledge* and *Discipline and Punish* at the very moment of their publication. And this lesson concerns, once again and above all, not just the luminous and fraternal understanding of these two monuments of the 1970s, but also the development of Deleuze's thought. The two first chapters of *Foucault* are privileged means of access to the genesis not only of the Kafka book, but also to the book that draws up its conceptual territory: *Anti-Oedipus*. It is not difficult to indicate the extent to which the theory of statements [*énoncés*] of *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, as description of those nonpersonal discursive multiplicities that establish extrinsic relations with nondiscursive formations (such as institutions, political events, and economic processes), was a fundamental instrument in the construction of *Anti-Oedipus*. The theory of syntheses of production, recording, and consumption that reveal at the same time the social, historical, and political characters of desiring processes, and, hence, of all familial deliriums, would be impossible without the idea of a saturation of the enunciable [*l'énonçable*] in each epoch, where everything is real in the statement, and where all reality is manifest.

*Discipline and Punishment* had a similar impact on Deleuze. Let's rehearse its basics. The theory of power [*pouvoir*] of this book, with such new concepts as the *dispositif* [mechanism or apparatus], of the institutional "diagram" as exposition of relations of forces, of "immanent cause," offers



one of the most transparent of sources for Deleuze and Guattari's analysis of Kafka. Even the concept of the collective assemblage of enunciation, by way of which a minor community resists the diabolical machines of power, is the literary expression of those diagrams of power of a simultaneously abstract and material character that Foucault established in *Discipline and Punish*. One may thus say that, in a fashion parallel to the studies in the human sciences, to readings in animal ethology and biology that traverse the work of the 1970s, Deleuze's appropriation of Foucault's pragmatics of statements as well as his microphysics of disciplinary power had an enormous, if more secret, effect on his thought.

Deleuze's book on Foucault, through its composition in two stages, gives us some keys for understanding two fundamental moments in Deleuze's development. The first, which includes the articles on *The Archaeology of Knowledge* and *Discipline and Punish* written in 1971 and 1975 for *Critique*, concerns the pragmatics of statements and the microphysics of power on which the Kafka book is based. The second moment, that of the chapters written after 1984, as we will see in the third part on Beckett and Melville, introduces the concept of the folding of thought that inspires Deleuze's book on Leibniz and that forms the horizon of the ethics of the impossible that one finds in Deleuze's text on *Bartleby*, and the aesthetics of exhaustion of the possible that is found in Beckett's texts for television.

These two moments in Deleuze's approach to Foucault are important for our argument. As an introduction to *Kafka*, we turn to the first two chapters of *Foucault*, dedicated, respectively, to *The Archaeology of Knowledge* and *Discipline and Punish*. We believe that it is possible to detect in *Kafka* the primordial lines of inspiration of the theory of collective assemblages of enunciation as well as the idea of power as abstract machine of desire. These concepts perhaps constitute the most singular aspects of Deleuze's view of literature in the 1970s.

The chapters that Deleuze dedicated to the last two volumes of Foucault's *The History of Sexuality* will be addressed in the third part of our study. They belong to a new paradigm in Deleuze's thought, one that gravitates around the question of subjectification as folding of force on oneself, transforming the microphysics of power into an ethics of the possible. This latter view of Foucault must thus be approached alongside the book Deleuze wrote on Leibniz.

### ***Pragmatics of Statements***

The concept of "collective enunciation," which organizes the reading of Kafka is, in large measure, the consequence of Deleuze's reading of the new pragmatics of statements put forth by Foucault. In *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, what Deleuze stresses is the concept of the "statement" that

Foucault there introduces as a specific object of his new methodology as an archivist of the human sciences. The idea of “reason” that Foucault discovered in the psychiatry of the eighteenth century, the images of the normal and the pathological he clarified in the nosographies of the centuries that invented clinical medicine, or the anthropological categories he revealed in the human sciences, this entire universe of knowledges, classifications, and categories, was drawn from the reading of medical treatises, police reports, clinical documents, and even novels and plays. Deleuze traces the justification that Foucault offers of the truth value of this material stratum of what has been said. If one can put into relation Cervantes’s pages on Don Quixote’s delirium, the final lines of *King Lear* and the narrative of the evil genius of Descartes, it’s because there, in the positivity of that which has been stated, a reality of reason and nonreason is manifest in a realized form. To legitimize the epistemology of *The History of Madness*, *The Birth of the Clinic*, and *The Order of Things* is to construct a metaphysics adequate to this autonomous reality of statements that Foucault regards as the exhaustive monument of the knowledge of an epoch.

For Deleuze, the concept of the “statement” proposed by Foucault is based on the opposition of the concepts of the “proposition” and the “phrase/sentence.” The proposition is what one can conceive of within a given language. The phrase corresponds to what one can really say on the inside of the infinite domain of propositions that might be conceived. The phrase is thus the material dimension of the mental dimension of sense. By contrast, the statement is the effective ensemble of phrases spoken at a determined moment and in a determined space. The line of demarcation seems to be established simply in extension, by successive subtraction of the dimension of the domains of sense, which go from the conceivable to the sayable [*disible*], and from the sayable to what is said. But for Deleuze, this line is above all ontological. It concerns the difference, on one hand, between the possible and the virtual, and, on the other, between the possible and the real. Propositions exist according to the regime of the possible, “For propositions can be thought of however one wishes, since propositions can be expressed ‘on’ others in conformity with the distinction of types; and such a formalization does not have to distinguish between the possible and the real, it generates possible propositions. As for what is really said, its *de facto* rarity comes about because one phrase prevents others, contradicts or represses others, to such an extent that each phrase remains pregnant with everything that it doesn’t say, of the virtual or latent content that multiplies sense, and offers itself to interpretation, forming a ‘hidden discourse,’ a veritable *de jure* richness” (F 2; trans. modified). Propositions correspond to the world of the possible, the world of the formalization of sense. Phrases, for their part, produce a virtual world. It’s the world where sense is produced, and multiplied in each phrase, but in a regime

of latency. Phrases thus invoke interpretation to make this virtual appear in its clarity. *The Archaeology of Knowledge* constructs a program of historical analysis of monuments of knowledge that refuses both formalization and interpretation, that is, both the study of propositions that an epoch conceived, and the phrases that it actually stated but which refer to other phrases that these phrases contradicted or repressed, not only against a history of the possible, but also against a history of the virtual. According to Deleuze, Foucault proposes a history of the real as a history of statements. And this real contains nothing of the possible, as if this possible were its transcendental condition, nor anything of the virtual, as its unsaid or hidden excess. It's a univocal real, which contains its entire foundation and its entire sense. To think this condition of an absolutely real speech, Foucault introduced the concept of the statement. As Deleuze says, "there is no possible or virtual in the domain of statements, everything is real, and all reality is manifest there: all that counts is what is formulated, there, at this moment, and with these lacunas, these blanks" (F 3; trans. modified).

This positivism of the spoken [*positivisme du dit*], or according to Deleuze's formula, "the positivity of the dictum" (F 15), which only recognizes as real that which is stated and that sees in the statement the complete manifestation of the totality of the real, has immense consequences. First, from an ontological point of view, as Spinozist univocity of Being, the concept of the statement implies a reduction of all reality to the plane of the actual [*l'effectif*], to the plane of an actual [*un actuel*] always in action, always accomplished, that absorbs all the possible of the conceivable and all the virtual of the interpretable into an already-said, in the dictum there and at such a moment. But, in the fashion of conceiving the reality of the statement itself, Deleuze brings to the program of *The Archaeology of Knowledge* very specific determinations of the ontological lexicon that he inherited from the Stoics, from Bergson, and from Spinoza. According to Deleuze, the statement refers to no subject and to no cogito. There is no need for a transcendental someone, singular or collective, to produce a statement. The statement is auto-positional; it refers only to itself and exists only in itself, in its proper spatiality, and in its unique temporality: "like Bergsonian memory, a statement preserves itself within its own space and continues to exist while this space endures or is reconstituted" (F 4). The statement thus has its own duration, which corresponds to the duration of the space in which the statement is conserved. It exists as a pure essence. And yet, although Deleuze invokes the concept of Bergsonian reminiscence, the concept of the statement cannot aspire to the ontological conditions of that pure mental [*spirituelle*] reality. Deprived of the dimension of the virtual (which Deleuze saves in order to define the domain of the phrase), one can no longer say that the reality of the statement is "ideal without being abstract, real without being actual,"

as Deleuze likes to repeat apropos of the condition of existence of the pure reminiscence in Bergson and the artistic essence of Proust. The statement is neither actual nor virtual, but solely real, and of a reality that is confused with actuality [*l'actualité*]. The real that Deleuze discerns in Foucault is a real encircled by its own reality, suffocated by the absence of the possible or the virtual. This is why the big question that Deleuze must address in his reading of *The Archaeology of Knowledge* is that of determining how a knowledge, which is composed of an ensemble—multiple but closed—of statements, relates to its outside, relates to a world that, in an exhaustive fashion, is manifest in it and constitutes it as knowledge. To the extent that the sense of a statement does not derive from formalization, that is, is not a case of an extensional domain that it exemplifies, and yet, to the extent that it is not constituted by interpretation, how then is a statement constituted as knowledge? Put otherwise: to the extent that its reality is exhausted in itself without being surrounded by possible propositions or virtual phrases, which could anchor the statement in other conceivable propositions or in other unspoken or repressed phrases, how can one determine the truth value of a statement, or, at least, its value as knowledge?

Deleuze recognizes that this new archivism of statements puts Foucault in an ambivalent spot. “In a certain way Foucault can declare that he has never written anything but fiction for, as we have seen, statements resemble dreams and are transformed as in a kaleidoscope, depending on the corpus in question and the diagonal line being followed. But in another sense he can also claim that he has written only what is real, and used what is real, for everything is real in the statement, and all reality in it is openly on display” (F 18). In Deleuze’s view, the concept of the statement places Foucault’s program at once in the dream and in reality, in fiction, and in knowledge. What’s surprising is the fact that Deleuze sees in this hesitation between two conditions of the statement the point of fleeing [*le point de fugue*], the line of flight of the thought of Foucault after *The Archaeology of Knowledge*. The ensuing work will be the struggle for a solution to problems inscribed in the thesis of the existence in itself and for itself of the statement. The statement is spoken only of itself, and to itself, it is, in itself, repetition. What it repeats, however, is another thing; it presupposes singularities of the real that are manifest in it, that are strangely similar and quasi-identical with it, without being confused with itself. For Deleuze, the passage of a theory of knowledge to a theory of power [*pouvoir*] was required by this indetermination of the outside of statements, by this hesitation in regard to the condition of nondiscursive singularities that the statement presupposes. “So the greatest problem for Foucault would be to uncover the nature of these peculiar features presupposed by the statement. But *The Archaeology of Knowledge* stops at this point and does not attempt to deal with a problem that surpasses

the limits of 'knowledge.' Foucault's readers become aware of the fact that we are entering into a new domain, that of power" (F 12). The entry into a theory of power would be the solution to the problem of the outside and of the beyond of knowledge.

In the exposition of the mode of existence of the statement, Deleuze has already distinguished three circles or three slices in this space where the statement is conserved in itself. First, what he calls a "collateral space," which is formed through other statements. The second slice of space is a "correlative space," where it's a matter of the relation of the statement, no longer with other statements, "but with its subjects, objects and concepts" (F 6). The third is a "complementary space," that of nondiscursive formations, such as institutions, political events, or economic practices. And apropos of this third slice of space, that which puts the statement in relation with the nondiscursive, Deleuze writes: "It is here that Foucault begins to outline his conception of a political philosophy" (F 9). The question of power appears for the first time within the theory of the statement in order to think the relation with the outside, the relation of the discursive with the nondiscursive. It is true that each space always refers the statement to an outside. The collateral space engages the outside of other statements. The correlative space engages the outside of the subjects and objects of the statement. The outside of institutions and economic practices is the condition of the complementary space. But in each case, Deleuze shows the presence of the same problem in Foucault. This outside—of other statements, of the subjects and objects of statements, of nondiscursive practices—is always brought back to an intrinsic function of the statement. This is evident above all in the correlative space, that which puts the statement in relation to its subjects, objects, and concepts. The subjects or objects of the statement are not references. Only a proposition is supposed to have a referent, because the proposition has as an intrinsic constant the return to a state of things that fulfills (or does not fulfill) the intentionality of sense. As such, the state of things is the extrinsic variable of the proposition. "But this is not the case with statements: a statement has a 'discursive object' which does not derive in any sense from a particular state of things, but stems from the statement itself" (F 7). For the statement, there is no reference or intentionality. There are only "discursive objects" which are intrinsic variables of statements, that is, objects that are established only through statements. And to illustrate this relationship of objects to statements, Deleuze recalls the Sartrean theory of dreams: it is "each dream and dream-image, which has its specific world." And Deleuze adds, "Foucault's statements are like these dreams: each one has its own special object or world" (F 8; trans. modified).

This consequence can only be intolerable for Deleuze. No knowledge is constituted in dreams, and no knowledge can presuppose its statements as

dreams, as fictions. Hence the importance that Deleuze attributes to the third dimension of space, which he calls the “complementary space” of the statement. It is the only extrinsic space, because it refers not to worlds that surround statements like dreams, but to nondiscursive formations, to institutional practices (contracts, recordings). However, this nononeiric outside breaks with the theory of knowledge. It presupposes that statements are retained around diffuse centers of power, around institutions, political events, and economic practices. It’s in this sense that Deleuze understands that this third extrinsic dimension of the space of the statement is already the outline of a political philosophy in Foucault. Power is this dimension of the space of the statement that opens onto extrinsic functions. Power is the relation with the outside. This thesis will furnish, up to the end, not only the guiding thread of Deleuze’s reading of the becoming of Foucault’s thought, but also the model for conceiving collective enunciation, or “the collective assemblage of enunciation” that in Deleuze’s view constitutes the fundamental literary labor of Kafka. One need only add to the reading of *The Archaeology of Knowledge* the reading of *Discipline and Punish* in order to establish a new understanding of the collective character of enunciation with a new theory of power as field of immanence. But it was necessary for Deleuze to await Foucault’s great book on power. It’s worth noting that Foucault publishes *Discipline and Punish* in 1975, the same year as *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*. The effect that this book of Foucault’s produced on the concept of power that organizes Deleuze and Guattari’s reading of Kafka must be the consequence of early access to the fundamental content of *Discipline and Punish*.<sup>11</sup> One can say, then, that Deleuze and Guattari’s concepts of the statement and power are inspired by Foucault.

*Discipline and Punish* will confirm in a luminous fashion this approach to the question of politics. Deleuze derives from this work his principal intuitions about the connection between statements and the relations of force that compose power. The Kafka book, published the same year of 1975, may be read as the happy consequence of Deleuze’s convergent readings of *The Archaeology of Knowledge* and *Discipline and Punish*.

### *Assemblages and Abstract Machines*

Deleuze saw in *Discipline and Punish* a true turning point in Foucault’s thought. For Deleuze, it is first a passage from an analytic of knowledge to a cartography of power. But this book also represents the political supplement to the theory of the statement of *The Archaeology of Knowledge*. As we will see, the Kafka book, which concerns the central question of the engagement of literary statements in the political, is the point of convergence of Foucault’s two books.

Deleuze devotes an entire article, published in 1975 in *Critique*, to the new cartography of power erected by Foucault. This article is reprised in Deleuze's Foucault book as Chapter 2, with the title "A New Cartographer." In this 1986 version of the *Critique* article, Deleuze also includes a few references to Foucault's *The Will to Truth* (1976), especially that which concerns the repression hypothesis. But the fundamental elements of Deleuze's view of the concept of power in *Discipline and Punish* are evident in 1975. It is not so much the question of life or the mechanisms of the production of discourse on pleasure that interest Deleuze, as the question of the nature of the relations of forces as the exercise of strategies internal to formations of milieus and of their manner of acting on bodies (such as the carceral milieu, the military milieu, or the scholastic milieu). In other words, Deleuze recognizes himself less in Foucault's biopolitics than in his microphysics. And as we will underscore, in microphysics, he will seek confirmation of his concept of the "machine," particularly that of the "abstract machine," as well as that of the "assemblage"—which Deleuze will equate to the concept of the *dispositif*, or "mechanism," which occupies the center of Foucault's new view of power. After the first exposition of the theory of the assemblage in 1975 in the Kafka book, as an instrument for conceptualizing minor literature, the text on *Discipline and Punish* is revealed as the laboratory of the political stakes of this concept. In retrospect, one sees that the folding of Foucault's concept of the *dispositif* on the concept of the assemblage was already at work in the genesis of the Kafka book.

Deleuze stresses two planes in Foucault's cartography: that of a critical map of postulates that marked the traditional Marxist position on the nature of power, and that of a cartographic or diagrammatic representation of power as map of relations of forces. These two planes reciprocally explain one another. It's through the dismantling—exhaustive, that is, showing its systematic character—of the postulates about power inherited from the Marxist tradition that Foucault makes plausible his new concept—diagrammatic—of power. Inversely, the diagrammatic model alone allows a negative diagnostic of the traditional postulates about power. In an exemplary fashion, Deleuze reconstitutes Foucault's map of illusions of the left vis-à-vis such questions as the nature of the state, the mode of existence of classes and their struggles, the relation between punitive regimes and systems of production, or the forms of symbolic domination, in order, in return, to disclose the truth of Foucault's view of the "abstract machines" of power. Thus, against the postulate of power as the property of a class that has vanquished another, Foucault shows that power is instead a strategy, which is exercised rather than possessed. It is not the privilege of a dominant class but the effect of the collection of its strategic positions. Against the postulate of the localization of power in particular institutions—the State—Foucault

sees the State itself as the result of a multiplicity of strategies, as the effect of a “microphysics of power,” of which discipline is the fundamental type, as technology of bodies, gestures, and times, that traverse all sorts of apparatuses and institutions. Third is the postulate of subordination, which concerns the representation of the State as subordinated to particular modes of production. Foucault’s microphysics makes visible—in the very interior of the economy, in factories, and in workshops—forms of domination similar to those at work in schools, barracks, prisons, and hospitals, which affect the inside of bodies and souls, thus making evident that it is the entire economy that presupposes the mechanisms of power. The fourth postulate is that of the essence or the attribute. As Deleuze indicates, this is a matter of making power an essence that qualifies those who possess it, establishing them as dominant. Foucault shows that power has no essence. “It is not an attribute but a relation: the power-relation is the set of possible relations between forces, which passes through the dominated forces no less than through the dominating, both these forces constituting singularities” (F 27; trans. modified). The postulate of modality presents power as a two-faced reality, sometimes violence, and sometimes ideology. In other words, the State sometimes represses, and sometimes makes people believe. It is above all repression. If it produces something, it’s nothing but beliefs, nothing but ideology. On the contrary, says Foucault, according to Deleuze, “Power ‘produces reality’ before it represses. Equally it produces truth before it ideologizes, abstracts or masks” (F 29). Finally, there is the postulate of legality. Power takes the law as its form par excellence. The law is either the pacification of brute forces or the result of a war won by the strongest. This false coincidence between state and law has led revolutionary thought to lay claim to another legality, which can only pass through the conquest of power and the inauguration of another state.

*Discipline and Punish* radically inverts this relation between law and power. “One of the strongest themes in Foucault’s book consists of replacing the crude opposition of law and illegality with the subtle correlation made between *illegalisms and laws*. Law is always a structure of illegalisms, which are differentiated by being formalized” (F 29). Strategy, technology of bodies, economy as disciplinary rather than productive mechanism, relation rather than attribute, producer of the real before repressing or creating ideology, and finally, formalization of the law through the composition of illegalisms—these, according to Deleuze, are the new characteristics of power after *Discipline and Punish*. But they are not exhausted in a theory of power, they concern not only a different understanding of the forms of domination. The great novelty introduced in Foucault’s thought by this book, says Deleuze, is to resolve a problem that haunts Foucault’s theory of expression, that of the relation of the statement to nondiscursive domains.



As we have seen, Deleuze stresses an insufficiency in the concept of the statement in *The Archaeology of Knowledge*. That work offers a distinction between two sorts of practical formations: discursive or those of the statement, and nondiscursive or those of the milieu. The nondiscursive are generically designated as the domains of relations of power—institutions, political events, and economic processes. What is lacking is a definition of power as positive definition of nondiscursive strata of practical formations. With *Discipline and Punish*, Deleuze argues, this lack disappears. Defining the nondiscursive of material institutions as ways of acting on bodies, as prison, barrack, school, hospital, Foucault attained a new relation between saying and the unsaid [*le dire et le non-dit*]. For example, penal law concerns the enunciable in a criminal matter, but the tortures, or the prison that replaces them, are practical formations that establish the association between the infraction and the code. These formations thus do not concern a regime of language that classifies infractions and calculates punishments, but concern instead a very specific regime of the nondiscursive, the regime of the visible. The passage from a juridico-discursive power to a disciplinary power, that is, to a power that is constructed in the material organization of the times and spaces of bodies, transforms the outside of the statement into things, into formations of milieus where it is possible to distinguish a form of content (e.g., the prisoner) and a form of expression (e.g., the words and concepts such as delinquency or delinquent). These formations of milieus, these things, are “visibilities.” “What *The Archaeology of Knowledge* recognized, but still only designated negatively, as the non-discursive milieu, is given its positive form in *Discipline and Punish*, a form that haunted the whole of Foucault’s work: the form of the visible, as opposed to form of the enunciable [*énonçable*]” (F 32; trans. modified). The privileged example of the visible in its relation to that which one says is the prison—not as a figure of stone, but through its condition of universal visibility of the criminal’s body, gestures, and rhythms. This visibility, as we know, Foucault named “panopticism.” Deleuze considers this panopticism in terms of the distinction between two dimensions: the luminous and the visual. The first has the condition of a milieu, the second, significantly, that of an assemblage. When he first presents the idea of “panopticism,” Deleuze says it is “a visual assemblage and a luminous milieu (a central tower surrounded by cells) in which the warder can see all the detainees without the detainees being able to see either him or one another” (F 32; trans. modified). Deleuze’s approach to this key concept of *Discipline and Punish* via the concept of the assemblage is significant. This allows him to establish a nondiscursive double of the concept of the collective assemblage of enunciation that he establishes with Guattari in *Kafka*. More precisely, the visual assemblage is what finally gives a positive form to this domain of the nondiscursive that was lacking in the theory of the statement in *The*

*Archaeology of Knowledge*. The counterpoint of the statement thus becomes the visible, in its double condition of visual assemblage and luminous milieu.

The concept of the assemblage is not in Foucault's lexicon. But Deleuze transforms it into a pivotal element of his reading of the concept of power in *Discipline and Punish*. All that is necessary is to show that "assemblage" is a good translation of *dispositif*. First, through the condensation of the two dimensions of the visibility of panopticism into the single figure of the assemblage. Rather than say that panopticism is a visual assemblage *and* a luminous milieu, as Deleuze does in his first presentation of this concept that Foucault found in Bentham, we read: "When Foucault defines Panopticism, either he specifically sees it as an optical or luminous assemblage that characterizes the prison, or he views it abstractly as a machine that not only affects visible matter in general (a workshop, barracks, school, or hospital as much as a prison) but also in general passes through all enunciable functions [*fonctions énonçables*]" (F 33–4; trans. modified). The assemblage is what condenses the entire dimension of the visible, what is at once optical and luminous. Panopticism in Foucault thus has only two determinations: as assemblage and as machine. But even the concept of "machine" is eventually brought back to the concept of the assemblage.

According to Foucault, the diagram, as Deleuze says, "is the display of the relations between forces which constitute power" (F 36). To the extent that these relations of forces are always strategic, microphysical, and diffuse, they constitute pure functions and form an abstract field. The diagram is "an abstract machine" (F 34).<sup>12</sup> It's not surprising that the concepts of "diagram" and "abstract machine" are used interchangeably in the context of *Discipline and Punish*. It's in this sense that Deleuze can write: "The diagram or abstract machine is the map of relations between forces" (F 36).

It is sufficient for the abstract machine (and diagram) to be presented as the cause of assemblages for the Foucauldian link between the diagram and the *dispositif* to be transformed into the link between the abstract machine and assemblages. The principle of this transposition is given in the concept of "immanent cause," which, according to Deleuze, exists precisely between the abstract machine and concrete assemblages: "the abstract machine is like the cause of the concrete assemblages that execute its relations" (F 37). And Deleuze offers a long explication of this concept of causality, at the end of which he establishes the fundamental equivalence of the concept of the assemblage and that of the *dispositif*. "What do we mean here by immanent cause? It is a cause which is actualized in its effect, integrated in its effect, and differentiated in its effect. Or rather the immanent cause is that whose effect actualizes it, integrates it and differentiates it. Also, there is a correlation, a mutual presupposition, between cause and effect, between abstract machine and concrete assemblages (it is for the latter that Foucault most

often reserves the term ‘mechanisms’ [*dispositifs*])” (F 37; trans. modified). The assemblage is the actualization of the abstract machine, that is, the actualization of the “diagram” as map of relations of forces that constitute power. Deleuze thus reduces Foucault’s *dispositif* to an actualization of the diagram. But he can only do so because he conceives of the link between machine/diagram and assemblage/*dispositif* as a process of actualization. This presupposes another theoretical decision: that of making power a reality that is not actual or efficacious [*effective*], but virtual. Power, the relations of forces, as such, does not exist in the mode of actuality. Only assemblages that actualize power are themselves actual. “If the effects actualize something this is because the relations between forces, or power relations, are merely virtual, potential, unstable, vanishing and molecular, and define only possibilities, probabilities of interaction” (F 37; trans. modified).

Deleuze explicitly adopts a modal perspective in order to conceptualize the condition of power in its relation with the actual [*effectives*] dimensions he reserves for assemblages—those such as the prison assemblage or the hospital assemblage. Deleuze reprises the concept of the virtual that he had so fully articulated in *Difference and Repetition*. For Deleuze, the relations of forces or power are only virtual. But this concept of the virtual is no longer the same. For the first time the virtual is treated as if it belonged to the same lexicon of concepts as “possible,” “potential,” and “probable,” concepts that Deleuze in his 1968 book tried to refute as bad descriptions of the domains of the nonactual. Power thus becomes the equivalent of all the classic figures of that which, without yet being actual [*effectif*], tends toward the actual [*l’actuel*] and toward the domain of *faits accomplis*.

Never before had Deleuze put in the same sentence the complete set of concepts of the nonactual [*non-effectif*]. The central question of his reading of Foucault, that of the nature of power, is thus reduced to a reprise of modal representations of the political. Power is only the propensity to do, the disposition to act, and the orientation toward the passage to the act. It’s true that these propensities, these dispositions, are not subjective properties, that they do not refer back to agents. Deleuze refers them to concrete assemblages and then to abstract assemblages or abstract machines, that is, to relations of forces as pure functions, as diagrams or maps of densities and intensities. But this does not prevent power from being brought back to that dimension that, since Kant, most profoundly defines the human condition: that of being, not a set of given properties, but being the set of one’s possibilities, probabilities, potentialities—in a word, one’s faculties (faculties of knowledge, desire, and pleasure, as Deleuze shows in his Kant book). Instead of being properties of agents, instead of being faculties of individuals engaged in relations of forces—possibilities, probabilities, and potentialities are the properties of abstract machines. But, to the extent that they exist only when they

are actualized in concrete assemblages or integrated in qualified individuals through these assemblages, the suspicion remains that these individuals contain in themselves as their archaic property, and in the final reckoning, all the power of the mode of possibility, potentiality, and probability. Indeed, Deleuze says, “actualization is an integration, a collection of progressive integrations. [. . .] The concrete assemblages of school workshop, army, etc. integrate qualified substances (children, workers, soldiers)” (F 37; trans. modified). The school is a concrete assemblage that actualizes the abstract machine of relations of forces according to the disciplinary regime of power, and this actualization performs integrations or actualizations on students. Aren’t these “qualified substances,” these students, workers, or soldiers, the real material points of power? One can see that Deleuze will discover in these qualified singularities the true anchor of relations of forces. But he will call them “monads”—and the issue no longer is the nature of power but that of the possible. This will come at the moment Deleuze inscribes his reading of Foucault in that of Leibniz. But this passage to Leibniz is not made directly. It requires the invention of the concept of the “fold.”

We now turn to the second part of the Foucault book, written expressly for the 1986 book and not reprised from earlier articles; here Deleuze reviews the three movements in Foucault’s thought—archaeology of knowledge, analytic of power, and ethics of subjectivation. What must be emphasized in Deleuze is the link between a theory of power and the concept of the assemblage. It will be central in the Kafka book. It’s only in this chapter on *Discipline and Punish* that one finds the approximation, on one hand, of the concepts of “diagram” and “*dispositif*” that traces Foucault’s fundamental view of power and, on the other hand, the concepts of “abstract machine” and “assemblage” that Deleuze and Guattari had begun to construct in *Anti-Oedipus* as instruments for thinking the political grounding of literary statements.

The fundamental aspects of the theory of assemblages in Deleuze’s reading of *Discipline and Punish*, as we have seen, may be reduced to five theses: (1) The assemblage is, first, the positive dimension of the nondiscursive, the counterpoint—visible and luminous—of the statement; (2) The assemblage is the same thing as Foucault’s *dispositif*. Hence, there is the concrete assemblage of the school, the workshop, the barracks, the hospital, and the prison. (3) In this sense, as *dispositif*, the assemblage also has two forms; it is not simply the dimension of the visibility of relations of forces, but it mixes the visible and enunciable [*énonçable*];<sup>13</sup> (4) The assemblage is the actualization of the abstract machine, that is, of the diagram of relations of forces, and the abstract machine exists only in the assemblages that actualize it: “It is as if the abstract machine and the concrete assemblages constituted two poles, and we moved from one to the other imperceptibly” (F 40; trans. modified);<sup>14</sup> (5) This migration of concepts between Foucault’s lexicon and Deleuze’s leads

to a simple equivalence, on one hand, between the diagram and the abstract machine, and on the other, between the *dispositif* and the assemblage. Deleuze puts this in a single sentence in order to stress the concrete dimension of assemblages: “The concrete machines are the two-form assemblages or mechanisms [*dispositifs*], whereas the abstract machine is the informal diagram” (F 39).<sup>15</sup>

In all these approaches to the concept of the assemblage, the big question concerns the nature of its actualization or integration of abstract machines. Deleuze says that power, as relations of forces, is only virtual. But how should one conceive of a power than only exists as virtual, as possible, probable, potential? Or, why conceive of the concept as “immanent cause,” which connects the abstract machine of relations of forces to concrete assemblages, as relation between a virtual reality and an actual reality?

*A Thousand Plateaus* (1980) invested a great deal of energy in the concept of the abstract machine as immanent to concrete assemblages. Significantly, the conclusion of the book is titled “Concrete Rules and Abstract Machines.” This chapter is almost a glossary of the whole book, a summary of the work’s principal concepts. The conclusion begins with the concept of strata and stratification, recapitulates the concepts of the assemblage, the rhizome, the plane of consistency and the body without organs, and then the concept of deterritorialization, to finish with the concept of the abstract machine. And the central problem that traverses this last section of the conclusion is precisely that of the modal condition of machines. The first lines declare right away: “There is no abstract machine, or machines, in the sense of a Platonic Idea, transcendent, universal, eternal. Abstract machines operate within concrete assemblages” (ATP 510). To the Platonic version of the abstract (transcendent, universal, eternal) Deleuze and Guattari oppose the concept of the “operation” of the concrete assemblages. The machines are indeed abstract realities, but realities that exist only in that they “operate.” What does “operate” mean here? Is this an equivalent of actualization, of incorporation, of effectuation?

The answer is hardly provided. We know above all that the abstract condition of machines consists in their hybrid reality. They have matter, but not form, since their matter exists only insofar as it operates, that is, insofar as it is tied to a function. But these functions, for their part, are purely material, in the sense that they have no defined properties. Deleuze and Guattari can thus say: “Abstract machines consist of *unformed matters and nonformal functions*. Every abstract machine is a consolidated aggregate of matters-functions (*phylum* and *diagram*)” (ATP 511). What are lacking in abstract machines and what require that they exist only insofar as they operate in concrete assemblages are forms and substances. But giving them form and substance is the role of a complex metaphysical process: that which Deleuze

and Guattari call “effectuation.” “To operate” is thus “to effectuate.” “Within the dimension of the assemblage, the abstract machine, or machines, is effectuated in forms and substances, in varying states of freedom” (ATP 511). To effectuate is only to receive a form or to be incorporated in substances. But, instead of explaining the nature of this process of formalization and substantialization that defines effectuation, Deleuze and Guattari prefer to relate it to an inverse process, that which goes, not from abstract machines to assemblages where they are operative or are effectuated, but from assemblages to abstract machines. “What we have said does not preclude the possibility of ‘the’ abstract machine serving as a transcendent model, under very particular conditions. This time the concrete assemblages are related to an abstract idea of the Machine” (ATP 512). The potentiality of assemblages, their creativity, derives from the way they are related to an abstract machine, and this relation is of the type “copy-transcendent model.” In their need to remove from the reality of the abstract the Platonic condition of the universal and the eternal without, however, confusing the abstract with the concrete, Deleuze and Guattari arrive in *A Thousand Plateaus* at an astonishing metaphysics: abstract machines are actual although not effectuated. “Within the dimensions of the assemblage, the abstract machine, or machines, is effectuated in forms and substances, in varying states of freedom. But the abstract machine must first have composed itself, and have simultaneously composed a plane of consistency. Abstract, singular, and creative, here and now, real yet non-concrete, actual yet noneffectuated” (ATP 511).

We have seen that in Deleuze’s reading of the concepts of the diagram and the *dispositif* in Foucault, abstract machines were not actual. In his reading of *Discipline and Punish*, Deleuze presents them as virtual, possible, potential, or probable. It is in this sense that abstract machines are actualized in optical assemblages and luminous milieus, such as prisons, workshops, and schools. The relations of forces, nonactual, are actualized in concrete assemblages and in actual and effectuated [*effectifs*] assemblages.

*A Thousand Plateaus* proposes an unexpected figure: actual without being effectuated [*effective*]. This modal condition is completely new in Deleuze’s thought. It marks an enormous displacement in his approaches to the question of the plurality of modes of existence. Deleuze had begun his work on the question of the metaphysics of modality with the Proustian formula, “real without being actual, ideal without being abstract.” This was the formula of states of resonance in involuntary memory as well as the formula of artistic essences in the *Recherche*. Deleuze constructed the entire doctrine of the virtual in *Difference and Repetition* around this subtle distinction between reality and actuality.<sup>16</sup> Although not actual, the virtual is real. It exists in itself, independently of its actualization in singularities. In *A Thousand Plateaus*, it is the condition of abstract realities of certain machines. Here, the

opposition is reversed. Rather than save ideality from abstraction, as in *Difference and Repetition*, it is the reality of the abstract that must be protected from its confusion with Platonic ideality. However, what is most surprising is the way this nonideal reality, which is not concrete, is defined in *A Thousand Plateaus*. The abstract machine is “actual but noneffectuated.” But what modal metaphysics can help us understand an actual, nonideal, that is not effectuated? How should we understand such a modality of existence? Is it a new concept of actuality, or, rather, a new approach to the condition of actuality [*l’effectivité*]?

This difficulty is at the center of the Kafka book. From the moment Deleuze wishes to leave the virtual/actual model in its structuralist version, he had to abandon the idea of actualization as relation between the law and its blind application in guilt. He thus replaces the concept of the law with that of the abstract machine. However, in the Kafka book the concept of the abstract machine does not have the same function as it did in the commentary on *Discipline and Punish*. In *Kafka*, “abstract” is not a positive concept; it does not signify that which is actualized in a concrete domain, but, on the contrary, that which is opposed to the actual, to the concrete. It’s in this sense that the entire book is constructed around the difference between the law and justice. The law is an abstract machine in the sense of a feigned transcendence, whereas justice is presented as a concrete machine, which is the collective assemblage of enunciation of desire. For Deleuze and Guattari, the fundamental aspect of the terrifying images that fill the stories and novels of Kafka is the construction of another understanding of the relation between the law and the assemblages of desire. All these images of absurd punishment and suffering are related, in the Kafka book, to abstract machines of torture. Rather than a transcendent law, what is presented in “In the Penal Colony” and *The Trial* are “abstract machines,” gears of punishment that don’t work, or that function in auto-destruction.<sup>17</sup> The law exists only as machine, but dysfunctional abstract machine.

Deleuze and Guattari double this machinic definition of relations of forces between, on one hand, the abstract machine of the law (that doesn’t work or is auto-destructive), and on the other, the concrete machine of justice. The millions of functionaries, judges, police officers, who compose these apparatuses of justice, with their tribunals, prisons, inexhaustible offices, are only machines, concrete machines. And these are not the actualization or incorporation of the transcendent law. There is only desire. “*Where one believed there was the law, there is in fact desire and desire alone*. Justice is desire and not law. [. . .] If everything, everyone, is part of justice, if everyone is an auxiliary of justice, from the priest to the little girls, this is not because of the transcendence of the law but because of the immanence of desire” (K 49–50). Kafka shows that power is only relations of desire, it is only the relation between the abstract machine of a law presumed to be transcendent

and machinic assemblages of justice, where everything works only through desire.<sup>18</sup> Deleuze and Guattari can thus see these descriptions of Kafka as anticipations of the analyses of panopticism in *Discipline and Punish*.<sup>19</sup>

The short stories and novels can be read as the movement of the character K., who leaves the abstract machine of the law, which is built on the opposition of the law to desire as the spirit to the body, to enter the machinic assemblage of justice, where only the immanence of desire exists.

It must be stressed that in the Kafka book the abstract machine as transcendent law does not have the condition of an actual reality. As fictive, it is not even virtual. The law of Kafka has no actualization. Concrete assemblages are indifferent to it. The abstract machine of the law, according to Deleuze and Guattari, is condemned to auto-destruction, like the machine of the Penal Colony, or to the pathetic ridicule of the infinite bureaucratic offices of *The Trial*. The abstract machine of the law is only there to be laughed at.

What is more difficult to understand in *Kafka* is the fact that this exhaustion, at once metaphysical and political, of the plane of the law, in the name of the concrete machine of assemblages of justice, is not maintained throughout the entire book. In fact, at the end of the last chapter, which is dedicated to the concept of the assemblage, Deleuze and Guattari reverse this relation. “Thus far we have opposed the abstract machine to concrete machinic assemblages. [ . . . ] Transcendent and reified, seized by symbolical or allegorical exegeses, it opposes the real assemblages that are worth nothing except in themselves and that operate in an unlimited field of immanence—a field of justice as against the construction of the law. But, from another point of view, it would be necessary to reverse this relationship. In another sense of abstract (a sense that is nonfigurative, nonsignifying, nonsegmental), it is the abstract machine that operates in the field of unlimited immanence and that now mixes with it in the process or the movement of desire: the concrete assemblages are no longer that which gives a real existence to the abstract machine by taking away its transcendental pretense; it’s almost the reverse now—it’s the abstract machine that measures the mode of existence and the reality of the assemblages” (K 86–7).

Here we have a new concept of the abstract machine. No longer the machine of the law, no longer the feigned domain of the unrepresentable and yet irrevocable, no longer the symbolic that makes the real impossible, but the real itself in its total immanence. A complete inversion. The abstract machine becomes not only the most concrete plane—either of the social field or of the body of desire—but this plane is constituted as a truly transcendental plane, that is, a plane that is the condition of the reality of concrete assemblages. The abstract machine, in Deleuze and Guattari’s formulation, “measures the mode of existence and the reality of the assemblages” (K 87). The abstract machine attains this status only through a particular assemblage: the assemblage of



enunciation, which itself reveals another machine—the literary machine. The concrete assemblages as commercial, fiduciary, judicial, and bureaucratic machines become in Kafka’s novels a field of immanence, a field of desire. The oeuvre of Kafka itself becomes an abstract machine, as prolongation of diagrams of relations of forces that compose the social field and as the incarnation of a body of desire.<sup>20</sup> Thus, the assemblages of enunciation that function as the assemblages of expression of the novels, the assemblage *Trial* or the assemblage *Castle*, instead of being the plane of actualization of the abstract machine in the transcendent sense, tend rather toward the abstract machine in the immanent sense. Hence, Deleuze and Guattari’s final questions in *Kafka*: “What is the ability of a literary machine, an assemblage of enunciation or expression, to form itself into this abstract machine insofar as it is a field of desire? The conditions of a minor literature?” (K 88).

Deleuze’s 1975 reading of *Discipline and Punish* and the Kafka book, published the same year, ends in the same difficulty: the relation between the abstract machine (diagram of relations of forces in *Discipline and Punish* or transcendent law in *Kafka*) and concrete assemblages (disciplinary *dispositifs* or bureaucratic, judiciary, hotel, bank machines). In the first case, the abstract machine, in its condition of diagram of power, is conceived as purely virtual, potential, and possible. In the second case, it is feigned. The concrete assemblages or *dispositifs*, such as prisons, barracks, and schools, do not seem to belong to the domain of power; they are not a part of relations of forces. They are only the actualization of these relations in the field of visibility. There is thus an angelic view of power, always exterior, as virtual, to its actualizations through assemblages of visibilities and luminous milieus. Likewise, with the concept of the abstract machine in the Kafka book. The illusory transcendence of the law deprives it of any relation with the concrete assemblages of desire, either in the body of justice or in collective enunciation. Only the idea that the oeuvre of Kafka is itself an abstract machine (a literary machine that measures the tenor of existence of assemblages of enunciation that it expresses because it is directly plugged into the social field) can save this political approach to literature founded simultaneously on a pragmatics of collective assemblages of enunciation and on a microphysics of collective assemblages of desire such as justice.

## ENTRANCE II: THE STATEMENT AND DESIRE (DIMENSION OF THE REAL)

### *The Collective Assemblage of Enunciation*

There are three big problems at work in the distinction among the letters, the short stories, and the novels in *Kafka*. The first concerns the way subjectivity

is replaced. According to Deleuze and Guattari, in the letters, subjectivity collapses through the doubling of the subject; in the short stories, through becoming-animal as unique process of the subject; and in the novels, through the collective assemblage of enunciation. But it is only on the level of the collective assemblage of enunciation that the figure of the subject is truly canceled. From the letters to the short stories and from the short stories to the novels, one traces the movement of the construction of the collective assemblage of enunciation. What Deleuze and Guattari stress in the passage from the short stories to the novels is the movement's Oedipal stakes. The letters and the short stories are modes of writing that fail because of the presence of Oedipus. Even the becoming-animal of the short stories fails because it has an Oedipal pole. The novels function with collective assemblages of enunciation. They are already in the immanence where every statement is an indirect discourse because it is part of a collective social field.<sup>21</sup> If Deleuze and Guattari are interested in this difference among Kafka's letters, short stories, and novels, it's because they see in this difference precisely the formation of a collective writing, a writing that breaks with Oedipal presuppositions and whose statements are bearers of desire.

The second problem may be summarized in the question: How can we dismantle the social system, that is, how can we not reverse the relations of power, but live in a way that has no support in the actual major system? How can we become minor? What Deleuze and Guattari want to stress is that only the collective assemblage of enunciation can effectively reverse the social machine. Only the collective assemblage of enunciation is truly collective, that is, it alone expresses a molecular multiplicity as pack, as rhizome that is created beyond the unity of state and molar individuation. One must become-particle, minuscule, and imperceptible, in order to free lines of flight in permanent movement. This, according to Deleuze and Guattari, is the only way out of every form of domination, because domination acts on the base of molar atomization: the condensation in an identical world of an entire set of political, symbolic, and imaginary dimensions coming from the social sphere. By contrast, the intensity of life is at play elsewhere, in zones not yet formed, still in formation because they are always becoming. Every condensation, every sedimentation implies a reterritorialization and leads thus to the diminution of flight and creativity.

Third problem: how can one transform Oedipus into a writing machine? Deleuze and Guattari show that Kafka's solution is humor. Humor as dismantling of the social machine reveals an entire assemblage that puts the wheels of the writing machine in operation. Thus, instead of guilt, the letters manifest fear of the reversal of the diabolical pact, the short stories, becoming-animal, and the novels, the collective assemblage of enunciation. "Writing has a double function: to translate everything into assemblages and to dismantle the assemblages. The two are the same thing" (K 47).

From this set of problems one can understand Deleuze and Guattari's reading of Kafka. Kafka is exemplary in that he demonstrates two fundamental theses that Deleuze and Guattari put forth in *Anti-Oedipus*. He serves as the literary illustration of this new theoretical universe, first, as laboratory of the mode of creation of the writing-rhizome. What Deleuze and Guattari emphasize, within a distinction between Kafka's short stories and novels, is that, although Kafka moves from the short stories to the novels, there is nonetheless a rhizomatic movement between these literary genres, the short stories being the seeds of novels, and the novels being unfinished short stories.

A question remains: Why include the letters in the oeuvre of Kafka? Why consider as part of his literary oeuvre a literary genre that emphasizes the doubling of the subject of enunciation in the subject of the statement, a doubling that Deleuze and Guattari want to interrupt? Although Kafka had no intention of publishing his letters—indeed, he wanted them destroyed—the letters, according to Deleuze and Guattari, function as part of the writing machine. They are even its central piece. The reason for this is that they let us see precisely to what extent the labor of writing in Kafka exists only as the collapse of the presuppositions of psychoanalytic interpretation. In both the theme of conjugality and the doubling of subjects, the letters function as the very failure of letters.

The three components of Kafka's machine of expression, according to Deleuze and Guattari, are the letters, the short stories, and the novels. Each is a specific mode of expression that forestalls Oedipal matters. For each of these modes of expression, Deleuze and Guattari present its exigencies, its potentialities, and its insufficiencies. But, if each component of expression has its specificities, they are important above all for their rhizomatic communication, their passage from one into the others. "Never has so complete an oeuvre been made from movements that are always aborted, yet always in communication with each other. Everywhere there is a single and unique passion for writing but not the same one" (K 41).

### *The Letters*

What Deleuze and Guattari emphasize in Kafka's letters is the perverse and diabolical relation he has with them. In Deleuze and Guattari's view, the letters serve a requirement: "To deterritorialize love. To substitute for the feared *conjugal contract a pact with the devil*" (K 29). Through an infinite movement that produces a permanent deferral of seeing, of encountering, the other, but also through a diabolical pact that conditions a doubling of the subject, the letters create a deterritorialization of conjugality, that is, of every established form of love. All the letters of Kafka have a woman on the horizon, because all the letters are love letters, even those addressed to friends or to his father.

However, they don't have a truly amorous character. They do not valorize love, but destroy it, and deterritorialize it. Paradoxically, they are love letters for a nonconjugalitv.

What makes these letters so important in Kafka's writing machine is their perverse character. The true motive of the letters is not love for the woman, it's not a supposed need for love. Rather, it's the body of the one who writes the letters. The anorexic body of Kafka, thin and weak, needs force, it needs blood and it seeks this source of energy in women, in the body of the woman. In this way the letters function as a spider web. They allow Kafka to have relations with women in a more daring manner, more intimate, "as though they would serve to establish a new circuit where matters would become more serious" (K 29).<sup>22</sup> The letters are a vampiric strategy. As veritable Dracula, Kafka fears only two things, the family and conjugalitv.

The letters are written as an incessant movement of writing, as a perpetual exchange of fluxes of letters, without end, with no objective of ending in conjugalitv. The letters are the expression of a demonic desire for writing; they are the desire of the very movement of the letters, of their return. "To substitute a destined addressee for destiny" (K 32). The system of the letters is a system for a nonvisibility. "The correspondence with Felice is filled with this impossibility of visiting. The flux of letters replaces seeing [*la vision*]" (K 31). Kafka creates a list of physical obstacles to meeting the beloved (go where? how arrive?). It's a matter of escaping the spatial proximity—of seeing and being seen—that all conjugalitv entails and presupposes. There is an inherent impossibility of visiting in the diabolical pact of the letters. The letters are not the means of meeting and seeing the woman as an amorous process that has as its goal that of acceding to a conjugal contract. They are rather the orgasmic pleasure [*jouissance*] of the very movement of the letter, of its dispatch, that is, a perverse orgasmic pleasure, for it never ends in anything other than itself, in the pure pleasure of writing. The diabolical pact of the letters, which Kafka initiates with women, thus consists in the replacement of the rendezvous with the composition of the letters, with the movement of letters. "The flux of letters replaces seeing, arriving [*la vision, la venue*]. Kafka never stops writing to Felice even though he's seen her only once. With all his force, he wants to impose the conditions of a pact. She must write two times a day. That's the diabolical pact [. . .] *To utter things from the start* [*Énoncer d'abord*] and then to see only those things later on or in a dream" (K 31; trans. modified). The objective of the letters is thus to defer the amorous encounter.

This desire for the infinite flux of the act of writing letters creates a doubling of the subject: "it transfers movement onto the subject of the statement; it gives the subject of the statement an apparent movement, an unreal movement [*un mouvement de papier*], that spares the subject of enunciation all need for a real movement" (K 31). The perverse use of the letters is manifest

precisely in the duality of the subject of enunciation and the subject of the statement. The letters produce a double of the subject. That double is manifest in the reversal of the specific role of each subject, the subject of the statement occupying the place of the subject of the enunciation.<sup>23</sup> Because of this permanent flux of letters, there is a concentration on the figure of the subject of the statement. This subject of the statement comes to occupy the place of the subject of enunciation, the latter being the subject that wants to avoid any encounter. It's a matter of exaggerating, of inflating the function of the subject of the statement, of making it unique, because the objective is to replace the subject of enunciation and assume his movements, which have become fictive or superficial [*apparent*]. "Instead of the subject of enunciation using the letter to recount his own situation, it is the subject of the statement that will take on a whole movement that has become fictive or no more than superficial" (K 30).

There is, however, a potentiality proper to the letters: that of machining letters. The diabolical pact requires that Felice write him twice a day. According to Deleuze and Guattari, this is a prodigious operation, not only because Kafka creates a topology of obstacles to any encounter, but also because he enumerates a list of conditions that must be fulfilled by Felice in order that an encounter might be possible.

The letters as desire, or the desire of the letters, are perverse in another way. It's a matter of finding the guilt of a situation in the reality of the world, in the external machine. In this way the letters succeed in excusing Kafka's horror at conjugality. In making conjugality impossible through his exhaustive list of obstacles external to any encounter, the subject of enunciation frees itself from all guilt, and the subject of the statement becomes the one who has the mission of conquering the obstacle.<sup>24</sup> Maximum perversion: become innocent of one's own horror at conjugality, accuse the world and its functioning of being the cause of the problem, and confer on the woman the role of solution of the problem. Guilt does not belong to the one who signs the pact. Guilt comes from without. Guilt is of the order of the outside, of the social and bureaucratic machine whose subjects (of the statement and of enunciation) are nothing but cogwheels. "The 'Letter to the Father' is the exorcism of Oedipus and the family by the writing machine, just as the letters to Felice are the exorcism of conjugality" (K 32). Like his father, Kafka knows himself to be Dracula and he thus knows himself to be diabolical in all innocence.

This dismantling of the social machine, which Deleuze and Guattari consider to be the essence of humor, is what ensures innocence. "It allows one to posit the innocence of the subject of enunciation, since he can do nothing and has done nothing; the innocence also of the subject of the statement, since he has done everything possible; and even the innocence of the third party, of

the addressee. [. . .] Everyone is innocent, that is the worst of possibilities” (K 32).<sup>25</sup> The subject of enunciation, the subject of the statement, and even the addressee of the letters, all are innocent, because all are parts of the same social machine that invests them and takes them as its cogwheels. The social machine organizes every statement and every writing machine. The letters are part of the Kafka-machine as its fleshly cogwheel, as source of the force of creating. The letters are a pure movement of writing and it is through this condition that they are the cogwheels that put the machine of expression into operation.

The letters, however, are insufficient; there is a point at which they fail, a point where a familial or conjugal, Oedipal return of guilt is the consequence of the devil’s own fatigue: “*Fear*. The devil himself is caught in the trap. One allows oneself to be re-Oedipalized not by guilt but by fatigue, by a lack of invention, by the imprudence of what one has started, by the photo, by the police—diabolical powers from faraway. Thus innocence no longer matters” (K 33). Beneath the laughable guilt, a true panic, the fear of being unmasked, of being discovered in one’s diabolical pact.

As diabolical pact, the letters always carry an inherent fear. The true danger of the letters is the fear that the writing machine will turn against the person who created the pact. It’s the fear that the writing machine might be, in a certain fashion, more perverse than the perversion of the letters. “The real panic is that the writing machine will turn against the mechanic” (K 33). The fear that the writing machine will turn against Kafka, as mechanic of this machine. The fear of the autonomy of the machine itself, not in terms of guilt but of the impasse in the rhizome, of a closure without exit, without escape. Kafka is so machinic (a function of the writing machine) that he fears the machine itself, its perverse functioning; he takes it as a source of blood in order to keep functioning or to completely stop functioning. The true danger of the letters, in short, is fear. Fear of no longer writing, of no longer finding pathways for the letters to reach their goal.

This fear, however, is possible only through perfect knowledge of the functioning of the writing machine, that is, through a great lucidity as to the functioning of the social machine. It’s a fear, therefore, that is possible only because Kafka is perverse, because his own perversion gives him knowledge of the perversion of the machine. “Thus innocence no longer matters. The formula of diabolical innocence saves you from guilt but does not save you from the photocopy of the pact and the condemnation that results from it” (K 33). The pact is there; that machine has functioned. But the machine can stop functioning. Because of fatigue or lack of creativity, Kafka faces the impossibility of writing. What gives him even greater fear is lack of caution: the presence of evidence of such a pact, by way of which Kafka is re-Oedipalized. He ceaselessly covers the tracks that can make him guilty and that can unmask

him. He simultaneously sends two letters that contradict one another so that—this time, in the reverse of the original pact—the answer will not come or will arrive too late. Too late, for a trial already awaits him there. Kafka, or K., knows that the letters to Felice can become a “hotel trial” and that he will be both the accused and the victim of the machine. According to Deleuze and Guattari, Kafka foresees this, for he writes “The Judgment” at the same time as he begins his correspondence with Felice. “But nothing stops the return of destiny: in his rupture with Felice, Kafka will emerge broken, but not guilty. He for whom these letters were an indispensable component, a positive (not negative) instigation to write everything, finds himself without a desire to write, his whole body broken by the trap that almost caught him” (K 33).<sup>26</sup>

### *The Short Stories*

Deleuze presents the short stories as a solution to the impasses of the letters—either to the infinite flux of letters or to the inherent traps of the diabolical pact. It’s therefore in these two senses that the short stories go farther than the letters. Not only do they have as their principal object becoming-animal (in which the animal seeks a way out, a line of flight without being trapped by the working of the machine itself, as in the letters), but they also already represent the functioning of the machine: they are no longer an apparent movement, an infinite flux of correspondence, and they presuppose no doubling of the subject. The letters have the role of starting the machine; they are an initiating force of the machine. But the short stories are already part of the very functioning of the machine, they are already on the level of creation (see K 34–5).

The exigency that underlies the short stories is that of trying to find a line of flight and of conjuring away the dangers of the letters. Every way out will be related to the figure of the animal, for the essence of the animal is escape. The animal coincides with the object of the short stories, the way out. All Kafka’s short stories, according to Deleuze and Guattari, are constructed around the urgency of flight, not in the sense of freedom from oppression, but of an intensive creativity, an affirmation of life. Becoming-animal becomes the object of the short stories because it is the very form of the way out. “For Kafka, the animal essence is the way out, the line of flight, even if it takes place on the spot, or in a cage. *A way out and not freedom. A living line of flight and not an attack*” (K 35; trans. modified). According to Deleuze, Kafka is the author par excellence of a philosophy of nature, because he poses animal essence not as the essence of a fight for freedom, but as a way out, a line of flight, a line of intense life. What is important is not to react against oppression. Rather, it’s to find a line of flight that permits intensive living. The line of flight surges forth as the pure position of a mode of life that is so

intense that it is not a reaction but an affirmation. And the animal, the essence of the animal, is placed in this vitalistic intensity. Not a war machine but a creative machine, a literary machine. The object of the flight or the way out is not to attain freedom, but to cross the thresholds of intensity. The line of flight is literal; it means nothing other than itself. It represents nothing and symbolizes nothing. Examples include “The Judgment” and “The Metamorphosis,” but the most striking is “Jackals and Arabs” (see K 35).

Everything in the animal is metamorphosis, which is simultaneously the becoming-animal of the human and the becoming-human of the animal. The animal is primordially metamorphosis, becoming, intensity. Metamorphosis includes in itself two types of deterritorializations, immanent one to the other. Not only that which is imposed on the animal by humans (imprisonment and subjection), but also that which the animal proposes to humans (lines of flight and of exit). The deterritorialization that is implicit in the metamorphosis of the human in becoming-animal is absolute, as opposed to the relative deterritorializations that correspond to spatiotemporal journeys. Becoming-animal is a journey, but an immobile one. It’s an intensive experience, and the intensity is lived without need of spatial displacement.

In contrast to the letters where the addressee is always presupposed, in the short stories there is no polarity or doubling of the subjects of enunciation and of the statement. This is the potentiality of the short stories, the replacement of subjectivity with a single and same process [*procès*] and a single and same method [*processus*]. Becoming-animal expresses a single and same process of subjectivity, as opposed to the letters, which function through a doubling of subjects, the subject of the statement and the subject of enunciation. As Deleuze says, “becoming-animal lets nothing remain of the duality of a subject of enunciation and a subject of the statement; rather, it constitutes a single and same process [*procès*], a single and same method [*processus*] that replaces subjectivity” (K 36; trans. modified). And this same process, as metamorphosis, is double, because it is at once the deterritorialization of the animal by the human and of the human by the animal. The animal is deterritorialized from the moment it seeks a way out, from the moment the human forces it either to flee or to be tamed. For his or her part, the human is deterritorialized when he or she is confronted by animal exits he or she cannot imagine (the schizo flight). Deleuze and Guattari explain that these deterritorializations are all immanent to one another, and that they precipitate each other and reciprocally cross a threshold.

The short stories are infallibly condemned to failure, and that’s because of the inherent polarity of every becoming-animal, the animal pole, and the human pole. Becoming-animal is a becoming-inhuman. It actually succeeds in finding a way out, in tracing a line of flight. However, it allows itself to be re-Oedipalized, it lets itself be led to a becoming-death. We may say that



becoming-animal, although giving the movement of writing true movement (as opposed to the apparent movement of the letters), although projecting a single and same process (and not the doubling of subjects of the letters), is blocked in the short stories. Not only is becoming-animal re-Oedipalized, but it also allows the introduction of a symbolic dimension that Kafka wants to avoid at all costs. The animals in Kafka “oscillate between a schizo Eros and an Oedipal Thanatos. It is in this perspective alone that metaphor, with its whole anthropocentric entourage, threatens to come back on the scene” (K 36).

The short stories are always confronted with becoming-animal’s proper character, which, despite being well-programmed and apparently certain of a good outcome, oscillates between two poles: that of its becoming-inhuman and that of a too-human familiarization. It’s precisely the tension between these two poles that makes becoming-animal incapable of attaining, by itself, a way out. Either it is caught in the human and familial pole, and thus it is too territorialized and individualized, or it enters into a becoming-molecular that is proper to it and is multiplied and becomes imperceptible. As Deleuze and Guattari summarize, animals are either “beaten down, caught in an impasse, and the story ends; or, on the contrary, they open up and multiply, digging new ways out all over the place but giving way to molecular multiplicities and to machinic assemblages that are no longer animal and can only be given proper treatment in the novels” (K 37–8). The failure of the short stories results in this alternative.<sup>27</sup> This question of the way out leads Kafka to resort to the novel. It’s in the conception of the assemblage as machine that the true way out, the true line of flight, is created.

The way out indicated in the short stories through becoming-animal can only truly be articulated in the novel. Becoming-animal in the short stories, still stuck in the duality of the familial and animal poles, is shown in the novels to be capable of going beyond the absolute character of its becoming, and for that reason, capable of reaching a way out. In the short stories, major traits are still present. One can still perceive the influence, though fragile, of the family and the human. Despite already having the character of a molecularization, of a becoming-imperceptible, becoming-animal in the short stories still represents territorialization, individualization, and a too-human visibility. For example, in “Investigations of a Dog,” the agitation of the seven dog musicians, which is produced in all directions, makes the dog perplexed.<sup>28</sup> Or in “The Burrow,” the mole anguished by the noises, no doubt of animals smaller than the mole, but that are heard everywhere in the burrow.<sup>29</sup>

Yet, even though they go further than the letters, the short stories are equally compromised in their expression. Kafka’s short stories can take two paths, both condemned to failure. Being already on the plane of literary creation, the short stories may be viewed as a literary machine. They already function

as such. However, they are still only the initial stage of this literary machine under construction. The short stories bear what Deleuze calls “machinic indexes.” These are signs of an assemblage that is not yet totally built. As their name indicates, they are indexes, signs, and indications of the construction of the assemblage. When the assemblage functions as a machinic index, it is not yet plugged into the concrete real, and it is not yet effectuated. There are machinic indexes when a machine is in the process of being constructed and it already functions without one’s knowing the parts that constitute it or what their proper functioning is. They indicate machines in the process of being constructed but with a mysterious functioning. “These machinic indexes (which are not at all allegorical or symbolical) are particularly well developed in the acts of the becoming-animal and in the animalistic stories. ‘The Metamorphosis’ forms a complex assemblage in which the index-elements are Gregor-animal and the musical sister; in which the index-objects are the food, the sound, the photo, and the apple; and in which the index configurations are the familial triangle and the bureaucratic triangle” (K 47).

Another case appears in the short stories when they are already a finalized literary machine, totally finished and constructed: abstract machines. These arise as the opposite of machinic indexes, for they are machines ready to function but that nevertheless do not function. If indexes suggest machines under construction, whose pieces and function remain unknowable, abstract machines are instead machines that, despite their state of completion, have no functioning. They are dead machines and pure abstractions because they are not concretely plugged into the real. “Such is the machine in the Penal Colony that answers to the Law of the old warden and doesn’t survive its own dismantling, such is the creature named Odradek [. . .] such too are Blumfeld’s ping-pong balls” (K 47). Thus, the short stories are either perfect and finished, closed in on themselves, as is the case with abstract machines, or they are unfinished because, as machinic indexes, they remain open to the novel, developed in the novel, itself unfinished and interminable. In relation to the first hypothesis, the short stories are always confronted with the proper character of becoming-animal, which, although well-programmed and always having an apparent way out, oscillate between two poles: a becoming-inhuman and a too-human familiarization. Deleuze explains that “not only the dog, but all the animals, oscillate between a schizo Eros and an Oedipal Thanatos. It is in this perspective alone that metaphor, with its whole anthropocentric entourage, threatens to come back on the scene” (K 36). In this way, no matter how well traced the line of flight, however clear the way out, becoming-animal is incapable of realizing its goal by itself. Likewise, for the deterritorialization of becoming-animal: although absolute, the animal lets itself be reterritorialized, retriangulated. Through its extreme slowness, becoming-animal remains a family affair (see K 59).

Deleuze and Guattari recognize that the division between the short stories and the novels is not always precise, the short stories being essays for the interminable novels and the novels being at times unfinished short stories. We must hence understand why Kafka undertook the novels. “What makes Kafka plan for a novel and, renouncing it, abandon it or try to close it up in the form of a story, or, on the other hand, say to himself that maybe a story can be the starting-point for a novel even if it will also be abandoned?” (K 38).

### *The Novels*

What functions better in the novels that allow them to find a way out that the short stories couldn't? That which indicates the way out of becoming-animal in a short story can only be truly articulated in the novel. It's as if the short story were inspired by the novel and by that which is already the most complex element in the novel: the assemblage. The assemblage is what in the novel makes possible intensive lines of flight. And the assemblage thus makes possible the way out, that, in the short story, the animal, still the prisoner of the familial and animal poles, was unable to attain. In the novel, the figure of the animal becomes quite secondary and Kafka no longer describes any becoming-animal. The machinic assemblage is the component of expression that was already active in the short stories but that could only be truly articulated in the novels. This allows one to grasp fully the violence of bureaucratic, judicial, economic, or political Eros. And this prevents the entry of metaphor and the symbol that animals permitted. The assemblage is thus presented as a veritable block consistent by itself.

The novels are characterized by the dismantling of bureaucratic, judicial, police, and social systems. There's no room for becomings-animal or for animals themselves, because they are condemned to failure and they allow metaphor to enter in. If Kafka's short stories have as their primary object becoming-animal (where the animal seeks a way out, a line of flight without allowing itself to be trapped), the novels are organized by the idea of the machine, or better, by the idea of the machinic assemblage. It's interesting to note that when Kafka began his three novels, he gave up on short stories and becomings-animal. As Deleuze and Guattari say, “a text that can be the seed of a novel will be abandoned if Kafka imagines an animal escape that allows him to finish with it” (K 38). (This is the case of “In the Penal Colony.”)

In the novels, the machinic indexes proliferate, giving rise to series, and abstract machines cease to be empty machines and plug into concrete sociopolitical assemblages. The novels have as their component of expression machinic assemblages, which are not valid for machines that function mysteriously or that no longer function, but only for the dismantling and deterritorializing they put into operation. They function through and in the dismantling of the social machine and representation. As we have seen,

Kafka traced lines of flight in the short stories, but he did not take flight *outside the world*. It was rather the world and its representation that he put to flight. In the novels, the dismantling of assemblages makes representation and social interpretation flee, not through the parameters of critique, but through a social and political protocol, through sobriety. The absence of a social critique signifies above all that Kafka is a revolutionary. He is aware of the reality of the social machine and its assemblages. Kafka is too much the realist, too lucid to conduct a social critique or to engage in organized, controlled revolutions. “He knows that all the lines link him to a literary machine of expression for which he is simultaneously the gears, the mechanic, the operator, and the victim” (K 58). He knows, just as well as the characters of his novels, that he must become a part of the machine. In truth, he resembles K. too much. As he himself says, “[The Worker’s Accident Insurance Institution] is a creation of the labor movement. It should therefore be filled with the radiant spirit of progress. But what happens? The Institution is a dark nest of bureaucrats, in which I function as the solitary display-Jew” (cited in K 58).

In Deleuze and Guattari’s view, the Kafka revolution cannot be conceived of as an official revolution. It can only involve a literary machine that anticipates the precipitation of “diabolical powers” (Americanism, fascism, bureaucracy). The literary machine joins the virtual movement (which is already real without being actual) of those powers even before they are constituted. Kafka’s revolution occurs through sobriety, the same sobriety with which he deterritorializes the German language. It’s this sobriety that allows Kafka to be “less a mirror than a *watch that is running fast*” (K 59). Deleuze and Guattari underscore what they call the “method of acceleration or of segmentary proliferation,” in which powers are accelerated, are precipitated even before their own constitution, in such a way as to proliferate everywhere and to contaminate the entirety of the real. It’s a method that, instead of functioning through critique—which is always the consequence of what it critiques—functions through anticipation of that which will be subject to critique once actualized [*l’anticipation de l’actuel critiquable*], through the impregnation of the actual by that which constitutes the object of critique.

Kafka knows that collective and social machines territorialize humans to an incredible degree. He knows that all critique is useless and that, as a result, one must produce an absolute molecular deterritorialization. Sobriety, as form of the struggle against these three powers, is much more intense than any critique.<sup>30</sup> The anticipation of these powers, the proliferation of series, and their appearance behind the family are also given through the proliferation of the photo, the portrait, and the image. (See, for example, K 60–2.) In the short stories, the portrait and the photo are territorial elements that block desire. But the novels go further. These elements become a crossroad, a connector that precipitates and accelerates the movement of deterritorialization.

For Deleuze and Guattari, the central question in Kafka can be formulated only through this concept that they invented, the concept of the assemblage. “Since the assemblage functions really in the real, the question becomes: how does it function?” (K 49). Kafka’s novels have as their object concrete social assemblages, which function as mechanisms of power [*pouvoir*]. Personally, Kafka experienced this machinic assemblage. In the Workers’ Insurance Company, as a bureaucrat, he took care of workers’ accidents, insurance coefficients of various types of machines, management–labor conflicts, and their corresponding statements. If the machinic assemblage functions as social and political assemblage, it’s because the machine is desire before anything else. Desire, not for the machine, but desire as machine. This “machinic” desire expresses the fact that the machine, above all, is contiguity, the adjacent cogwheel, connection. It allows one to understand the extent to which the office or the tribunal forms a part of the machine. As Deleuze and Guattari summarize, “What is essential in Kafka is that machine, statement, and desire form part of one and the same assemblage that gives the novel its unlimited motor force and its objects” (K 83).

Kafka (who is at the juncture of two bureaucracies: the new and the old) claims to attack the violence of a bureaucratic, police, judicial, economic, or political Eros, as a segment of power and a position of desire (see K 57). To do this, Kafka shows us these mechanisms through the use of literary assemblages. This means that we have two types of assemblages, one that concerns political power and that is an element of social coercion, of influence and the social domain; the other a literary assemblage, creative, which, in forming part of the literary machine, allows us to see the first type of assemblage. Hence, two rules: “a novel doesn’t become a novel, even if it is unfinished, even and especially if it is interminable, unless the machinic indexes organize themselves into a real assemblage that is self-sufficient; [. . .] on the other hand, a text that includes an explicit machine will not develop unless it succeeds in plugging into such concrete socio-political assemblages” (K 38; trans. modified). Two rules. The first, which bears on the consistency of the work of art: one must create, through machinic indexes, an assemblage that is consistent by itself. The work of art, as monument, includes within itself assemblages that are themselves monuments. The consistency of the work thus is formed through the consistency of its assemblages, themselves consistent. This is an endo-consistency. The second rule is that of the connection of literary machines with concrete assemblages. This rule seems to contradict the first, for it evokes the need of the work to form a monument with the social and political concrete real. However, the two rules are complementary: the work, as artistic object, forms a monument simultaneously through endo-consistency and as a social and political object. These are two sides of a single assemblage, for every assemblage has two modes of relation to the

collective: particular and universal. The absence of social critique, moreover, makes Kafka's labor a political labor. The aesthetic side of the work of art is conceived by Deleuze and Guattari in resonance with its political side. And it's precisely this artistic character that makes a revolution, through the style of sobriety. Under the first rule, we have, for example, the three great novels of Kafka (*The Trial*, *Amerika*, and *The Castle*); under the second, we have the three unfinished novels ("In the Penal Colony," "Odradek," and "Blumfeld").

According to Deleuze and Guattari, *The Trial* is a novel without end because it reflects an indefinite penal system. In all the novels, what is important is always elsewhere; it always takes place in another place, in the hallways, in the waiting rooms, and in the offices. As Deleuze and Guattari explain: "If the ultimate instances are inaccessible and cannot be represented, this occurs [. . .] as a function of a *contiguity of desire* that causes whatever happens to happen always in the office next door. The contiguity of the offices, the segmentarity of power, replaces the hierarchy of instances and the eminence of the sovereign" (K 51; trans. modified).<sup>31</sup> In both *The Castle* and *The Trial*, persons and institutions all form parts of the same machine; they are all internal wheels of the machine, and the law is only a pure form of desire that is made visible through itself in that it is inherent to the machine. This is the reality of the social and political assemblage, which is the same as the literary assemblage Kafka claims to dismantle. "To dismantle a machinic assemblage is to create and effectively take a line of flight that the becoming-animal could neither take nor create. It is a completely different line. A completely different deterritorialization" (K 59–60; trans. modified). The comic is now on the side of flight, of the exit from the impasse, of becoming-animal. It's the understanding that all systems bear in themselves their own abolition, dissolution, line of flight. All systems are systems with the possibility of an exit from the system. "There is a 'defeat' in the novel not only when the becoming-animal continues to predominate but also when the machine doesn't succeed in incarnating itself in the living political and social assemblages that make up the animated material of the novel. In this case, the novel remains a rough draft that also cannot develop, no matter what its force and beauty may be" (K 39).

### ENTRANCE III: AGAINST THE AESTHETIC (DIMENSION OF THE IMAGINARY)

#### *Minor Writing, Collective Affair*

Kafka is the extreme case of a literature without sensation or imagination, of a hyperreal literature, where all fictional dimensions result, not in projections

of phantasms or imaginative modification, but in a sobriety of subjective impression as connection around remarkable objective points immanent to the work. Kafka displaced fiction from the plane of impressions to the plane of a machinism, to the plane of points of connection that function objectively as signals for the characters and for the narrator. This collapse of impressions, of sensations, but above all of the imagination in the understanding of the nature of fiction places Kafka on the outside of what Deleuze and Guattari call an aesthetic conception of literature. “No one knew better than Kafka to define art or expression without any sort of reference to the aesthetic. [. . .] Machinic definition, and not an aesthetic one” (K 70). In another passage, they write: “Aesthetic impressions, sensations, or imaginings still exist for themselves in Kafka’s first essays where a certain influence of the Prague school is at work. But all of Kafka’s evolution will consist in effacing them to the benefit of a sobriety, a hyper-realism, a machinism that no longer makes use of them. [. . .] To speak here of a projection of phantasms would be to compound the error” (K 70).

The fundamental instruments of psychoanalytic interpretation are thus all related by Deleuze and Guattari to the “aesthetic.” To save Kafka from the Oedipal universe is to accompany his movement of creation, his passage from a model that presupposes a faculty that produces nonreality to a hyperrealism, his transformation of a psychology of sensation, imagination and the phantasm into a politics of collective machines, of the production of the real. The great task becomes that of thinking art without imagination. But how does one read Kafka’s works as a hyperrealism and as a machinism? How does one understand the labor of unrealization, of fiction without a faculty of images?

Deleuze and Guattari’s strategy is double. On one hand, stressing the machinic dimension of collective assemblages of enunciation, that is, the way in which Kafka makes literature a collective affair, an affair of a minor community that works as if a foreigner in its own language. On the other hand, displaying the clinical dimension of Kafka’s writing. Deleuze and Guattari show Kafka’s work as historical and global delirium, as multiple kinds of becomings (becoming-minor, becoming-animal, and becoming-machine). Literature thus becomes a matter of health, a healthy delirium. We will follow these two lines of the destitution of an aesthetic conception of fiction, of the erasure of the great myths surrounding the imagination and the phantasm.

Deleuze and Guattari present Kafka’s oeuvre not as a private affair, with individual phantasms, but as a collective affair. His work is a result, a symptom of a determined history and geography, which are reinvented at each moment of literary creation. According to Deleuze and Guattari, the collective character of language is present in Kafka in two mechanisms: (1) on one hand, in the fact that literature is always created through the inscription of personal life (familial, conjugal, and so on) in an economic, bureaucratic, or

judicial background; (2) on the other hand, in the form of collective investment of literary labor, where every statement takes on the value of common action.

According to Deleuze and Guattari, the mechanism that regulates the inscription of the individual in the political is the collective assemblage of enunciation, that is, the transformation of literary labor into an affair of the people, in making literature a “collective machine of expression.” Collective machine of expression is the term used to break with the idea of the productivity of sense or a value-sign, which nonetheless, for its part, has the advantage of distinguishing schemas of representation, information, and communication. To maintain the separation of these schemas, but without falling into the fundamental ambiguity of the dialectic (the transformation of matter into sense, of content into expression, of social process into signifying system), Deleuze and Guattari propose the concept “collective machine of expression.”<sup>32</sup>

The collective assemblage of enunciation displaces language in relation to the territory and inscribes individual history in a collective horizon. To understand the mode of existence of a minor literature is thus to understand this assemblage. And to understand this assemblage is to understand the necessarily social character of enunciation. The collective assemblage of enunciation has two definitions: one nominal, and the other real. The nominal definition shows us the necessarily social character of enunciation. This definition is redundant because it shows at once the movement of enunciation, which goes from itself to collective assemblages, and the movement of the collective assemblage, which requires and determines the processes of subjectivation of enunciation and the individuality of the statement. What is important in this definition is that it allows one to understand the value of “free” indirect speech and the importance of the role of the assemblage in the delineation of this discourse. Such delineation designates precisely the state of nondefinition [*indéfinition*] of the statement. All constants, all subjective elements, are consequences of an action of the collective assemblage. “It is the assemblage, as it freely appears in this discourse, that explains all the voices present within a single voice, the glimmer of girls in a monologue by Charlus, the languages in a language, the order-words in a word” (ATP 80). The real definition concerns immanent acts of language. “These acts seem to be defined as the set of all *incorporeal transformations* current in a given society and *attributed* to the bodies of that society” (ATP 80).

In a minor literature, the writer, expropriated from his territory of origin and his place in discourse, renounces not only the principle of the narrator but also the mechanism of the hero. These two traditional figures of the subject in literary activity are changed into a literature without a subject. “There isn’t a subject, *there are only collective assemblages of enunciation*, and literature



expresses these assemblages” (K 18; trans. modified).<sup>33</sup> No longer are there author and hero, narrator and character, but a community. As regards the narrator, Kafka creates a neutral narrator, with no trait of singularity and completely insignificant. Kafka’s narrator is absent from history and has not the least advantage over the uninformed reader. His only access to events is through the hero, who, equally insignificant and poorly informed, is, nevertheless, the individual who experiences the action of the narrative. The lived experience of the action is the sole advantage the hero has over the narrator. Thus, it is through necessity that the internal topography of Kafka’s narrative is undetermined. *The Castle*, for example, is only the permanent verification of collective conventions that determine the place of the high and the low in the scale of values, a story that is constructed as the rectification of instituted values. And as Kafka always manages to dismantle these values, we can say that all of his work is a demolition of society.

We can also see the refusal of the narrator in the statements of the dog researcher, which, in “Investigations of a Dog,”<sup>34</sup> amount to statements of the canine species, of the collectivity, where the canine community is the omnipresent background. It’s also the case with “Josephine the Singer,” where the mouse people exemplify the force of the community; or of “The Great Wall of China,” where the Chinese people work together in the erection of their own defense and where the people are the source and guarantee of all truth. We are in the presence of one of his most consistent ideas: the idea of the people as always being rooted in a small community. A community that is founded not only on language and history, but above all on ties to the earth and blood. There where this unity—at once biological, linguistic, territorial, and historical—has been entirely preserved, the individual is as if justified, saved in advance, because the people protect him or her, sustain the individual, and he or she is with the community as a whole entity. This is what Kafka means by “a single people.”<sup>35</sup>

Kafka’s notion of literature as a collective affair is also visible in the importance that the most insignificant, humble, and obscure people have for him. This importance given to insignificant people comes from the fact that Kafka does not take seriously the “deep meaning” of major themes such as metaphysics, religion, or history. People for Kafka are what are worth thinking and talking about. Hence the importance of the Chinese people in “The Great Wall of China,” the canine race in “Investigations of a Dog,” the mouse people in “Josephine the Singer,” and the principal role of characters like Gregor, K., the Surveyor, or Joseph K., as minor figures opposed to the system of institutions. In other words, in Kafka there is a negation of deep meaning in favor of immediately visible reality. Throughout his oeuvre, Kafka focuses on people, a people or a specific character, but never on a metaphysical theory or a religious doctrine. Where there are theoretical elements, they

are present only to be ridiculed, treated ironically, and, thus, diminished. Such is the case with the juridical system in *The Trial*, the human system in “Report to an Academy,” or in the legend of the Golem.

### *Be a Foreigner in One's Own Language*

The theme of foreignness/strangeness [*étrangeté*] in a language goes back to Proust but gains a new formulation in *Anti-Oedipus*. There Deleuze opposes psychoanalysis' reduction of the maternal language to the figure of the mother, to the voice of the mother who speaks in the writer (who, in continuity with our previous commentaries, may also be named, this time with a supplementary reason, “the foundling” [*enfant trouvé*]). To be a foreigner in one's own language is thus above all to be a foreigner to this maternal voice that drives the writer to a linguistic structure and a set of elements that constitute the very order of language.<sup>36</sup> To be independent of the maternal voice is thus to be independent of the imposition of a filiation and an arborescence of language. One must create a liberty in the maternal language (or language of the mother), a usage of language through rhizomatic alliance. The creation of a new language is thus a political affair.

In *Kafka*, this theme is formed through the concept of minor literature, the literary work that a minority conducts within a major language. Such is the case with the Czech and Jewish community to which Kafka belonged. In Prague, at the beginning of the century, this community had to write in German and inside a literary tradition built on the great myths of Christianity. Reduced to an abstract ghetto of language, a ghetto of German outside his class and his society, Kafka, paradoxically, can write only in a public and official German. He writes only in an adopted language, whose use he is permitted by the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Ironically, he is forced to write in an administrative and bureaucratic language, so to speak—in a major language. His German places him in a zone of generality where he occupies the place of a simple functionary of the Workers' Insurance Company. It's with a chancellery German that Kafka writes his reports, his judicial chronicles, his memoranda, and his affidavits. His oeuvre is written with the same language as his work documents. It's the same language that he uses as a functionary of the social and bureaucratic machine and as a writer. The major language thus becomes a constitutive part of his art, a minor art fashioned with major instruments. This is the genius of his paradoxical art: an art that makes of logic the argument of the fantastic and of the fantastic a simple accident of normality; an art that destroys all categories of grammar and rhetoric, and an art that finally renders indifferent the fictional world and the cruelty of the realist observer. The writer invents a minor use of a major language; he minorizes the dominant, arborescent language.

It is necessary to distinguish between “majoritarian” (homogeneous and constant system), “minorities” (subsystems), and “minoritarian” (potential and created becoming, creative) (see ATP 105–6 and 291–2). According to Deleuze and Guattari, every major language carries within itself elements of minor languages. Every major language suffers the influence and the alterations of the minorities who speak it.<sup>37</sup> To render a language minor, is this: to conduct a minor treatment of that language. The subsystems are what transform the great system of the major language. The people who inhabit small communities, ghettos, immigrants, in short, the neighborhoods excluded from the central (and majoritarian) part of a city, are those who work upon the major language and make it minor.<sup>38</sup> But the transformation of a major language is not conducted exclusively through the concept of the minority. Rather, the concept of the minoritarian is at the center of this transformation. Above all, artists as creative powers [*puissances*] are the one who make a major language minor. It is thus through the way both minorities and minoritarians use, speak, and set in function the major language that it becomes a minor language. “‘Major’ and ‘minor’ do not qualify two different languages but rather two usages or functions of language” (ATP 104).

But the major language itself is only a result of the influence of minor language. It’s not solely the minor language that is derived from the major language. In Deleuze’s view, languages are both at the same time. It’s at the very moment when the specificity of the minor language is created that the major language itself becomes major. The major language does not exist for itself as such. On one hand, it is major because it is the result of a major usage, a marker of power.<sup>39</sup> If minor language is the usage that minorities make of official language, major language is also the consequence of its use by forces of power and the majority of people. “Kafka suggested that ‘major’ literatures always maintained a border between the political and the private, however mobile, whilst, in minor literature, the private affair was immediately political and ‘entailed a verdict of life or death.’ And it is true that, in the large nations, the family, the couple, the individual himself go about their own business, even though this business necessarily expresses social contradictions and problems, or directly suffers their effects” (C2 218). On the other hand, a major language bears within itself a minor usage, that is, heterogeneous elements.<sup>40</sup> Minor language like major language—in other words, all language—is composed by heterogeneous characteristics, inherent and continuous variations, permanent crossings of intensities.

But what truly distinguishes minor language from major language? Two things. First, that minor language has only a minimum of structural homogeneity and constants. It is defined as “language of continuous variability” (see OLM 244). By contrast, major language is constructed as a homogeneous, standard system, with the idea of an internal structure, with invariants,

universals, or constants. Second, that minor language alone has the power [*puissance*] of creation, the creative property. Hence, Deleuze writes in “One Less Manifesto” that “Kafka, a Czech Jew writing in German, makes a minor usage of German, and thus produces a decisive linguistic masterpiece (more generally, the work of minorities on German in the Austrian empire). At the most, one could say that one language is more or less endowed with these minor usages” (OLM 244; trans. modified).

The invention of a minor language implies taking the maternal language, or the language in which one writes, to the extreme. But what does “taking to the extreme” mean? To take a language seriously is the equivalent of submitting oneself to norms, to linguistic laws, which have determined the functioning of the major language. The minor writer seeks a way out of that language, and the way out is found beyond language. It is thus necessary to create another usage of the language. To construct a way out, an escape [*une fuite*], the minor language must be profoundly different, that is, its difference in relation to the language of origin must imply not only a conceptual difference, but also a grammatical and syntactic difference.<sup>41</sup> Minor language has no particular sonorities or local tone. From the phonetic point of view, minor language becomes an almost insignificant language, one might say, a language without qualities. To create a new tongue in an already-given language means above all that new grammars, new syntaxes, are invented, that new powers/capacities [*puissances*] of the language itself are created. As Deleuze and Guattari say, “the more a language has or acquires characteristics of a major language, the more it is affected by continuous variations that transpose it into a ‘minor’ language” (ATP 102).

To introduce the factor of “continuous variation” into the interior of a given language means that the expression and content of language become indissociable, indistinct, for they no longer have the function of saying things but are in the same state as things. Language has become a single plane, where expression and statements are inserted into contents, where they intervene in contents, not in order to represent them, but to anticipate, shift them, to slow them or speed them up, to detach them or unite them, and to cut them up differently. One can no longer assert the primacy of expression or content over the other. They are now in reciprocal presupposition. On this plane of continuous variation, expression and content are totally deterritorialized.<sup>42</sup> Language, which is usually defined by phonological, semantic, and syntactic constants that form the statement, in sum, by its homogeneity, is now defined by a variability that consists of “the usage of these constants in relation to variables internal to enunciation itself (variables of expression, immanent acts, or incorporeal transformations)” (ATP 85). Thus, in a given language, one can set in variation semantic, phonetic, phonological, and stylistic constants. As Deleuze explains, “the constants are drawn from the variables

themselves. [. . .] *Constant is not opposed to variable*; it is a treatment of the variable opposed to the other kind of treatment, or continuous variations” (ATP 103). However, one must beware of the danger of disengaging a pseudo-constant from content or expression.<sup>43</sup>

The new language is thus a language constructed in a state of variation. It is continuous variation itself. “Build the *continuum* of ‘I swear!’ with the corresponding transformations. This is the standpoint of pragmatics” (ATP 94).<sup>44</sup> The concept of continuous variation is understood by Deleuze in opposition to the idea of representation. Continuous variation is a state as possibility of overturning all stability and all standardization, in a word, all the power [*pouvoir*] of representation. All representation presupposes invariants and constants, and these are precisely the characteristics that make representation a marker of power. Continuous variation is the effort to put to flight these characteristics by incorporating them into chains of heterogeneous elements. We believe then that it is possible to call continuous variation a “machine of continuous variation” or even “varying machine.” Continuous variation follows the principle of a permanent movement, of an infinite operation that is in relation with a continuous flux. Second, as machine, variation is mechanical, that is, above all it must function. As Deleuze remarks, to avoid the risk of the minority becoming a majority, “variation must never itself cease varying. That is, it must travel through new and always unexpected routes” (OLM 254; trans. modified). Finally, as concerns the machine, which is at once social, bureaucratic machine (of power) and writing machine, machine of collective expression (of counterpower), continuous variation at once forms a part of major systems and constitutes, through its presence in subsystems (as minor languages), the deconstruction of systems of power. The question is how to render major language minor, that is, how to create a minor-becoming. “That is the strength of authors termed ‘minor,’ who are in fact the greatest, the only greats: having to conquer one’s own language, in other words, to attain that sobriety in the use of a major language. [. . .] Conquer the major language in order to delineate in it as yet unknown minor languages. Use the minor language to *send the major language racing*” (ATP 105). Minor language is thus not a stabilized language, decided and finished. On the contrary, it is virtual, subject to all variations.

Deleuze and Guattari condense this struggle in what they call the “universal figure of the minoritarian consciousness.”<sup>45</sup> Creation is possible only in a state of preindividuation, where figures of the Person, of the Subject, no longer make any sense.<sup>46</sup> Creation thus involves the dissolution of the Ego and the I in order to reach the figure of a presingular universal consciousness. It is formed not through a process of the individual in relation to the social, but through a becoming-everybody [*un devenir-tout-le-monde*], a becoming-haecceity in confrontation with nothingness. This becoming-everybody has its double in Artaud’s idea of writing *for* the illiterate. “But what does ‘for’

mean? It is not ‘for the benefit,’ or yet ‘in their place.’ It is ‘before.’ It’s a question of becoming” (WP 109).

In Kafka’s case, writing in German has the value of writing in the language of a foreign country, in a country abroad [*d’un pays étranger, dans un pays à l’étranger*]. As he told Max Brod, to write in German is for a Jew the equivalent of taking possession of “someone else’s property [*bien étranger* in the French translation], something not earned, but stolen by means of a relatively casual gesture. Yet it remains someone else’s property [*un bien étranger*], even though there is no evidence of a single solecism” (Kafka 1977: 288). But Kafka, like all Jewish writers, faces an impossibility in writing in German. He needs to feel at home, to feel that he possesses a country, a true soil to which he can belong by right. In this same letter, we read his description of what he calls the linguistic impossibilities of German Jews: “the impossibility of not writing, the impossibility of writing German, the impossibility of writing differently. One might also add a fourth impossibility, the impossibility of writing (since the despair could not be assuaged by writing, was hostile to both life and writing [. . .]). Thus what resulted was a literature impossible in all respects” (Kafka 1977: 289).

Toward the end of making his own literature possible, in sum, to be able to write, Kafka thus must find a way out in the German language; he must invent a different usage of German. According to Deleuze, his task is precisely to invent a “minor” usage of the major language, to “minorize” the dominant language. This is what Kafka does with German. “Kafka [. . .] submits German to creative treatment as a minor language, constructing a continuum of variation, negotiating all of the variables both to constrict the constants and to expand the variables: make language stammer, or make it ‘wail,’ stretch tensors through all of language, even written language, and draw from it cries, shouts, pitches, durations, timbres, accents, intensities” (ATP 104). To do this, he created atypical expressions that deterritorialize correct forms, the constants of public German.<sup>47</sup> But we must stop to try to understand what procedures Kafka uses to make language minor.

First, the use of certain words, which we can call key words or image words, such as “trial” (*Prozeß* in German means both “judicial action” and “disease process”), “castle” (*Schloss* retains the Latin sense of “closed field”), “mistress” (*Herren* signifies the tyranny of Administration officials, important people, and in relation to women, dominant men who reduce them to slavery), and “dog” (*Hund* which is an anti-Semitic slur). These words are employed in an absolutely grammatical fashion, without complement or determinative. These are words that evoke several images. And it is this set of images of the word that produces a play—itsself double at the level of the plot—of the action of the text, for it engages the action in two simultaneous directions, one manifest, the other more or less dissimulated.

This is also what Kafka does when he takes simple words and locutions of common language and makes them say something else. He extracts all the possibilities of sense outside common sense or good sense. This means that Kafka takes away words' absolute power [*puissance*] of signification. He sets their meanings in movement. But it is above all in their implicit sense, their repressed sense, that the words attain a powerful dynamism and gain their force. These words refer to all their historical, philosophical, political, social, and even religious significations. The double sense, or the repressed sense, is evident and can be spoken and understood only in a theoretical context and explanation. This shows to what extent in Kafka the most evident is the least evident. In these texts, metaphors condense in a single and same image all the associations of ideas suggested by their locution. The image instantaneously realizes the latent wish contained in the manner of speaking.

In this linguistic process, Kafka dismantles the assemblage of quotidian language. He makes evident how this language is constructed around forces of power, forces that are only fetishistic vehicles of a truth that is only falsehood. In other words, what Kafka lets us see is that profound truth of quotidian language, a truth that, because it only hides the double sense of words, is only a countertruth (see Robert 1986: 21). The images he subtly brings forth are absolutely necessary because, being themselves the object of this repression of quotidian language, they are the only way of showing the "true" truth of quotidian language. Kafka shows the repressed object of dominant language; he unveils that which power wants to keep hidden but which is always present. As Deleuze and Guattari say, "No one is better than Kafka at differentiating the two axes of the assemblage and making them function together. On the one hand, the ship-machine, the hotel-machine, the circus-machine, the castle-machine, the court-machine, each with its own intermingled pieces, gears, processes, and bodies contained in one another or bursting out of containment (see the head bursting through the roof). On the other hand, the regime of signs or of enunciation: each regime with its incorporeal transformations, acts, death sentences and judgments, proceedings, 'law'" (ATP 88).

In deconstructing quotidian language, the images that nouns now make visible are thus only possibilities of ways out. They form part of this opposition, of this war of minorities against the system of power—in this case a linguistic system. This is how Kafka discovered a way to avoid being forced to make use of social critique. He dismantles society, not only via a question of language, but in language, by the numerous images that words create around them. The images that surround these words also form part of a game of dissimulation. The multiple images that the words make visible are no truer than the supposed truth of quotidian language that they dismantle. These images are not true in themselves. Paradoxically, all are false and all

are conditions of truth. At the same time that they dismantle instituted truth, they also denounce their own illusion and error.

Kafka does nothing more than exploit this ambiguity of words, playing with what they make visible, with their logical, historical, or cultural dependencies. He plays with these dependencies and, thus, plays with the values of the entirety of the major, German society of Prague. In exploiting language to the maximum, and in particular the grammar and meaning of words, Kafka manages to create a veritable game of words. However, this game of words is so subtle and minor that it remains unperceived. This is the power [*puissance*] of a language raised to its limit.

Deleuze and Guattari also underscore Kafka's irony in regard to his own name and those of some of his characters. Kafka makes use of the relation between his name and that of Franz-Josef<sup>18</sup> in naming his characters. Hence, Josephine the singer and Joseph K. are derived from Franz-Josef, which allows us to attribute them to the double name of the emperor. Also, with the image of his own name, he creates the character K., symbolic initial of Kafka, which is again justified through the name of the emperor. In the same way Kafka describes his father (see Kafka 1954: 268).

In "Wedding Preparations in the Country," Kafka once again uses humor to dismantle social reality and its mechanisms of seduction. He shows the ridiculousness of Prague Jews who try to pass for native Germans, pure Germans, who speak German in their homes and raise their children as Germans, but who, outside their neighborhoods, are recognized by everyone as Czech Jews. To give this ridicule a literary cast, Kafka offers the relationship between K. the Surveyor and the Gentlemen of the castle. The character K. the Surveyor is an example of Germanized Judaism. However, he is assimilated only by the people of the village, never by the Gentlemen of the castle. He thus tries to become a fellow citizen of the indigenous population. Yet, despite speaking the same language, he is not accepted in that linguistic community. It's the same as in the story of the swimmer who returns to his home, but who understands nothing of what his compatriots say.

Minor language in Kafka is thus constituted only by intensities, forces, sounds, and affects. It is differentiated by affects. Affect breaks words, nullifies sense, and returns everything to the subject. Affect sends to the limit not only the sense of words but even their vocalization: the affect of the cry. This marginality of minor language, a marginality of the virtual, is the consequence of the dynamism proper to affect. Minor language is thus only a composite of sensations, and sensation is a "zone of indetermination, of indiscernibility, as if things, beasts, and persons [. . .] endlessly reach that point that immediately precedes their natural differentiation. This is what is called an *affect*" (WP 173). Affect is pure positive intensity that never expresses a final state as the equivalent of the individual in its complete form, as organism, but always a



passage between states. It's a feeling of passage from one state to another, of an "I am" to an "I feel." It's the expression of the full body without organs, which is pure becoming, which is preindividual and presingular, uniquely traversed by fluxes and lines. Affect is on the side of those who invent a minor people. It is only through sobriety that one manages to do this. We know that "*affects are precisely these nonhuman becomings of man*" (WP 169). The affect of becoming ("I sense that I am becoming a woman") is intensive quantity in a pure state. It's a feeling, a primary emotion from which hallucinatory and delirious experiences derive, as secondary elements.<sup>49</sup>

### *Take the Materiality of Language for the Object of Desire*

The creation of a minor language implies a difference between the act of making sounds and the visibility proper to language. The agrammatical and asyntactic limit to which a primary language is brought produces a change in the way this language is perceived. What these words now let one hear is the language's proper limit, its exteriority, its grammatical and syntactic delirium. In *Essays Critical and Clinical*, Deleuze says that there is "a painting and a music characteristic of writing, like the effects of colors and sonorities that rise up above words" (CC lv).<sup>50</sup> It's a matter of making language stutter, of making it stammer, like the whistling of the mice in "Josephine the Singer," or like Grete's violin that reflects her brother's squeaking in "The Metamorphosis," and which in turn is confirmed by the agitation of his legs and the oscillations of his body.<sup>51</sup> Stuttering is not restricted to speech, but to all of language and all the linguistic and nonlinguistic elements of language.

It's like the tonal or diatonic system of music: the minor mode introduces continuous variation, making music's centered arborescent organization a fleeing and decentered rhizome. One can no longer speak of a sonic form that organizes a semantic and syntactic matter. Nor can one speak of a continuous development of form. As Deleuze and Guattari say: "It is a question of a highly complex and elaborate material making audible nonsonorous forces. The couple matter-form is replaced by the coupling material-forces" (ATP 95). The sonority and musicality of words are not the audible material components, but the forces of the outside with which they compose themselves. And these forces, this compositional principle, transform each word into an affect-word, into an image-word. This is their materiality and sonority, to show the outside that lives inside them. In this way, the created language is always between, always in the middle of the word and its images. Writing thus begins in the between of materials and forces. Hence the fundamental stuttering of every writer.<sup>52</sup> Deleuze distinguishes three ways of stuttering, one of which concerns only the usage of a given language, the other two introducing words into the language, words that no longer exist independently of the

stuttering that affects them. Hence, we have a first way of stuttering, *doing it* literally, that is, making characters stutter. It's a question of making the character stutter in his or her speech and thereby affecting language. In other words, the stuttering is only an affectation of the character, a person's way of pronouncing words, without changing the word. Stuttering as affectation does not concern language. Such stuttering remains major. The second is *saying it without doing it*, where the realization is on the side of the reader, for whom the writer gives only indications of the stuttering of characters. Such is the case with Gregor, whose squeaking, although more prevalent than his speech, is only indirect, that is, is attested to only through those who hear him. Finally, the third possibility is when *to say is to do*, that is, when stuttering introduces new words, words that exist only in and through stuttering. Thus, there is a difference in the language that one speaks: it's no longer an affectation of language, it's the language itself that now includes new words, sentences, sounds. "It is no longer the character who stutters in speech; it is the writer who becomes *a stutterer in language*. He makes the language as such stutter" (CC 107). In this case, the words are what count, not the characters. The words are the object of stuttering. To the form of expression "he stuttered" now corresponds a form of content as environment of stuttering, as affective milieu of words. For example, the squeaking of Gregor is not indicated externally by Kafka, but is deduced from the factors that surround him as oscillations of his body and trembling of his legs. It's thus not a matter of an affectation of language but of the affects of language.

Sometimes, in place of an extensive or representative language where there is a relation between the subject of enunciation of sense, on one side, and the subject of the statement and the designated thing, on the other, minor language operates through intensity, which Deleuze designates as "asignificance." In these procedures, minor language neutralizes sense, cancels it through tonalities without signification. It's the plane of the deterritorialization of sense and subject, notions of significance, and reference. "It is less a matter of using pseudoconstants to produce a simulacrum of language or a metaphor for the voice than of attaining that secret neuter language without constants and entirely in indirect discourse where the synthesizer and the instrument speak no less than the voice [. . .] an immense coefficient of variation is affecting and carrying away all of the phatic, aphatic, linguistic, poetic, instrumental, or musical parts of a single sound assemblage—a 'simple scream suffusing all degrees'" (ATP 96–7).<sup>53</sup>

### *The Becomings of the Writer: Delirium against the Fantasy*

Writers follow the strange imperative that tells them either to completely stop writing or write like another. They become producers of new worlds, of

unheard-of realities, never seen, not because they are imagined or projected as fantasies, as private deliriums, but because they write as sorcerers. “If the writer is a sorcerer, it is because writing is a becoming, writing is traversed by strange becomings that are not becomings-writer, but becomings-rat, becomings-insect, becomings-wolf, etc.” (ATP 240). All becomings are minor becomings, minoritarian. The writer never becomes Man because that would be to become the dominant expression. Man is “the molar entity par excellence,” the entity of domination, which implies the possession of power and right.<sup>54</sup> Man is also the “subject of enunciation,” which has the function of the “central Point” of the regime of arborescence, as opposed to the decentralized line of flight of the rhizomatic regime. It’s a question of the point that makes the binary distinction between elements that characterize the dual machine. Functioning as the average European, man enables the distinction between male–(female), adult–(child), white–(black, yellow, red, and mixed), and reasonable–(animal). The writer becomes the minoritarian figures of a people that is itself minoritarian. He becomes the specificity of a minority. He becomes the minority itself. As Deleuze asks, “The shame of being a man—is there any better reason to write?” (CC 1).

The writer is an experimental being who stops being a man in order to experiment in becomings, such as becoming-animal and becoming-inhuman. In most of Kafka’s texts, becoming corresponds to the problem of flight, not freedom (see K 10). In all his novels and short stories, at stake is a way out or an entrance, or an aside, an adjacent place, a corridor, and so on.<sup>55</sup> Rather than remain in the dominant sphere, in the world and the system of the bureaucracy and justice, the becomings-animal are absolute deterritorializations. They have their own reality.<sup>56</sup> Becomings-animal tend toward the desert world that Kafka depicts so well in his novels and short stories. As Deleuze says, “Kafka’s animals never refer to a mythology or to archetypes but correspond solely to new levels, zones of liberated intensities. [. . .] animals, mice, dogs, apes, cockroaches are distinguished only by this or that threshold, this or that vibration, by the particular underground tunnel in the rhizome or the burrow. Because the tunnels are underground intensities” (K 13).<sup>57</sup>

Becoming follows two principles. The first says that becoming passes through the pack and through the contagion of the pack. The animal as gang or pack signifies that becoming is a multiplicity without center, and above all, without ancestor. Becoming is formed not through heredity, nor filiation, but through propagation identical to that of sterile hybrids whose proliferation takes place through an asexual union. The specificity and importance of this process of proliferation are that it puts heterogeneous elements, such as a human, an animal, and a virus, in a state of contagion.<sup>58</sup> Becoming is a rhizomatic process; it is a matter of making a rhizome among heterogeneities.

The second principle says that becoming-animal must take place through alliance with an exceptional entity that, paradoxically in a rhizomatic system, has the role of leader of the gang, or master of the pack. This entity has several possible positions in relation to the pack. Not only is it the head of the group, but it can equally be the figure of the Loner, to the side of the pack, or the Demon, superior to the pack. This second principle presents a contradiction with the first, for it says that, in order for the becoming to take place, the human or the animal must break with its group or its pack. Becoming begins with a detachment from the pack. The presence of the figure of an exceptional entity, of the Anomalous/of an “an-omalie,”<sup>59</sup> in the process of becoming implies a choice of the one who becomes. This choice is a pact, a pact with this anomalous entity. But how should we define this entity? Deleuze and Guattari describe the anomalous as that reality which is neither individual nor species, which only bears affects. For them, it’s a question of a phenomenon of the “border.” As they say: “This is our hypothesis: a multiplicity is defined [. . .] by the lines and dimensions it encompasses in ‘intension.’ [. . .] Thus there is a borderline for each multiplicity; it is in no way a center but rather the enveloping line or farthest dimension, as a function of which it is possible to count the others,” and they conclude: “The elements of the pack are only ‘dummies,’ the characteristics of the pack are only symbolic entities; all that counts is the borderline—the anomalous” (ATP 245). The anomalous signifies that the border, the limit of the sphere of the pack, has been reached. The anomalous is that which breaks this limit, that traces the line of the periphery in relation to the pack. Through this characteristic of the border, and as concerns the pack, the anomalous is in a position that does not allow precise knowledge of whether it forms part of the pack or if it is already beyond the pack. It is *between* two spheres, on this side of and beyond the pack. “Kafka, another great author of real becomings-animal, sings of mouse society; but Josephine, the mouse singer, sometimes holds a privileged position in the pack, sometimes a position outside the pack, and sometimes slips into and is lost in the anonymity of the collective statements of the pack. In short, every Animal has its Anomalous” (ATP 243).

The animal becomes a concern of humans when multiplicities with heterogeneous terms and a cofunctioning of contagion enter into certain *assemblages*. These are assemblages that may be called, following coordinates presented in *A Thousand Plateaus*, “contagion through the animal as pack” and “pact with the anomalous as exceptional being” (ATP 246), as opposed to the regime of filiation. It’s a contradictory collective assemblage of enunciation, because, as we’ve seen, it is constituted by two contradictory themes. Its form of content is constituted by infection and epidemic, and its form of expression by alliance and the pact, the two principles that regulate becoming. These assemblages where becoming takes place, express the marginal,

the oppressed, minorities—in short, all those who are on the border between the minoritarian sphere and the institutional sphere. Becoming-animal is truly the limit moment where writing becomes a matter of sorcery.<sup>60</sup>

Deleuze and Guattari discover the last literary dimension of becoming in a new concept of “delirium.” In opposition to the idea of the work of fiction as the effect of imaginary evasions and compensations through fantasies, Deleuze and Guattari propose the idea of literature as a matter of delirium. As Deleuze will say in *Essays Critical and Clinical*, “literature is delirium” (CC 4). Delirium concerns peoples. Every delirium is world-historical, and every delirium is an affair of peoples, races, and tribes.<sup>61</sup> Yet one must distinguish two forms of delirium. Minor literary delirium is a result, a symptom of a determined history and geography. Here, it’s a matter of an exaltation of a missing people. Delirium serves a collective literature, a literature as affair of health. Delirium is that which causes language to leave its limit and to break through its boundaries: it carries language away, as does the sorcerer’s line. Delirium is thus the line of flight that liberates language. To create a language within language, minorize the major language, and make it minor, such is the work of healthy delirium. In the case of the expression of a major people, one is in the presence of the risk inherent to literary delirium, the fact that it can always fail in a delirium of the type of papa-mama or a dangerous phenomenon like fascism. One finds the same process in the major system that incorporates a possibility of flight. In short, “Delirium is a disease, the disease par excellence, whenever it erects a race it claims is pure and dominant. But it is the measure of health when it invokes this oppressed bastard race that ceaselessly stirs beneath dominations, resisting everything that crushes and imprisons, a race that is outlined in relief in literature as process” (CC 4). Health is an affair of the minority. There is health only in an intensive system where the body is reduced to the skin, as the unique mode of perception of life. As Deleuze concludes, “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. To write for this people who are missing . . .” (CC 4).

However, Deleuze remarks that most great writers have a “delicate health” [*petite santé*] (CC 3). We know that Kafka was sickly, a weak individual, who died of tuberculosis. How does Deleuze make this author of delicate health an example of the writer of a literary athleticism? According to Deleuze, the writer of delicate health is the only one capable of letting himself be affected by the fluxes of life. Kafka experiences this kind of passivity, this passion in relation to life. His relation to writing is only the absolute expression of this form of understanding of life: to die in order to write, to live a life. Perhaps it is because of his delicate health that Kafka was obsessed with everything that related to health: food, hygiene, and so on. The fragile health of the writer derives from their experimenting with things that are too big, too strong, that

go beyond them and exhaust them. These things offer the writer the possibility of experimenting with intensities that a very healthy body, a dominant body, would have made impossible to experience. For the writer, the world becomes a set of symptoms. The writer of weak health makes literature an experimentation of worlds to come; this writer makes literature a labor of affirmation. The writer, through his or her proper literary creation, creates a minor people, bastard and oppressed. A people who struggle, who invent new forms of health, because they are truly formed in opposition to the three great illnesses of the age. As Deleuze says, “What Kafka immediately anguishes or rejoices in is not the father or the superego or some sort of signifier but the American technocratic apparatus or the Russian bureaucracy or the machinery of Fascism” (K 12).<sup>62</sup>

## NOTES

1. Robert (1979: 119). In the same chapter, we read: “The law left Kafka no peace [. . .]; it is this law [. . .] which speaks in *The Judgment* through the terrible voice of the grandiose yet senile judge-father; which pursues Joseph K. [. . .]; which, inscribed in the books of the Old Commander in *In the Penal Colony* and rendered illegible by underscorings and flourishes, makes the sentence known only by imprinting it directly in the living flesh of the convict. [. . .] It was this immanent law [. . .] that killed Kafka, if it was true, as he so firmly believed, that the lesion in his lungs was merely a symbol of another, invisible wound [. . .] His heroes have aptly predicted: in an internal world where the commandment without commander has lost the force of giving life, the law-become-ferocious has nothing more than a total power of killing” (Robert 1979: 118–9).

2. It is significant that in his writings most closely tied to psychoanalysis and Lacan Deleuze uses the term “phantasm” [*phantasme*], but in works after his meeting with Guattari he uses “fantasy” [*fantasme*] instead.

3. It is significant that, after the Kafka book, Deleuze does not abandon this tripartite approach to literature. Even his last great programmatic text, “Literature and Life,” published in 1993 in *Essays Critical and Clinical*, takes up the political, machinic, and experimental perspectives. In this essay, Deleuze lists six themes that organize his approach to literature: (1) writing as experience of being a foreigner in one’s own language; (2) literature as a collective affair; (3) literature as literary machine; (4) literature as working on the materiality of language; (5) the becoming-minor of the writer; and (6) the writer as a physician of the world.

4. Deleuze gives other examples of Kafka’s assemblages: “the assemblage of letters, the machine for making letters; the assemblage of the becoming-animal, the animalistic machines; the assemblage of the becoming-female, the becoming-child, the mannerisms of female blocks or childhood blocks; the large assemblages that deal with commercial machines, hotel machines, bank machines, judiciary machines, bureaucratic machines, and so on; the bachelor assemblage or the artistic machine of the minority” (K 87).

5. “The idea of expression works, then, by serving a hermeneutic role, revealing a secret; through it we are to see how the outwardly linear discourse of the *Ethics* actually proceeds on two different levels at once, explicitly on the level of demonstrative rationality proclaiming its unbroken necessary progression, and then beneath the surface, where we find the concrete realm of the affects that traverse the progression” (Macherey 1996: 143).

6. “Sense, *the expressed of the proposition*, is an incorporeal, complex, and irreducible entity, at the surface of things, a pure event which inheres or subsists in the proposition” (LS 19).

7. Here we follow the brief genealogy of the return of the concept of expression after its disappearance in *Anti-Oedipus* proposed by Philippe Mengue. “We must show how *Anti-Oedipus*, which granted a major role to the concept of repression, implicitly led to an impasse. The idea of repression is one of the fundamental categories of representational thought. The notion of repression necessarily brings with it—*causal duality*: to repress, there must be a repressing cause that bears on a desire (repressed), where its effect is produced, repression—a *representing/represented relation*: to repress, it must be necessary to inscribe and deform, and thus a deforming representing-element and a deformed represented-element. [. . .] Faced with these difficulties, one understands the necessity of a conceptual reorganization, which will take place beyond the apparent continuity so complacently signaled in the identical subtitle (‘Capitalism and Schizophrenia’) in *A Thousand Plateaus*. The radical novelty that comes with the concept of the assemblage is to regroup the theory of expression, by simultaneously eliminating any ‘representational’ trace in the function of expression and in going around the entire theory of language and signs (of the signifier) of Saussure. [. . .] The tour de force, which one cannot stress enough, of the Deleuzian conception is to succeed in constructing a theory of expression while doing without the concept of the sign (as relation between signifier and signified)” (Mengue 1994: 61).

8. As Anne Sauvagnargues explains, “for the organic commencement, for the hierarchical totality of the work, there is a substitution of a kinematic entry that accounts for reading, understood materially as the act that forces a trajectory into the burrow, and opens a singular gallery. All readings are not equal, all do not have the same circulatory density, but each transforms the work. [. . .] The relation to the work corresponds to the survey of a real territory: there, we find the appearance of cartography, which will define the rhizome, and here allow description of the critical activity. [. . .] The rhizome, as theory of reading, thus takes account of the act of reading, and makes reception an active production, a veritable transformation and capture of the work” (Sauvagnargues 2005: 119–20).

9. Later in Chapter 5, Deleuze and Guattari are more explicit in their “revolt”: “The three worst themes in many interpretations of Kafka are the transcendence of the law, the interiority of guilt, the subjectivity of enunciation. They are connected to all the stupidities that have been written about allegory, metaphor, and symbolism in Kafka. And also, the idea of the tragic, of the internal drama, of the intimate tribunal, and so on” (K 45).

10. The study that most strongly reinforces this perspective is that of Manola Antonioli (Antonioli 1999).

11. Foucault's new concept of power is mentioned twice in *Kafka*, once in note 20, p. 94, and especially note 3, p. 97, where Deleuze and Guattari write: "Michel Foucault has provided an analysis of power that reworks all economic and political questions. Although his method is completely different, his analysis is not without a certain Kafkaesque resonance. Foucault insists on the segmentarity of power, its contiguity, its immanence in the social field (which means that it is not an interiority of a soul or of a subject along the lines of a superego). He shows that power doesn't work at all by the classic alternative of violence or ideology, persuasion or constraint. See Foucault's *Discipline and Punish* [. . .] the field of immanence and the multiplicity of power in 'disciplinary societies'" (K 97).

12. "The *diagram* is no longer an auditory or visual archive but a map, a cartography that is coextensive with the whole social field. It is an abstract machine. [. . .] It is a machine that is almost blind and mute, even though it makes others see and speak" (F 34).

13. "It is not an exaggeration to say that every mechanism [*dispositif*] is a mushy mixture of the visible and the articulable: 'The prison system combines in a single figure discourse and architectures,' programmes and mechanisms" (F 38). This same mixture of the visible and enunciable is at the center of the theory of the assemblage in the *Kafka* book. In the first line of the last chapter, "What Is an Assemblage," we read: "An assemblage, the perfect object for the novel, has two sides: it is a collective assemblage of enunciation; it is a machinic assemblage of desire" (K 81). And later: "This is so because the machine is desire—but not because desire is desire of the machine but because desire never stops making a machine in the machine [. . .] the machinic assemblage of desire is also the collective assemblage of enunciation. [. . .] The statement is always juridical, that is, it always follows rules, since it constitutes the real instructions for the machine" (K 82).

14. Deleuze explains this correlation between two poles in relation to the case of prisons: "And if the techniques—in the narrow sense of the word—are caught within the assemblages, this is because the assemblages, with their techniques, are selected by the diagrams: for example, prison can have a marginal existence in sovereign societies (*lettres de cachet*) and exists as a mechanism [*dispositif*] only when a new diagram, the disciplinary diagram, makes it cross the 'technical threshold'. [. . .] If we continue to move from one pole to the other, this is because each assemblage effectuates the abstract machine, but in varying degrees: it resembles coefficients of effectuation of the diagram" (F 40–1; trans. modified).

15. It is quite significant that in Deleuze's exhaustive reading of the concept of the *dispositif* in *Discipline and Punish*, the 1988 essay "What Is a *Dispositif*?"—published, we should note, at roughly the same time as *The Fold*—there is no reference to the concept of the assemblage. This provides further proof that the concept of the assemblage, though based on the Foucauldian concept of the *dispositif*, no longer was necessary in Deleuze's theoretical universe of the 1980s and 1990s.

16. "The virtual is opposed not to the real but to the actual. *The virtual is fully real in so far as it is virtual*. Exactly what Proust said of states of resonance must be said of the virtual: 'Real without being actual, ideal without being abstract'" (DR 208).

17. "Abstract machines surge into existence by themselves, without indexes. But in this case, they don't function, or no longer function. Such is the machine in the



Penal Colony that answers to the Law of the old warden and doesn't survive its own dismantling. [. . .] Yet it seems also that the representation of the transcendental law, with its elements of guilt and unknowability, is an abstract machine of this sort. If the machine of the Penal Colony, as representative of the law, appears to be archaic and outmoded, this is not because, as people have often claimed, there is a new law that is much more modern but because the form of the law in general is inseparable from an abstract, self-destructive machine and cannot develop in a concrete way" (K 47–8).

18. "The transcendence of the law was an abstract machine, but the law exists only in the immanence of the machinic assemblage of justice. The Trial is the dismantling of all transcendental justifications. There is nothing to judge vis-à-vis desire; the judge himself is completely shaped by desire. Justice is no more than the immanent process of desire" (K 51).

19. The role of *Discipline and Punish* in *Kafka*, as we indicated earlier, is explicitly recognized in K 97, note 3.

20. "The abstract machine is the unlimited social field, but it is also the body of desire, and it is also Kafka's continuous oeuvre in which intensities are produced" (K 87).

21. "Statements are not at all products of a system of signification; they are the product of machinic assemblages, the product of collective agents of enunciation. Which implies that there are no individual statements, and behind statements, when for example one can specify a given epoch when statements change, a historic epoch where a new type of statement is created, for example the great breaks like the Russian revolution, or of the phalanx of the Greek city-state; a new type of statement appears, and on the horizon of this type of statement, there is a machinic assemblage that makes it possible, that is, a system of political agents of enunciation. Collective—that means neither people nor society, but something more. One must seek in machinic assemblages that belong to the unconscious the conditions of the surging forth of new statements, bearers of desire, or concerning desire" (Seminar 12.02.73, [http://www.le-terrier.net/deleuze/anti-oedipe1000plateaux/1012\\*02\\*73.htm](http://www.le-terrier.net/deleuze/anti-oedipe1000plateaux/1012*02*73.htm), accessed 23 August 2018).

22. Kafka himself considers literary creation as "payment for the devil's services" (cited in K 30).

23. The desire of the letters "transfers movement onto the subject of the statement; it gives the subject of the statement an apparent movement, an unreal movement, that spares the subject of enunciation all need for a real movement" (K 31). This characteristic is present in "The Man Who Disappeared," the first sketch of *Amerika* and "The Judgment."

24. "That which is the greatest horror for the subject of enunciation will be presented as an external obstacle that the subject of the statement, relegated to the letter, will try at all costs to conquer, even if it means perishing" (K 31). Consider in this regard "Description of a Struggle" and *The Castle*.

25. "The duality of the two subjects, their exchange or their doubling, seem to found a feeling of guilt. The guilt itself is only the surface movement, an ostentatious movement, that hides an intimate laugh" (K 32).

26. Such is the case with "In the Penal Colony," *The Trial* and *The Castle*.

27. Failure is an almost permanent question in Kafka's texts. Marthe Robert goes even so far as to consider this failure as the symptom of a disease of the unfinished in several areas of his life. Being a trait exclusive to Kafka's work, according to Robert, it is present in a very grave way, in Kafka's life itself (cf. Robert 1979: 126–7, 130–4, 137–42, 151–2, and 168–9).

28. "Although I was profoundly confused by the sounds that accompanied them, yet they were dogs nevertheless. [. . .] But while I was still involved in these reflections the music gradually got the upper hand, literally knocked the breath out of me and swept me far away from those actual little dogs, and quite against my will, while I howled as if some pain were being inflicted upon me, my mind could attend to nothing but this blast of music which seemed to come from all sides" (Kafka 1971: 314).

29. "It was an almost inaudible whistling noise that wakened me. I recognized what it was immediately; the small fry, whom I had allowed far too much latitude, had burrowed a new channel somewhere during my absence" (Kafka 1971: 371).

30. "This method is much more intense than any critique. K. says so himself. One's goal is to transform what is still only a *method* (*procédé*) in the social field into a *procedure* as an infinite virtual movement that at the extreme invokes the machinic assemblage of the *trial* (*procès*) as a reality that is on its way and already there. The whole of this operation is to be called a Process [*processus*], one that is precisely interminable" (K 48). And later, Deleuze and Guattari conclude: "It is by the power [*puissance*] of his noncritique that Kafka is so dangerous" (K 60).

31. Take the example where K., seeing the inscription "Staircase to the Court Offices," recognizes that "the court offices were in the loft of this tenement" (Kafka 2009b: 47).

32. "We think the material or machinic aspect of an assemblage relates not to the production of goods but rather to a precise state of intermingling of bodies in a society, including all the attractions and repulsions, sympathies and antipathies, alterations, amalgamations, penetrations, and expansions that affect bodies of all kinds in their relations to one another. [. . .] Tools are inseparable from symbioses or amalgamations defining a Nature-Society machinic assemblage. [. . .] Similarly, the semiotic or collective aspect of an assemblage relates not to a productivity of language but to regimes of signs, to a machine of expression whose variables determine the usage of language elements. These elements do not stand on their own any more than tools do. There is a primacy of the machinic assemblage of bodies over tools and goods, a primacy of the collective assemblage of enunciation over language and words" (ATP 90).

33. See also CC 4, where Deleuze takes this relation of expression to the limit, writing that "literature is a collective assemblage of enunciation."

34. Take for example the passage where the dog says, "I do not deviate from the dog nature by a hairbreadth. Every dog has like me the impulse to question" (Kafka 1971: 324).

35. As Kafka says in "Investigations of a Dog," "we all live together in a literal heap" (Kafka 1971: 312) [*tout en un tas*], or as he says in his letters to Milena (September 7, 1920), "they are all one people" (Kafka 1990: 198) [*un seul* people; stressed in the original, according to Pombo Nabais—but not in the English translation].

36. “In order to kill the maternal language, the combat must be waged at every moment—and above all, the combat against the mother’s voice” (CC 12).

37. As Deleuze writes with Guattari, “For if a language such as British English or American English is major on a world scale, it is necessarily worked upon by all the minorities of the world. [. . .] Or the linguistic situation in the old Austrian empire: German was a major language in relation to the minorities, but as such it could not avoid being treated by those minorities in a way that made it a minor language in relation to the German of the Germans. There is no language that does not have intra-linguistic, endogenous, internal minorities” (ATP 102–3).

38. It’s for this reason that what characterizes the concept of “minority” is becoming-everyone [*devenir-tout-le-monde*; literally, becoming-all-the-world] as amplitude, as continuous variation, in opposition to constants of expression and content, to the figure of “Nobody” [*Personne*], that is, to forms of power and domination that the concept of “majority” implies. “Minorities, of course, are objectively definable states, states of language, ethnicity, or sex with their own ghetto territorialities, but they must also be thought of as seeds, crystals of becoming whose value is to trigger uncontrollable movements and deterritorializations of the mean or majority” (ATP 106).

39. As Deleuze writes in “One Less Manifesto,” “But this rule of constancy and homogeneity may already suppose a certain usage of the language under consideration: a major usage treating language as a state of power [*pouvoir*]” (OLM 245).

40. “You will not come across a homogeneous system that has yet to be shaped by an immanent, continuous, and constant variation: here is what defines all language in its minor usage, an enlarged chromaticism, a black English for each language” (OLM 245; trans. modified).

41. “To be a foreigner, but in one’s own tongue, not only when speaking a language other than one’s own. To be bilingual, multilingual, but in one and the same language, without even a dialect or patois. To be a bastard, a half-breed, but through a purification of race. That is when style becomes a language. That is when language becomes intensive, a pure continuum of values and intensities” (ATP 98).

42. See the seventh theorem of deterritorialization: “the deterritorializing element has the relative role of expression, and the deterritorialized element the relative role of content [. . .]; but not only does the content have nothing to do with an external subject or object, since it forms an asymmetrical block with the expression, but the deterritorialization carries the expression and the content to a proximity where the distinction ceases to be relevant, or where the deterritorialization creates their indiscernibility” (ATP 307).

43. As Deleuze and Guattari remark, “Placing-in-variation allows us to avoid these dangers, because it builds a continuum or medium without beginning or end. Continuous variation should not be confused with the continuous or discontinuous character of the variable itself. [. . .] A variable can be continuous over a portion of its trajectory, then leap or skip, without that affecting its continuous variation” (ATP 94–5).

44. “It is perhaps characteristic of secret languages, slangs, jargons, professional languages, nursery rhymes, merchants’ cries to stand out less for their lexical inventions or rhetorical figures than for the way in which they effect continuous variations

of the common elements of language. They are chromatic languages, close to a musical notation. A secret language [. . .] *places the public language's system of variables in a state of variation*" (ATP 97).

45. "There is a universal figure of minoritarian consciousness as the becoming of everybody, and that becoming is creation" (ATP 106).

46. "There is no primacy of the individual; there is instead an indissolubility of a singular Abstract and a collective Concrete" (ATP 100).

47. It is worth relating this literary process to other readings of Kafka. Marthe Robert refers to a "this side" [*un en-deçà*] of language in Kafka's writing in German. Kafka, she says, "could look for his instrument only in a domain anterior [*en deçà*] to the written and spoken language, outside of space and time. [. . .] To provide himself with a style in keeping with his aims, but faithfully connoting the expropriation of which he felt himself to be at once the agent and the victim, Kafka, in brief, detoured around *the* language and attained directly to *language as such*, outside of history and society. He worked at the zero point of time, at a level where the language, still free [. . .] has nothing to offer but its immediacy and the infinite resources of its combinations. [. . .] He confined himself to a linguistic sector where words, stripped of all signs indicating their age, social and literary usage, or land of origin, preserve their full ambiguity" (Robert 1986: 154). By contrast, Hannah Arendt considers Kafka's radical nature in relation to literary modernity as an absence of style. This absence is characterized, she says, by the total simplicity of the language, by the nonutilization of either experimentation or mannerism. "Kafka [. . .] engaged in no technical experiments whatever; without in any way changing the German language, he stripped it of its involved constructions until it became clear and simple, like everyday speech purified of slang and negligence" (Arendt 1994: 69).

48. Kafka's father, Hermann Kafka, loyal to the emperor, protector of Jews during the Double Monarchy, named his son Franz Kafka, "Franz" being derived from Franz-Josef (see Robert 1986: 206).

49. "Delirium and hallucination are secondary in relation to the really primary emotion, which in the beginning only experiences intensities, becomings, passages" (AO 18–9; trans. modified).

50. Dumoncel's characterization of this music is interesting: "It's an aleatory music with hammers without masters [a reference to Boulez's composition *Marteaux sans maîtres*] and choirs of birds hooting the evening in the depths of wood blocks. It's a concerto of Niagaras. It's the 'song of the earth' orchestrated with strokes of methane. And it's [. . .] the smile of Moby-Dick in the role of Aeolian harp (inhaling and blowing)" (Dumoncel 1999: 70). Also, see Proust (2000: 124).

51. "It's easy to stammer, but making language itself stammer is a different affair; it involves placing all linguistic, and even nonlinguistic, elements in variation, both variables of expression and variables of content. A new form of redundancy. AND . . . AND . . . AND . . . There has always been a struggle in language between the verb *être* (to be) and the conjunction *et* (and)" (ATP 98).

52. "Creative stuttering is what makes language grow from the middle, like grass; it is what makes language a rhizome instead of a tree, what puts language in perpetual disequilibrium: *Ill Seen, Ill Said* (content and expression). Being well spoken has never been either the distinctive feature or the concern of great writers" (CC 111).

53. We find an illustration of this experience in Kafka's *Journal* notations of December 15, 1910. He complains of what he calls his monstrous incapacity. "Almost every word I write jars against the next, I hear the consonants rub leadenly against each other and the vowels sing an accompaniment like Negroes in a minstrel show. My doubts stand in a circle around every word, I see them before I see the word, but when I do not see the word at all, I invent it" (Kafka 1964: 29).

54. "Man is majoritarian par excellence, whereas becomings are minoritarian; all becoming is a becoming-minoritarian" (ATP 291). "It must be said that all becomings begin with and pass through becoming-woman. It is the key to all the other becomings" (ATP 277).

55. In the novels take, for example, this passage from *The Castle*: "He resolved not to be deterred from going on by any difficulty on the road, or indeed by anxiety about finding his own way back" (Kafka 2009a: 29). In *The Trial*, the waiting room, for example: "it was a long corridor with crudely made doors leading to the various cubicles in the loft" (Kafka 2009b: 50). In the short stories as well, the theme of the way out is central. In "The Burrow" this is made explicit: "I had to have the possibility of immediately leaving." In "Report to an Academy," the ape says, "I had no way out, but I had to create one, for without it I could not live," and later, "no, I didn't want freedom. Just a way out."

56. "The becoming-animal of the human being is real, even if the animal the human being becomes is not; and the becoming-other of the animal is real, even if that something other it becomes is not" (ATP 238). See also ATP 279.

57. In *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari take an inventory of animals. In their view, although they think that all animals can be treated in three ways, there are three types of animals. Individuated animals, which they also call Oedipal, and which are related to one's personal story: "my" cat, "my" dog. The second type of animal is that which has a characteristic or attribute, one of a classification or of the state: archetypes or models. Finally, "there are more demonic animals, pack or affect animals that form a multiplicity, a becoming, a population, a tale. [. . .] Schools, bands, herds, populations are not inferior social forms; they are affects and powers [*puissances*], involutions that grip every animal in a becoming just as powerful as that of the human being with the animal" (ATP 241).

58. "These combinations are neither genetic nor structural; they are interkingdoms, unnatural participations. That is the only way Nature operates—against itself" (ATP 242).

59. Deleuze and Guattari remind us that the concept of the anomalous must be distinguished from the "abnormal": "*a-normal*, a Latin adjective lacking a noun in French, refers to that which is outside rules or goes against the rules, whereas *anomalie*, a Greek noun that has lost its adjective, designates the unequal, the coarse, the rough, the cutting edge of deterritorialization" (ATP 243–4).

60. "It can be said that becoming-animal is an affair of sorcery because (1) it implies an initial relation of alliance with a demon; (2) the demon functions as the borderline of an animal pack, into which the human being passes or in which his or her becoming takes place, by contagion; (3) this becoming itself implies a second

alliance, with another human group; (4) this new borderline between the two groups guides the contagion of animal and human being within the pack” (ATP 247).

61. “All delirium is racial, which does not necessarily mean racist. It is not a matter of the regions of the body without organs ‘representing’ races and cultures” (AO 85).

62. Kafka himself affirmed, in “Report to an Academy,” his status as a political man. As the ape says, “I am not appealing for any man’s verdict, I am only imparting knowledge, I am only making a report” (Kafka 1971: 291).



## Chapter 6

# Carmelo Bene and the Real of Less

### INTRODUCTION

As we have seen, before the turning point of *Anti-Oedipus*, Deleuze's major books on literature are books oriented by a theory of the virtual as a real that is not actual and an ideal that is not abstract. There is an ontology of the non-actual that serves as the horizon of the concepts of the "sign" in *Proust and Signs* and the "phantasm" in *Masochism: Coldness and Cruelty*. Yet, at the beginning of the 1970s, Deleuze abruptly distances himself from this concept. He abandons the theory of the virtual and takes Kafka's universe as evidence of a literature of a full and saturated actual. The real is exhausted in the actual and it lacks nothing. In opposition to a virtual-Oedipus, all literary production becomes production of the real as actual.

We may say that Deleuze's distancing himself from the ontology of the virtual, from the theory of the faculties and from psychoanalysis, constitutes a veritable minorization of elements he will classify as "power" [*pouvoir*]. This minorization will be the emblem of his literary work from the Kafka book on. It's as if the movement of reaction against almost everything he had written (a movement that becomes paradigmatic with *Anti-Oedipus*) became the very movement of his thought, and of a thought in itself of minorization. The theme of "minor literature" in Kafka, like the "manifesto of less" of Bene, will be the expression of a new theory of literature. Fiction has moved to another reality, where the virtual is indiscernible from the actual and where there is no longer any place for the imaginary. Fiction becomes the operative function of minorization and subtraction. It is now the production of a "minor" real/actual in the case of Kafka and a "less" in the case of Bene.

There is no concept of the possible in Deleuze's 1975 reading of Kafka. There is only the construction of scenarios so asphyxiating that minor entities



are liberated through lines of flight. Singularities flee relations of conflict after the implosion, via the absurd, of the great apparatuses of the State. In inflating the instances of power to such an absurd extent, these same instances become autonomous and, thus, totally arbitrary. This unlimited inflation of power leaves minor singularities in flight. In all forms of power there are lines of flight and of resistance. But there are no new possibilities, no new powers/capacities [*puissances*], no new potentials.

The text on Bene inaugurates what we call a “triad of the possible,” which includes, besides this work, the text on *Bartleby* and the text on Beckett. But Deleuze the reader of Carmelo Bene is not yet the creator of the possible as a concept. Here, he creates only the concept of power/capacity [*puissance*]. For the moment, Deleuze does not want to call “power/capacity” “possible.” He will only do so with *The Fold*. For the moment, in *Superpositions*, Deleuze is not very precise about the relation between the possible and the virtual. On one hand, he speaks of the operation of amputation as the development of a virtuality, but on the other, he considers this operation as that which disengages “a new potentiality of the theater” (OLM 242; see also OLM 254–6): “To render a potentiality present and actual is a completely different matter from representing a conflict” (OLM 254).

We think that Deleuze is in the process of distinguishing two planes of the nonactual: the virtual as the asphyxiated actual in a canonical text and a power/capacity that is liberated only when the actual of a canonical text is minorized. On one side, there would be a petrified virtual, but which, through the operation of minorization, becomes actual. On the other, there would be a power/capacity that surges forth only when this virtual is made actual in a new minor text. Once secondary characters are liberated from their frozen relations, they enter into variation and become powerful [*puissants*]. Thus, there is a movement that goes from the annihilated virtual (in a major text) to a free power/capacity in variation (in a minor text).

But the concept of the virtual is also used in a second sense. On one hand, it designates the characters or issues that are asphyxiated but already contained in a canonic text, and, on the other, it is used to name the becoming-minoritarian of the world (universal consciousness) as the power/capacity that is disengaged from this virtual actualized in a minor text. The power/capacity is hence a consequence of the virtual. In *Superpositions*, Deleuze proposes the concept of the virtual as potentiality or power/capacity. Mercutio, for example, exists virtually in Shakespeare’s play because he has the power/capacity to become in the play of Bene. The virtual includes power/capacity, with power/capacity being here always the power/capacity of becoming. It is thus that power/capacity is opposed to the petrification of a state, the form of an element of power [*pouvoir*].

Minor literature is the literature of an asphyxiated real, of a real as act of political resistance. It is a literature that is created minor by itself; it is subtracted from a major language. It is the result of a political decision of minorizing power [*pouvoir*]. Hence, there is an almost perfect continuity between the “Kafka mechanism [*dispositif*]” and that of Bene. The big difference is found in their respective procedures. Kafka, for Deleuze, is the author of lines of flight. And these lines of flight, however, have the same modal condition as that which they flee. They are as actual as the institutions, as the forms of power [*pouvoir*]. Bene, for his part, is the author of continuous variations, no longer through the inflation of power [*pouvoir*], but through their minorization. And these variations bring forth new potentialities. They affect the characters who, in a preceding scenario, were cornered and frozen, and who, in a minor scenario, take off and enter into variation, into aleatory movement, because they are freed from relations of conflict (which are always internal to the scenarios of power [*pouvoir*]).

What Deleuze stresses in Bene is precisely the idea that one must remove the marks of power [*pouvoir*] in order to free the potentialities that were oppressed inside the texts. Operations of minorization, like the repetition of words in mockery, the cancellation of conflicting characters, changes of roles or contexts, among others, are the dramatic techniques of Bene. According to Deleuze, all these mechanisms of minorization are radically original literary and dramatic techniques to remove the elements of power [*pouvoir*] from a theatrical work that has already been established as canonic.

## THE THEATER OF NONREPRESENTATION

The novelty of Bene’s theater, in Deleuze’s view, consists first of a critique carried to its limit. This involves a critical theater, but a critique that goes well beyond the demolition of social clichés of popular theater or of class relations, as in Brecht’s theater, to take Deleuze’s example. Deleuze explains that Bene’s critique is not conceived as a teaching or an exposition of information, but as a manifesto. It’s not a theater for everyone, which always and already puts in place the dichotomy “man of the theater/people,” which is only a form of demagoguery. Rather, it is a critique that transgresses the text. Moreover, according to Deleuze, this text is not essential. The essential rather takes place on the stage.<sup>1</sup> Bene’s critique is not a surplus, in the sense of making visible a reality plus his critique, that is, plus critical information or representations and parodies.<sup>2</sup> What Deleuze stresses as the specificity of Bene’s critique is the fact that it is a subtraction, a minorization of reality.

Bene's theater is not a theater of nonrepresentation like Artaud's. It's another type of nonrepresentation. Reality is there, but in order to be amputated. Bene's critique adds nothing to reality. On the contrary, it subtracts something. It's a critique that is performed on the essence of the theater; it proceeds via the demolition of the very fact of representation. The critique consists precisely in this subtraction of the criticized reality by the subtraction of the representative condition of the represented reality. It's a nonrepresentation as theater of less. If it's a matter of a theater of the manifesto, it's because, as Deleuze's title indicates, it's a "manifesto of less." One amputates what one critiques, and hence one does not represent what one critiques. Critique is thus the very operation of less, of minorization, and of amputation of reality and its representation. It's the constitution of a reality of less. "He subtracts something from the original play. To be precise, he does not call his play on Hamlet one more *Hamlet* but 'one less *Hamlet*.' [. . .] For example, he amputates Romeo, he neutralizes the Romeo of the original play. Because a part chosen not arbitrarily is now missing, the entire play could thus lose its balance, turn upon itself, and land on a different side" (OLM 239; trans. modified). Critique, as minorization of the original play, is thus creation. In making the original play a play of less, Bene creates another play, with new relations among the characters, which also find different and new importance. Deleuze remarks that Bene's critical work is a "constitution" of characters. "If you amputate Romeo, you will witness an astonishing development, the development of Mercutio, who was only a virtuality in the play by Shakespeare. In Shakespeare, Mercutio dies quickly. But, in Bene, he does not want to die, he cannot die, he does not manage to die since he will become the subject of the new play" (OLM 239). Only with the amputation of Romeo does Mercutio become visible, and even a truly existing character, a character who begins to develop. The inexistence of one is the condition of the existence of the other. The impotence [*impuissance*] of the one is the power/capacity [*puissance*] of the other. And the same is true for the plays: the amputation of the original is the condition of possibility of the derived play.

In *Superpositions* Deleuze sets forth two aspects of the making of a nonrepresentative theater. First, there is an aesthetic or critical procedure of minorization and variation. This is a matter of minorizing and putting into variation language, time, representation, and texts. Second, there is the creation of the mode of apprehending the work. Every form of art establishes the new at the same time that it establishes itself. But this establishment calls forth a new form of experience, a new public. And it's precisely in this regard that nonrepresentation is accomplished.

On the plane of aesthetic procedures, the first step is subtraction and minorization. Subtraction as procedure signifies the creation of a new play,

with new characters. This takes place on several levels. For example, at the level of characters. To the determined form of characters and the formation of the "I," Bene opposes characters without a destiny, who are developed on the stage through various series of metamorphoses following a line of variation. The paradigmatic case is the formation of Richard III as man of war. Deleuze explains that "the man of war has always been considered in mythology as coming from an origin different from that of the statesman or the king: deformed and crooked, he always comes from elsewhere. Bene brings him onto the stage: while the women of war enter and exit anxious for their whining children, Richard III will deform himself to amuse the children and restrain the mothers" (OLM 240; trans. modified). In this fashion, according to Deleuze, Bene realizes a theater of manufacturing, of the manufacture of characters, a factory-theater. And the very function of the man of the theater changes, for he/she "is no longer an author, an actor, or a director. S/he is an operator" (OLM 239).

Another level is that of the text, where minorization consists of the negation of every principle of the constancy, eternity, or permanence of the text. "The play ends with the creation of the character. [. . .] It ends with birth when it normally ends with death" (OLM 240). The play is not an affair, a history/story [*une histoire*], but an undoing, a demolition of history, and a minorization of the historical through a hysterical becoming of the characters. This operation of undoing the text has consequences on the level of structure. According to Deleuze, Bene reverses the very idea of unity. The theater of the creation of characters, as creation in variation, as birth and development on the stage, is a theater that follows a continuity of creation rather than a unity of representation. The stage is made, not by two or more lines of variation corresponding to each character, but it is created as a continuum of variation, an immanence of variation. The characters are not part of a set of which they are the parts. The stage is not structured like an organism. It is not even structured at all. One can say that it is rather a body without organs. The stage is a single body, but immanent, without organs, because the characters do not constitute functions on the inside of a body as system. The continuous variation of gestures and things "must not remain parallel. In one way or another, they must be *placed one within the other*" (OLM 250). Hence, Lady Anne and Richard, whose "vocal variations, phonemes and tonalities, form a tighter and tighter line infringing on each one's gestures, and vice versa. [. . .] From this moment, there would not be two intersecting continuities but one and the same continuum in which the words and gestures play the role of variables in transformation" (OLM 251).

Finally, on the level of language, minorization works through the disorganization of the homogeneous system of rules, constants, and invariants. "Bene outlines a linguistics for laughs" (OLM 243). This linguistics is

created through a variation that extends to all its elements (phonological, semantic, syntactic, or even stylistic). Minor language is a language with minimal structural homogeneity.

To summarize the critical operation or aesthetic procedure, we may cite Deleuze's explication: "The complete critical operation consists of (1) deducting the stable elements, (2) placing everything in continuous variation, (3) then transposing everything in *minor* (this is the role of the company in responding to the notion of the 'smallest' interval)" (OLM 246).

But the nonrepresentation that defines Bene's theater is in play well before this. There is a political question behind the motivations for a nonrepresentational theater. The traditional theater consecrates the presentation of conflicts as the repetition of models of power [*pouvoir*]. Institutions are institutionalizations of relations of force, of mechanisms for the cancellation of conflicts, for "pacification" that is always the imposition of a determinate victory, and the imposition of a relation of force. All institutions are constructions that express conflicts, but they are already the phase of the stabilization or pacification of these conflicts.

According to Deleuze, Bene does not want to follow Brecht in his popular theater, nor does he want to fashion a theater of the avant-garde. He also does not want to create an antitheater. Finally, he does not want to create a lived theater, a mystical theater, or an aesthetic theater (see OLM 253). Even the critical or subversive theater remains in the domain of representation, because it is always a matter of staging conflicts, relations of power [*pouvoir*].<sup>3</sup> Power, in itself, is already a theater of conflicts, a codified representation of relations of force. The central question for Deleuze concerns precisely this reciprocal implication of institutionalized conflicts and the theater as representation. "But why do conflicts generally depend on representation? Why does theater remain representative each time it focuses on conflicts, contradictions, and oppositions? It is because conflicts are already normalized, codified, and institutionalized. They are 'products.' They are already a representation that can be represented so much the better on stage" (OLM 252). The very construction of a script or a dramaturgical topic in the theater of representation is already the reprise of a given schema of relations of forces; it is always the support of the institutionalized version of conflicts. The relations of force, from the beginning, presuppose the frozen configurations of confrontations between characters, groups, and communities. Each singularity finds its identity only as inscribed on a political map, placed in the interior of a role, of a status. "The elements of power [*pouvoir*] in the theater are what insure both the coherence of the subject in question and the coherence of the representation on stage. It is both the power of what is represented and the power of theater itself. In this sense, the traditional actor enters into an ancient complicity with princes and kings, while the theater is complicit

with power” (OLM 241; trans. modified). In Deleuze’s view, if Bene puts into question the power of the theater as representation and the theater as representation of power, it’s precisely because he creates a theater where he does away, in a single gesture, with power and representation. “When he decides *to amputate* the elements of power, he changes not only the theatrical matter but also the form of theater, which ceases to be a ‘representation’ at the same time as the actor ceases to be an actor” (OLM 241). Through a single movement of unrepresentable impotence [*impuissance*], Bene’s stage is constructed as a laboratory where power is lacking its place, at the same time that representation is replaced by a factory of figures or characters where only powers/capacities and impotencies [*puissances et impuissances*] come forth. According to Deleuze, the fundamental function of Bene’s theater is summarized in the statement: “To eliminate every occurrence of power: the power of what theater represents (the King, the Princes, the Masters, the System), but also the power of theater itself (the Text, the Dialogue, the Actor, the Director, the Structure)” (OLM 251).

To refuse representation is not to refuse to put characters and situations on the stage. Bene does not extend Artaud’s metaphysics of the erasure of gesture, speech, and events. Deleuze thus finds in Bene’s work an entirely new way of making visible the ruin of representation. What’s necessary is a displacement of the center of that which is represented. It’s a matter of demolishing the representation of representation, that is, the way of presenting the horizon of every event, of all characters. The theater is constructed, from ancient mythology and the first tragedies, in the context of the conflict and relations of forces. But also, and above all, the force of the theater itself, its representative power, depends on the relation of the actor with the figures of power. This is Bene’s procedure: he neutralizes Romeo as representative of the power of families; he paralyzes the Sadean Master as representative of sexual power; he creates a becoming-woman of Richard III, who was the representative of the power of the State. For Deleuze, Bene creates the line of flight of a theatrical work through the amputation of every element of power. As Deleuze says, the question that haunts Bene’s theater is, “how do we break free of this situation of conflictual, official, and institutionalized representation? How do we account for the underground workings of a free and present variation that slips through the nets of slavery and eludes the entire situation” (OLM 253).

Instead of taking frozen characters, cornered in institutionalized relations of force, they must be shown in a movement of flight, or of “free variation.” Power [*Pouvoir*] fixes, hardens, annihilates all power/capacity [*puissance*], petrifying it in an actual. Bene’s operation is thus seen as a placing in variation of each element of a set, a placing in variation on the stage of the potentialities, and the virtualities oppressed in a play.

To free the stage of institutionalized representations, Bene, according to Deleuze, begins with a procedure of subtracting dramaturgical literature in itself. The procedure amputates the text, the sense, but above all the characters. It subtracts the content of original texts, modifies the anchor of characters, and sets the topics in disequilibrium. The amputation of the elements of power and frozen relations of a text is nothing but the liberation of the life of the characters, prisoners up to that moment of the system that was imposed on them. To amputate the dominant characters means rendering possible the existence of minor characters. For Deleuze, Bene's theater is a theater of the constitution of characters onstage [*sur scène*], in the scene and in the very movement of the scene, with no relation to the issues of conflict, opposition, even love. Deleuze emphasizes the example of the play *Richard III*. Bene manages to change the play's sense so much, through the introduction of nonrepresentative elements, elements of nonpower, that Richard III, in his movement of self-constitution on the stage, understands that his goal is not the conquest of a State apparatus, but the construction of a war machine, inseparably political and erotic, and necessarily feminine. Bene re-creates the character of Richard III by canceling the royal and princely system, and thus transforming Richard III, no longer into a king, but rather into a man of war, but in a war without enemies. This re-creation signifies above all a becoming-woman of Richard III. But this new existence implies no stabilization of these characters in an identity, no reterritorialization in a "self" [*moi*], and no replica or reversed image of the amputated other. Carmelo Bene produces "the critique of form and subject (in the double sense of 'theme' and 'self' [*moi*]). Only affects and no subject, only speeds and not form" (OLM 249). The birth of characters takes place in and through variation itself, on the stage, and it is a deformation rather than a formation. The character is constituted in the middle, in an intensive relation with other nonrepresentative elements that are in play. "Richard III, the Servant, and Mercutio are born only in a continuous series of metamorphoses and variations. The character is part of the totality of the scenic design including colors, lights, gestures, and words" (OLM 241; trans. modified).

Bene's theater, according to Deleuze, is nothing more than the very process of the birth and potentialization of new characters. Bene manages to render powerful [*puissantes*] the virtualities hitherto impossible to actualize. The characters are made powerful [*puissants*] in their actions and they vary, stutter, transform themselves, and express themselves on the stage. It's a constructivist theater that is almost nothing but the very constitution of the characters, in the sense that "the play initially involves itself with the fabrication of the character, its preparation, its birth, its stammerings, its variations, its development" (OLM 239). Thus, it's a theater of the genesis of characters on a line of flight, in a solitary becoming. Furthermore, Deleuze defines it

as “theater-experimentation” (OLM 240) and as a positive operation. “This critical theater is a constituting theater, Critique is a constitution” (OLM 239; trans. modified). It’s a “constructivism” on the stage because its only model is nothing, that which does not exist, that which is missing without one’s knowing even what isn’t there. Hence, the very reduced time of the plays, for they last only as long as the time of the constitution of the character. Once the character is created, the spectacle is over, for the play is nothing other than the very constitution of the character rendered powerful [*puissant*], that is, actual, through the amputation of another.

We are faced with a true political liberation of the theatrical work. As we have indicated, for Deleuze, representation in the theater, before being a metaphysical or aesthetic question (a question of making visible a situation or character in action), is thus a political question, in that it is a question of the annihilation of the institutional forms of forces. But it is this political dimension that makes possible unknown figures of dramatic experience, because, as Deleuze says, it is “the subtraction of the stable elements of Power that will release a new potentiality of theater” (OLM 242; trans. modified).

Against representation as the image of power, Bene proposes to make power present as the birth of potentiality on stage. But how does one make potentiality come forth beneath power? How does one actualize that which exists only virtually beneath representation? Is it enough to erase the relations of power [*pouvoir*], the configurations of power, to liberate other powers/capacities [*puissances*] of life and other dramatic potentialities? No. Relations of force must be shown, and conflicts must take place on the stage. But not as the organizing principle of situations and characters. “But the theater of Carmelo Bene never unfolds in relation to force and opposition, regardless of its ‘toughness’ and ‘cruelty.’ Put even better, the relations of force and opposition are part of what is shown only to be subtracted, deducted, neutralized” (OLM 249). Deleuze stresses the fact that Bene wants to show power/capacity [*puissance*], becoming, not power [*pouvoir*]. And powers/capacities exist only as the effect of the neutralization of figures of power.

This process of showing powers/capacities is not a representation in a new sense. In Bene’s theater, gestures, postures, and facts are put on the stage. But none of these actions exists before being performed, not even as a possible action in the fiction. The potentiality that is freed through the minorization of structures of power is born at the very moment of its performance on stage and solely as annihilation, likewise on the stage, of power and its images. It is thus against the condition of re-presentation that defines power in its conflicts and institutions that Deleuze proposes a new theatrical concept for conceptualizing Bene’s practice: “rendering present.” And this “rendering present” concerns only potentiality. “To render a potentiality present and actual is a completely different matter from representing a conflict” (OLM 254).



Nonrepresentation dissolves the borders of power, puts into variation the contours of communities, mixes peoples, and ruins the codes that separate forces. Deleuze underscores this point: “The traces of a politics are clearly evident in the declarations and positions of Carmelo Bene. The border, that is to say, the line of variation, does not divide masters and slaves, rich and poor. This is because an entire regime of relations and oppositions is woven from one and the other that makes the master into a rich slave, and the slave into a poor master, *at the heart of the same majority system*” (OLM 254).<sup>4</sup>

Minorization is a liberation, a putting in variation of its characters. Variation is necessarily a movement of minorization made by a minority. “Minority here denotes the strength [*pouissance*] of a becoming while majority designates the power [*pouvoir*] or weakness [*impouissance*] of a state, of a situation. Here is where theater or art can surge forward with a specific, political function” (OLM 255). The concept of “variation” is the ultimate and maximal form of the critique of representation. Variation becomes a political act, as critique of the despotic invariance of power. Playback will be one of the means used by Bene to bring forth all the variations of a statement. There is no dialogue in Bene’s theater. There is only the use of playback, which superimposes voices and makes them enter into continuous variation. There is a second plane of minorization through variation in the statement. Bene introduces variation into it, not only the context in which it is spoken, but also in its physical intonation, in its inside: its signification, its syntax, and its phonemes. “I swear” is not the same statement when it is pronounced in a tribunal, in a love scene, or in a childhood situation. Thus, the variation of the statement is the sum of its proper variations. The one who speaks enters into the very becoming of the statement and enunciates it according to all its situations. The statement becomes the continuum of “I swear.” It’s a matter of “transmitting an *énoncé* [statement] through all the variables that could affect it in the shortest amount of time. The *énoncé* will never be more than the sum of its own variations that frees it from each apparatus of power [*pouvoir*] capable of fixing it and that gives it the slip from all constancy” (OLM 245).

Bene does not write in a literary or theatrical way, but in an operational fashion. “It is even necessary to overload the text with nontextual, and yet internal, directions, *which would be not merely scenic*, which would function as operators consistently conveying the scale of variables through which the *énoncé* passes” (OLM 246; trans. modified). The objective is to create a theater as direct perception of action. The text has no importance; it is only the simple artistic material for putting continuous variation into effect. Variation is double, for it bears at once on elements that are inside and outside language. It is at once “a work of ‘aphasia’ on language (whispered, stammered, and deformed diction, barely audible or deafening sounds), and a work of ‘obstruction’ on objects and gestures (costumes limiting movement instead of

aiding it, props thwarting change of place, gestures either too stiff or excessively ‘soft’)” (OLM 248). This double principle of aphasia and hindering must be instituted simultaneously to form a single and same continuum of variation.

Bene’s writing, for Deleuze, also is exercised through a third operation: after having subtracted every stable element of power and after having put everything into continuous variation, everything must be rendered minor. First, one must minorize a language. One must impose on all the elements inside language (phonological, syntactic, and semantic) the heterogeneity of variation. This is done by being bilingual within a single language, by being a foreigner in one’s own language, and by making language itself stammer.<sup>5</sup> But one must also minorize a play and put in a state of continuous variation all the elements of the stage and on the stage: actions, passions, gestures, attitudes, objects, and displacements—as in Beckett. Variation contaminates everything. Variation has its linguistic and sonic consequences, but it also transforms gestures, attitudes, actions, objects, and passions. The variation of language has consequences for nonlinguistic elements. It puts in variation elements inside language as well as outside language. The body, gestures, and even costumes follow the same variation as language. “So it works in *Salomé*: the apple being continually swallowed and spit up; the costumes never ceasing to fall off and needing continually to be put back on; the stage props always useless rather than useful, as with the table that separates instead of supporting things—one must always surmount objects instead of using them” (OLM 248). The work of impeding things and gestures accompanies the work of aphasia in language.

To minorize is also an operation Deleuze’s calls “disgrace.” “We become minor, only by the creation of a disgrace or a deformity. It is the operation of grace itself” (OLM 243). Bene invents a deformed language in the major language. He creates the monster in the beautiful, renders the deformed gracious, or equates the movement of disgrace with grace. He subordinates qualified form to the deformity of movements and qualities. Major language is a lingua franca [*une langue véhiculaire*] through its standard and strongly homogeneous structure, based on constant or universal invariants, of a phonological, syntactic, and semantic nature. Hence its global or national expansion, as well as its power. Minor language, by contrast, is vernacular; it is a communal language or language of the ghetto. Bearing only a minimum of constants or structural homogeneity, minor language is a language in continuous variation. It is created at the same time as it is practiced by communities, and it is in perpetual becoming. But there is a rhythm to variation, a continuum. This regularity allows every minor language to find its own rules and thus not to be reduced to a simple mixture or stew of patois. Yet, the distinction between minor and major languages is itself a reductive distinction. It’s a distinction

that starts with the principle of variation as extrinsic and applicable to a language as homogeneous structure. What Deleuze wants to think, rather, is the immanence of all languages to a continuous variability. Since languages are endowed with variation, they are distinguished by their greater or lesser capacity for variation and their capacity for usage by minorities. In this way Deleuze explains that the imperialism of a major language is worked over from within by minorities and carried away by minor usages that make the language flee in lines of continuous variation. This distinction among languages is thus made by a difference in the language's capacity to be varied from within. And that capacity is a capacity of creation, language being more or less creative in itself.

The concepts "minor" and "major" thus classify creativity, or better: the potentiality of creation of a language that lets itself be worked over from within and lets itself be carried away by the rhythm of the continuous variation that is immanent to it. "Continuous variability is not explained by bilingualism, nor by a mixture of dialects, but by language's most inherent, creative property as apprehended in minor usage. And, to a certain degree, this is the 'theater' of language" (OLM 245).

As we have indicated, the means Bene uses in his operation of minorization do not consist of clashes, confrontations, or oppositions. The conflicts or relations of force are always already normalized, codified, and institutionalized—and it is for this reason that the theater, which takes conflicts as its object, remains always a theater of representation. Despite being a harsh and cruel theater, the relations of force are precisely that which can only be performed by being subtracted and neutralized. For example, the young woman in *S.A.D.E.*, who is transformed into a succession of familiar objects, is never mastered by the master, and her metamorphoses, in their gracious gestures, discover lines of flight in relation to the sadistic master.

Bene dissolves these conflicts to neutralize them from the inside. The result is the invention of new dramaturgical relations. No longer relations of force but relations of speed and slowness, insofar as they inform gestures and statements. The theater of "less" is made through a grace of variation, a beauty of style, and a melody of disequilibrium. Variation requires a short time, the fastest possible. The continuum of variation must be made at high speed so that every form is deformed and every repetition of a gesture or a word bears this same temporal deformation.<sup>6</sup> "It seems to me that two essential aims of the arts should be the subordination of form to speed, to the variation of speed, and the subordination of the subject to intensity or to affect, to the intense variation of affects" (OLM 249).

Speed and affect against form and subject. Hence, what's required is a difficult art of putting a text in disequilibrium. But this disequilibrium is not performed in a manner that is itself in disequilibrium. On the contrary, Bene's

operation of continuous variation is a geometric, harmonious, and rhythmic deformation. “The beauty of his *style* is how it induces stammering by the creation of melodious lines that free language from a system of dominant oppositions. The same goes for the *grace* of the gestures on stage” (OLM 249). But the amputation that Bene performs on original texts, either through the disarticulation of institutionalized networks of force or through the internal vibration of statements, goes much further. In terms of the establishment of a new theatrical material (new characters, aphasia and stammering of language, repetition, and hindrance of gestures), it’s a matter of turning the author into an operator and the director into a protagonist. “Bene’s pride would rather trigger a process over which he is the controller, the mechanic or the operator (he himself says: the protagonist) rather than the actor” (OLM 241).

The political dimension of art here takes on a new sense. At the same time as he subtracts the elements of power from the stage, at the same time as he refuses the representation of conflicts and institutions, Bene introduces a revolutionary becoming of the public itself. The theater of nonrepresentation is also a project of constitution or constructivism of a community of perception. One must invent a spectator as power/capacity [*puissance*] in becoming. And this power/capacity [*puissance*] in becoming of the public is not another form of power [*pouvoir*]. Rather, it is the ultimate moment of its disappearance. “It could no longer be said that art has power [*pouvoir*], that it is still a matter of power, even when it criticizes Power. For, by shaping the form of a minority consciousness, art speaks to the strengths of becoming that are of another domain than that of Power and measured representation” (OLM 254). The spectator, in his or her becoming power/capacity [*devenir puissance*], in his or her becoming-minor, brings the impotence [*impouvoir*] of the stage to completion.

The minorization of power in the theatrical work always makes an appeal to a minor community. And this community is invented by the work itself. Art is always creation of the unexpected, of the unsettling. But the unsettling is not in itself revolutionary. From the simple fact that it is a break from the established order of things, the new in itself has no political effect. The absolutely new is revolutionary only through the actualization of a virtual never given in its virtuality. The new must surge forth as the convocation of a virtual that has no actual counterpart. It must be a virtual-to-come. In his lecture on the act of creation, Deleuze introduces the concept of “the people who are missing” [*le peuple qui manque*] to designate this different domain of the virtual. “The people are missing and at the same time, they are not missing. [. . .] There is no work of art that does not call on a people that does not yet exist” (2RF 329). The people are missing, but the people only become actual through art, through the creation of new ways of seeing and hearing. The people are on the horizon, at the limit of each variation. The people who

are missing offer another virtuality-to-come: that of the new perception of the created object. They designate here the community of aesthetic judgment that the work of art constitutes through the very fact of its appearance. This missing people is the Kantian sense of the community of aesthetic judgment. The production of the new implies at the same time the production of the very mode of understanding and of apprehending this novelty. The new is always unrecognized, unrecognizable, and unexpected. "A work is always the creation of a new space-time [. . .] a new syntax [. . .]: In creative works, you find a multiplication of emotion, a liberation of emotion, the invention of new emotions" (2RF 294).<sup>7</sup> Established modes of perception are not adequate to the new, and they are capable only of the same and repetition. One must construct the proper mode, itself new, for capturing difference. Kant understood that art, in general, is the fabrication at the same time of the object and of its mode of perception. Art is thus the production of the new at the same time as the production of perception of the new. It is the virtualization of the gaze-to-come through minorization and through variation of the constituted gaze. If, according to Deleuze, Bene's theater is a theater of constitution, this is so in a double sense: as constitution of characters on the stage and as creation of the missing people, of the new community of perception as apprehension of the new.

The constitution of this people to come had already begun with the constitution of the characters on the stage through the construction of the figure of everybody [*tout-le-monde*] as minoritarian consciousness, as a becoming-universal inside the potentiality of each of these characters. This is the complete opposite of a collective emancipated consciousness suggested by the play. For Brecht, we know, the collective consciousness is constructed as a new border between the characters and the public during the conflicts on the stage. In his political theater, the collective consciousness is represented, it is made visible in each individual decision of a character or in each of a group's movement of lucidity. For Bene, the theater also constitutes a consciousness. But this consciousness is not incarnated. "It is truly a matter of consciousness-raising [*une prise de conscience*], even though it bears no relation to a psychoanalytic consciousness, nor to a Marxist political consciousness, nor even to a Brechtian one. Consciousness, consciousness-raising is a tremendous power [*puissance*] but one made neither for solutions nor for interpretations. [. . .] The more we attain this form of minority consciousness, the less isolated we feel. Light. Each of us is a mass in oneself, all alone, 'the mass of my atoms.' Under the ambition of formulas, there is the most modest appreciation of what might be a revolutionary theater, a simple loving potentiality, an element for a new becoming of consciousness" (OLM 256; trans. modified).

According to Deleuze, a minoritarian consciousness has no representatives on the stage, nor is it even representable, because it exists only in a people who are missing, not on the side of the stage floor but on that of the public, of the community of perception, once “the theater [will surge] forward as something that represents nothing, but that presents and constitutes a minority consciousness as a becoming-universal” (OLM 256; trans. modified).<sup>8</sup>

### THE REAL BETWEEN THE ACTUAL AND THE VIRTUAL: POWER/CAPACITY [*PUISSANCE*] AND POTENTIALITY

The *pouvoir/puissance* dichotomy is everywhere apparent in *Superpositions*. The only strategy for countering the power [*pouvoir*] that monopolizes the plane of the real/actual is to produce less of the real/actual. This is done by amputating the effects of power that characterize certain classical theater texts, that is, by eliminating some of their structuring elements. In this fashion, potentialities are liberated. They were contained in secondary characters as principles of resistance to power. One must reduce power in order to liberate power/capacity [*puissance*]. Yet Deleuze still thinks of liberated power/capacity as a virtuality.

For the moment, in his analysis of Bene, Deleuze no longer uses the concept of the possible. There is no “possible” in *Superpositions*.<sup>9</sup> Deleuze only speaks of “potentiality,” which makes *Superpositions* a paradoxically Aristotelian book. One must liberate the potentialities in each character, which are imprisoned by power, that is, imprisoned by the frozen representation of conflicts. This liberation is effected through a process of setting in variation characters who are already present in these political situations, though in the condition of virtuality. In *Superpositions*, the concept of potentiality (or power/capacity [*puissance*]), although related to the idea that Deleuze will much later treat as the “possible”—since, this possible, this potentiality is that which must be liberated to become actual—is, however, a concept presented in parallel with that of the virtual or virtuality.

The power/capacity [*puissance*] that is liberated was already a virtuality contained in the actions of the original play. In order for new situations and new characters to be realized—that is, not that they become actual, but potentialized—one must amputate, in a canonic text, either the institutions of power or the characters who represent them. What Bene creates is rather a power/capacity, the power/capacity of liberating the text from the domain of power that fixes the text in a form. Power/capacity is foremost a potentiality of becoming. Virtuality exists in the original text, but as dead, impotent, asphyxiated by the representational system. Through Bene’s actions, the

virtuality contained in the text becomes potent [*puissante*] and is liberated, yielding lines of variation that have now become realizable.

Bene's only decision is the choice of the element to be amputated from the text. All the rest, that is, the constitution of the characters, the *mise-en-scène*, the elements of the set, everything enters into an involuntary and aleatory becoming. As Deleuze says, "even objects and props await their destiny" (OLM 239). The minorization, the amputation, is precise. Bene amputates the text with a "surgical precision." Like a scientist, he awaits the result, unpredictable, of what will occur. Amputation is the only precise, calculated gesture, performed with a goal: minorization. All the rest, the play itself, will be unforeseeable. However, the result is not like a game of chance, because the point of departure is not aleatory. The surgery consists of the subtraction, the amputation of elements of the original play—an amputation, as Deleuze notes, that is not arbitrary (see OLM 239). Bene subtracts only that which creates the order of the text, that which gives it its consistency, that which creates the weft of the work. From another perspective, the surgery is also the prosthesis of potentiality: in amputating the potentiality of the elements of power, in neutralizing them, Bene allows the potentialization of a new play with new characters and new scenes. Through this disequilibrium of powers/capacities, through this equilibrium in disequilibrium, in *S.A.D.E.* for example, the masochist Servant "creates himself onstage in relation to the deficiencies and impotencies of the Master" (OLM 240). The autonomy of a power/capacity is created through the amputation of another, either in a dominant system or in a liberatory system. What Bene does, according to Deleuze, is to reverse the system, changing the terms of the equation of disequilibrium of powers/capacities. Instead of a relation of majority–power–power/capacity [*majorité–pouvoir–puissance*] versus minority–nonpower–impotence [*minorité–impouvoir–impuissance*], in Bene's theater, "minority here denotes the strength [*puissance*] of a becoming while majority designates the power [*pouvoir*] or weakness [*impuissance*] of a state, of a situation" (OLM 255).

Minorization is a continuous subtraction. Deleuze identifies five fundamental operations in this subtraction: (a) cut back the story as temporal mechanism of power; (b) amputate the structure as a set of invariants; (c) subtract the constants as stabilized elements of major usage; (d) minorize the text; and (e) amputate the dialogues and even the diction as vehicles of the dominance of language [*langue*] over speech [*parole*]. Following this veritable cleaning operation, what remains is not something less, but a whole [*un tout*].<sup>10</sup> What remains is variation, becomings, an entire set of potentialities made actual. What remains are minor characters who were secondary in the antecedent text, new situations without the castration of power, new relations, and new connections in a new space and a new time. "The movement of subtraction, of amputation, one already covered by the other movement that gives birth

to and multiplies something unexpected, like a prosthesis: the amputation of Rome *and* the colossal development of Mercutio, one in the other” (OLM 238; trans. modified). More than simple amputation, Bene’s operation is shown to be a prosthesis of the unexpected on the amputated actual. Unexpected virtualities become possible and develop through the amputations of powers/capacities already in action, already actual.

The artwork thus functions as a manifesto for the new as minorization. It results from an experimentation of variations, of becomings and minor, minorized, modes of living. “A becoming is by its nature that which is subtracted from the majority” (WP 108; trans. modified). Through this becoming, through this continuous variation toward minorization, one flees power, and one creates a new earth and another territory for the missing people. People who do not yet exist, no longer as a community that gives shape to a new perception, but as the result of the minorization of all the relations of power. “Art and philosophy converge at this point: the constitution of an earth and a people that are lacking as the correlate of creation” (WP 108).

What interests Deleuze, what, he says, makes up the political singularity of Bene’s work, is reaching the new from inside the object itself. We know that this art of development, or explication of a work through the unfolding of that which is enfolded within it, is the discovery of the Baroque. It is the well-known technique of variations. But in Bene’s case, variation is not a matter of carrying to the limit a finite number of possibilities contained in the theme or the initial situation. Rather, it’s a matter of putting in variation certain characters, untying them from their relations with other characters in a fixed situation. To annul all representational features, Bene constructs a minor starting from the original; he produces a play of less, a minor power/capacity. This is the operation of creating potentialization through minorization of the actual. What is interesting is that Deleuze thinks the realization of this power/capacity through a minoritarian becoming. Deleuze knows well that the art of the *mise-en-scène* is not in the repetition of a virtual. And for this reason, it is not a matter of information or of communication. On the contrary, it is precisely against the mechanisms of power and control, such as information as pure transmission of commands [*mots d’ordre*] and communication of the established and dominant same, that art is characterized as an act of virtualization. And in this minorization one finds a new dimension of the real. The real, no longer as the actualization of a virtual, but as the *mise-en-scène* of a virtuality to come. If the rendering present of power/capacity takes place via the minorization of an original text, that is, via the amputation of a character or another element, and via the consequence valorization of another character, this emergence of power/capacity has the form of an actualization. New elements can appear because up to this point they were pure virtualities not yet actualized. Thus, as we have already seen in *Romeo and Juliet*, Mercutio,



an asphyxiated virtuality in the original play, becomes, in Bene's hands, free power/capacity, continuous variation. Likewise, the neutralization of the figure of the Master in *S.A.D.E.* makes the figure of his servant autonomous and, thus, makes possible his construction as a character. Suspension of the initial actualization, neutralization of his actual power/capacity, in order to disengage a virtual. Refraction, creation of a second sign less than the actual first sign.<sup>11</sup> This is the operation Bene performs on these plays. It is a putting-in-variation, but a variation that works on that which has never been given, on that which exists only as virtual. It does not tend toward the nearly-infinite of combinatories, but toward the finite of disappearance, of minorization. Variation of less. Deleuze stresses this procedure of the becoming minor of the Master in *Sade*, of the becoming-woman of *Richard III*, or the disappearance of *Romeo*. Through the amputation and the subtraction of characters, of elements of power or the actions of the play, Bene subtracts from the actual in order to create a new potentiality, a power/capacity always less than the given actual.

To amputate is to neutralize, to paralyze; it is to render minor the major traits of power present in the actual. To return to the last example, that of *S.A.D.E.*, the procedure of minorization as amputation is very explicit. In Bene's text, the Master is reduced to the condition of a masturbatory tic. But a better example of this veritable operation of neutralization and impotence [*impuissance*], according to Deleuze, is *Richard III*. As he explains, "while the women at war enter and exit anxious for their whining children, Richard III will deform himself to amuse the children and restrain the mothers. He will fashion himself with prostheses as he arbitrarily takes objects from a drawer" (OLM 240).

It's a matter of a very precise operation. Subtract the history/story, the structure, the constants, the text, the dialogues, and even the diction and the action. Also subtract, as a cleaning operation, all that has to do with power. It's the same procedure, according to Deleuze, that one finds in *Bacon*: clean away every vestige of domination, of the power of the canvas in order to make it visible from another point of view, but from an active point of view, a positive one that creates and that alters the object.<sup>12</sup> To render a play minor is to allow the play to find its line of flight and to vary along that line in a continuous movement of variation. It's to make the play capable of actualizing the virtual.

*Superpositions* is the operation of positing power/capacity beneath the actual, of making visible the folds, the virtualities that, through the domination of institutions of power, have been neutralized and hidden. Bene superimposes power/capacity and the actual, superimposes power/capacity on/under the actual in order to disengage the virtual. From another perspective, to superimpose power/capacity is to posit a minority consciousness as universal-becoming.

“Becoming” is the concept Deleuze offers against every form of domination, whether political domination or psychoanalytic domination. Becoming hence functions as the concept that is opposed not only to political power, but also to the power of the fantasy and of interpretation. Despotism and invariant power is the frozen image, and becoming is the state in movement. But becoming is also a concept counter to history. *Superpositions* thus must be understood as the operation that establishes, in a given actual, a time other than that of succession. To superimpose is to position/posit, on the existing actual, a time of coexistence that does not function according to before and after. On the contrary, the time of superimposition is a time that pushes up from the middle. In this sense, Bene’s operation is the very establishment of philosophical time such as Deleuze will present it later: “This is a *stratigraphic* time where ‘before’ and ‘after’ indicate only an order of superimpositions. [. . .] Philosophical time is thus a grandiose time of coexistence that does not exclude the before and after but *superimposes* them in a stratigraphic order” (WP 58–9).<sup>13</sup> The line of variation is the border between history and antihistoricism.

Thus, superimposition as the operation of minorization must be explained starting from time, for succession relates to the actualization of a new dimension (the relation of forces-time). Between before and after, there is potentialization. Power/capacity is created in the middle, through becoming. “But the past and even the future are *history*. What counts, on the other hand, is becoming, becoming-revolutionary, and not the future or the past of revolution” (OLM 242).<sup>14</sup> The middle is not a place between the past and the future. It is not a point on a continuous line, but rather an instant as excess, as production, as an addition [*un plus*]. The middle is the element of communication of different times. It is a beyond of history, a beyond of chronological time, without, however, being eternal. It is rather the untimely, always becoming, a time of variation. “A minor author is precisely that—without future or past, s/he has only a becoming, a middle (*un milieu*), by which s/he communicates with other times, with other spaces” (OLM 242). Minor authors are those who create their own time, who invent a time proper to themselves. Minor authors are untimely, and they take time out of joint; they are not of their own time and space because they are always becoming.<sup>15</sup> Becoming is the creation of a new time and a new space, the nonappearance of abstract and already-established forms of space and time or of the entire sphere of individuality. “*The minor author does not interpret his or her time; no one has a fixed time, time depends on the man*” (OLM 242).

We may say that Carmelo Bene’s theater is a second step in the project of a transcendental empiricism. This project is now presented according to the model of the univocity of the actual. From the perspective of power, the conditions of experience are the actual conditions of power. But art is defined

as minorization of this power, that is, as amputation of the actual, liberating potentialities that are produced as variation in minorization of an actual petrified in institutions. In this case, from the perspective of art, transcendental empiricism now gains a new formula: the condition is smaller than the conditioned, starting from the moment that the condition is minorized.

This reformulation of the program of transcendental empiricism via Carmelo Bene's text raises a set of questions about the archaeology of the concepts of modality that traverse Deleuze's entire oeuvre. How can we explain that, in *Difference and Repetition* (1969), there is such a strong opposition between the virtual and the possible? How can we explain that Deleuze's last texts on literature are all constructed around the concept of the "possible," a concept that was previously thought of as opposed to the virtual? How can we explain the displacement of a literature of the virtual, as critique of the possible, toward a literature of the possible, as sphere of a different reality but one presupposing the sphere of the virtual? How can we explain that the concept of the possible takes on a central dimension, with a positive signification, as we will see in Deleuze's texts on Beckett and on "Bartleby"? And what do we say about the fact that the concept of the "possible" in those texts is used to designate dimensions of the real itself?

The answer may be found in Deleuze's new reading of literature. We have already seen that in *Kafka* power/capacity is introduced for the first time. Deleuze's treatment of Bene's theater extends this "physics" of power/capacity. We must stress that the concepts of power/capacity and potentiality produce a new concept of the virtual on the inside itself of the world of assemblages of Kafka. We can even say that the univocity of the actual that organizes the concept of the assemblage must allow an exception; that is, it must presuppose a dimension of the virtual against which the actuality of the assemblage is constructed. If there were only machinic assemblages against machinic assemblages, there would be nothing to assemble [*rien à agencer*; nothing to arrange in assemblages]. The solution is to consider the machinic assemblage as a procedure of "active dismantling" that the assemblage performs on the machine itself. "The assemblage no longer works as a machine in the process of assembling itself, with a mysterious function, or as a fully assembled machine that doesn't function, or no longer functions. It works only through the dismantling (*démontage*) that it brings about on the machine [ . . . ] and actually functioning, it functions only through and because of its own dismantling. It is born from this dismantling" (K 48). The assemblage functions actually, that is, as a pure actuality. But it's an actuality that is actualized only because it is a machine that is dismantling itself. As active dismantling, the assemblage is quite different from a critique. It operates in an already actualized social field, by prolonging or accelerating the lines of uncoding or deterritorialization that traverse it. This social field has the

condition of a virtual, the condition of something that is already real without being actual. Deleuze and Guattari give it the designation “power/capacity” or more precisely, “diabolical power/capacity of the future.” “This method of active dismantling doesn’t make use of critique, which is still part of representation. Rather, it consists in prolonging, in accelerating, a whole movement that already is traversing the social field. It operates in a virtuality that is already real without yet being actual (the diabolical powers [*puissances*] of the future that for the moment are only knocking on the door)” (K 48; trans. modified). The virtual is thus the set of diabolical powers/capacities of the future. These powers/capacities are “virtual” because they are not yet there. But still, they are real and already there. They “are knocking on the door.” The machinic assemblage (and the assemblage of enunciation) actively dismantles these powers/capacities as literary acceleration of uncoding and deterritorialization. In this sense, the machinic assemblage, in its process, is also virtual. As Deleuze and Guattari say, “One’s goal is to transform what is still only a *method* (*procédé*) in the social field into a *procedure* as an infinite virtual movement that at the extreme invokes the machinic assemblage of the *trial* (*procès*) as a reality that is on its way and already there” (K 48). Diabolical powers/capacities that knock on the door or machinic assemblages that operate through active dismantling are actual and virtual, they are of the real and they are to come and, at the same time, they are already there. However, this virtual will be thought in the Kafka book only as another version of the concept of “power/capacity,” of this knock on the door, of that which is imminent. We must await the Leibniz book for an explicit return to the concept of the virtual. Only in 1988, in *The Fold*, will Deleuze establish a very clear distinction between the world of the virtual and that of the possible. There he writes that the virtual actualizes itself and that the possible realizes itself. This shows that the concept of the possible emerges only as a positive concept in 1988. Hence, a brief recapitulation of Deleuze’s modal lexicon is necessary.

First one must understand the displacement produced by *Anti-Oedipus* in regard to psychoanalysis and structuralism. In this book Deleuze radically distances himself from the concept of the virtual. We may surmise that he realized that this concept occupies in his own work the place of Oedipus and of the phantasm. He would also recognize it in the concept of “essence” in his Proust book. And it is in his analysis of Kafka that one may see the emergence for the first time of a theory of literature focused on the real, on a real that lacks nothing, on a real without the imaginary or the symbolic, without castration or Oedipal reduction. Literature henceforth becomes a work on the real and the artist has as his or her task the production of an intensive reality of the minorization of the sphere of power [*pouvoir*]. In *Anti-Oedipus*, there is no concept of the virtual or of the crystal. Likewise, in *A Thousand Plateaus*.

The virtual returns in *Kafka* and in the cinema books. It is the time crystal that defines the cinematic image. If the concept of the virtual is to be found in *Difference and Repetition*, the concept of the crystal is not yet present. In 1969, it is the concept of the virtual that, in opposition to the possible of transcendental idealism, enunciates the nonactual of the conditions of real experience. As we will show, the virtual of cinema is a concept that emerges from the philosophy of Nature invented in *A Thousand Plateaus*. Thus, it is a completely different concept from that other concept of the virtual that was formulated in dialogue with Kant in the books of the 1960s.

This return to the virtual presupposes the passage through Bene: this passage is the introduction of the “not yet” real. In the *Kafka* book, there is only the real. Bene seems to inscribe himself in the paradigm of a minor literature, in that way of thinking about art as resistance and line of flight. Indeed, Deleuze’s entire reading of Bene is summarized in an operation of amputation of topics of the fixation of relations of force in such a way as to liberate potentialities in the real.

It’s true that Deleuze’s theory of art is normally considered an aesthetics of the virtual. But this only became standard because we forgot the final modal models, that is, the modal horizon from which his thought on literature emerged: that of the saturated or minorized real of *Kafka* and *Bene*, and the other horizon that transforms aesthetics into a thought about the possible and the impossible (which one finds in the texts on Beckett and *Bartleby*). It’s with *Superpositions* that one witnesses the beginning of a new modal configuration of a theory of literature, an art of power/capacity against power [*pouvoir*]. According to Deleuze, *Bene* is an author who creates new potentialities in the original texts on which he conducts an amputation of the elements of power. Without ever using the concept of the “possible,” perhaps because it had been deprived of significance after *Difference and Repetition*, in *Superpositions* Deleuze speaks only of “power/capacity” and “potentiality.” However, this concept of power/capacity or potentiality, between the possible and the virtual, will be abandoned for the clear affirmation of two strata of the real: a possible real and a virtual real. If *Kafka* was the author of the real without the possible or the virtual, *Bene* is the author of an idea that contains in itself a mixture of these two planes as yet undefined. The *Bene* text is thus the first step in this new aesthetics of the possible. From *The Fold* on, this virtual will be called “possible.”

This change within the theory of art takes place in parallel with a new formulation of the program of transcendental empiricism. It takes *The Fold*, that is, it takes having written about Leibniz, for Deleuze to affirm definitively the parallelism of the possible and the virtual and to defend a Leibnizian empiricism against Kantian idealism.

*Superpositions* is thus a book where Deleuze faces an impasse: how can one make actual a virtuality that inhabits an asphyxiated reality, without falling either into Aristotelian power/capacity or into the possible so long criticized as the bad image of the nonactual? The Kafka book may be seen as a solution, the literary solution to the impasse resolved by *Anti-Oedipus*, to wit: How can one go beyond the definition of the real as unconscious and desire as lack? What Kafka makes evident, according to Deleuze, is the plane of immanence, the contiguity of the real, and the plenitude of desire. *Anti-Oedipus* and *Kant* constitute a period in which a problem is solved: that of going beyond psychoanalysis and affirming a positive and productive real.

The Bene book, although in the same lineage as the Kafka book, that is, although affirming on the same plane the real and the procedure of minorization of the dominant real, testifies to the period of an impasse. This is a period where Deleuze needs to go further in this asphyxiated real, to affirm it as a different positivity of the virtual and yet as impossible. He will find the solution in *The Fold*, in peacefully reconciling himself to the concept of the possible. The title of *Superpositions* may thus be understood as the expression of a superimposition of two planes: one that corresponds to the idea of the possible, but that does not yet have its concept; the other that refers to the real, the only statement as such. But this real does not exhaust all of reality.

The texts on Kafka and Bene thus belong to the same configuration of thought. According to Deleuze, at the level of the treatment of language, these two authors have identical procedures and destroy the idea according to which power is the stable point of relations of conflict. However, we can establish a confrontation between the two. The difference rests rather in the representation of power itself: Kafka produces an infinite, amplified power, whereas Bene radically removes all the elements of power. On one hand, Kafka represents power in a process of majorization, of rendering major, of a grotesque amplification of spheres of power (*Amerika*, *The Trial*, *The Castle*). Kafka's minor literature produces lines of flight and deterritorialization of these masses of power produced by a majorization, an inflation of institutions. It's an almost paradoxical minorization because it functions through the amplification to the absurd of the sphere of power. Bene, on the other hand, produces, not a grotesque majorization, but a practical and concrete minorization, amputating from a text its constituent elements of power, the petrified elements of conflict. Both authors perform minorizations, but through different procedures. Kafka creates a becoming-minor of K. And power, although the same, is viewed from a minor perspective. Power is dismantled, not in its functioning, but from a perspective of minorization—the minor perspective of K. Bene minorizes power itself, the subject matter of conflict represented in canonical texts. Not only does he minorize the characters, but above all

he minorizes power in itself, as institution and as dominant topic. In both cases, there is the idea of a becoming-minoritarian. In Kafka, this becoming takes place through amplification and through the hypertrophy of scenarios of power. In Bene, this becoming immediately minorizes these same scenarios, amputating their central elements of power. We may say that Kafka and Bene offer Deleuze two versions of a minor literature. Kafka performs a minorization of more [*de plus*], through the addition and multiplication of hypertrophied elements of power, whereas Bene performs a minorization of less [*de moins*], through atrophy and through subtraction.

If at the beginning of this analysis of Bene we said that he inaugurates what one might call a “triad of the possible,” now we understand that this triad is really only a couple: *Bartleby* and Beckett. As we will see, *Bartleby* places the impossible beyond the possible and Beckett exhausts the possible. Hence, three means of thinking a difficult concept for Deleuze. The possible, we know, is a concept against which he long fought—especially following his opposition of the *virtual* and the *possible* in *Difference and Repetition*. In 1979, Deleuze returns to the idea of the possible, although masked as power/capacity. It’s a true reconciliation with this concept of the “possible” that he had so cursed in *Difference and Repetition*, though this reconciliation was not truly accepted and recognized until *The Fold*, nine years later. From its characterization as the metaphysical concept par excellence, responsible for idealism in the approach to the concept of a philosophy of the transcendental (as abstraction of the real), the concept of the possible now becomes the counterpoint of the virtual in the understanding of power/capacity rendered actual through art. The possible is paired with the virtual, coupled with the image.<sup>16</sup>

Bene gives Deleuze a first approximation of the possible. True, Deleuze does not yet speak of this concept in *Superpositions*. He speaks only in an almost traditional fashion and calls that which constitutes the inverse of power “power/capacity” or “potentiality.” But more than masked by the concept of power/capacity, Bene’s possible is still negative. Indeed, the possible only becomes possible through the negation of all the established possibles. It is the result of an operation of annulment of an initial possible, the possible frozen in power. This is a possible as derived from a cleaning of a petrified existing totality.

The timid utilization of the possible as a means of thinking about Bene’s dramaturgy and the literature of Beckett and Melville forces us to consider the continuity, on one hand, between the text on Bene’s theater, and on the other, the continuity between the text on Beckett’s theater and the text on the novella “*Bartleby*.” We must understand both the emergence of the virtual in the cinema books and the return to the concept of the possible proposed in *The Fold*.

We can only very briefly trace the nonlinear path of the concepts of the possible and the virtual. This path may be summarized in three moments: a

first one, that of *Difference and Repetition*, where the critique of the possible is conducted through the theory of the virtual. The difference between the virtual and the actual is a real difference because the entirety of the virtual changes in nature when it is actualized. The possible here is clearly a negative concept. It is only the nonactualized actual, as its power/capacity, as its image. This theory of the virtual is already visible in the Proust books—the virtual as essence—in the Sacher-Masoch book—the virtual as phantasm—and in *The Logic of Sense*—the virtual as Oedipus. The second moment of the path takes place with *Anti-Oedipus*, a moment extended in the Kafka book. In this period, which also includes *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze clearly affirms a theory of the real as negation of the virtual and the image, the latter reduced to its condition as product of the imagination and the imaginary. And it is on the basis of this distinction that Deleuze comes to rethink the clinical problem of the work of art. This clinical aim becomes that of the capture of the too-intense visions and auditions of life.

The third and final moment begins with *Cinema 2: The Time-Image*. Here, we find the first positive formulation of a theory of the image—which is defined as virtual. As if it simply replaced the role of the possible in *Difference and Repetition*, now the virtual is defined as the image of the actual. Deleuze drops his argument against the possible. We remember that in *Difference and Repetition* the critique of the concept of the possible as nonactual double of the actual world followed the critique of the concept of the image and the concept of “concept.” “Image” and “concept” in *Difference and Repetition* were bad instruments for approaching the domain of the nonactual. Deleuze denounced this complicity between theories of the image, the philosophy of the concept, and the metaphysics of the possible. We are convinced that the cinema books—and thus the introduction for the first time of the theory of the image, separated from the question of the imagination—are what allowed Deleuze to become reconciled to the concept of the possible. Without the return to the virtual, within a naturalist philosophy of the time crystal, we would not have the Leibniz book and this immense rehabilitation of the question of possible worlds. After having been relegated to an Aristotelian role of the imagetic power/capacity of the actual, the concept of the “possible” becomes central, not only for understanding Leibnizian metaphysics, but also, and above all, for understanding the force of Bene’s theater, the specificity of Melville’s “Bartleby,” and the literature of exhaustion of Beckett. And the impossible will emerge as an opening onto these possible worlds. It is the introduction of the concept of the image that allows the reintroduction of the virtual, “purified” of Oedipus. This allows Deleuze to frame the question of fabulation as possible world and positing of the impossible.

*Superpositions* invents power/capacity. *Cinema 2* rehabilitates the virtual. *The Fold* can thus establish this parallelism of the virtual and the possible:



the first is actualized, the second is realized. How could Deleuze have written *Superpositions* if this book had come after the great visit to the metaphysics of possible worlds of Leibniz?

## NOTES

1. As Deleuze remarks, “Bene’s wariness of Brecht is understandable in this context: Brecht performed the greatest ‘critical operation,’ but this operation was enacted ‘on the text and not on the stage’” (OLM 246).

2. “It is not a matter of reading Shakespeare ‘critically,’ or of theater within theater, or of parody, or of a new version of the play, etc. Bene works differently, in a new fashion [. . .] he amputates an element from the original play” (OLM239; trans. modified). As Anne Sauvagnargues remarks, *Superpositions* is also a book where Deleuze’s text does not function as a manual for understanding Bene’s play, but rather as a philosophical response stimulated by the work of the writer: “The critique does not proceed by the addition of a commentary of ‘more,’ but by the subtraction of a commentary of ‘less.’ This clinical area is here doubled by the fact that Bene’s play is itself a reprise of Shakespeare’s *Richard III*, but a reprise that is an ablation allowing literature (Bene) and philosophy (Deleuze) to enter into composition with the work and transform it. Thus, to create is to engage in surgical amputation” (Sauvagnargues 2005: 19).

3. “There is a popular theater analogous to the narcissism of the worker. Without a doubt, there is Brecht’s attempt to make contradictions and oppositions something other than represented; but Brecht himself only wants them to be ‘understood’ and for the spectator to have the elements of a possible ‘solution.’ This is not to leave the domain of representation but only to pass from one dramatic pole of bourgeois representation to an epic pole of popular representation. [. . .] Institutions are the organs of the representation of recognized conflicts. And theater is an institution. Theater is ‘official,’ even when avant-garde or popular” (OLM 252; trans. modified).

4. The border “passes between the people and the *ethnic group*. The ethnic group is the minoritarian, the line of flight in the structure, the anti-historical element in History. Carmelo Bene himself lives his own minority in relation to the folk of Puglia: his South or third world, in the sense that everyone has a South or third world. [. . .] Bene has never pretended to be creating a regionalist theater. [. . .] Bene is never more Puglian, more a southerner, than when he creates a universal theater” (OLM 254–5; trans. modified).

5. “To be a foreigner, *but* in one’s own tongue. . . . To stammer, *but* as a stammerer of language itself, not only of speech” (OLM 246).

6. “It is in this context that Bene’s writing and gestures are musical: because each form is deformed by modifications of speed. The result is that the same gesture or word is never repeated without obtaining different characteristics of time. This is the musical formula of continuity, or of form as transformation. The ‘operators’ of Bene’s style and staging are just such indicators of speed that no longer belong to theater even though they are not outside of theater” (OLM 249).

7. This search for new modes of perception is what led Bene to work with cinema. Cinema goes further than the theater in its relation to the speed of the image: “Is it possible for cinema to directly construct a sort of visual music, as if it were the eyes that first grasped the sound, while theater has trouble forsaking the primacy of the ear” (OLM 250). In cinema, Bene found a direct perception of the action that goes beyond the domination of words in the theater. The theatrical operation produces an effect on the reader (see OLM 246). This theme is already present in *Masochism* in the idea of literature as an effect on the reader. If Deleuze thinks the work of art as production of an effect on the individual who apprehends it, it’s because Deleuze argues for an intense connection between art and affect. “The spectator must not only understand but unknowingly hear and see the aim already pursued by the earliest mummings and falls: the Idea has become visible, perceptible, the politics have become erotic” (OLM 251).

8. “A revolutionary theater, a simple loving potentiality, an element for a new becoming of consciousness” (OLM 256).

9. Although the idea of the possible is already at work in his analysis of Bene, Deleuze does not want to use the possible as a concept. One must keep in mind that up to this point Deleuze had rejected the concept of the possible, which he wanted to avoid at any cost. Nonetheless, this concept will become increasingly unavoidable. Deleuze will make it central in future texts, above all in *The Fold*.

10. “But what remains? Everything remains [*Il reste tout*], but under a new light with new sounds and new gestures” (OLM 245).

11. “This is because sense is less the object of an actualization than of a *refraction*, of a ‘continuous and refracted’ birth in a second, created sign (PS 48–50). To set up means to suspend actualization by extracting its virtual part (drama, infinite movement), to repeat the very movement of explication” (Zourabichvili 2012: 132).

12. “Isolation [of the Figure] is thus the simplest means, necessary though not sufficient, to break with representation, to disrupt narration, to escape illustration, to liberate the Figure” (FB 6). “It would be a mistake to think that the painter works on a white and virgin surface. The entire surface is already invested virtually with all kinds of clichés, which the painter will have to break with” (FB 12). The act of painting is first an act of cleaning, because the canvas is impregnated with clichés. “The painter is *already* in the canvas, where he or she encounters all the figurative and probabilistic givens that occupy and preoccupy the canvas. There is thus a preparatory work that belongs to painting fully, and yet precedes the act of painting” (FB 81).

13. “Bacon defines it in this way: make random marks (lines-traits); scrub, sweep, or wipe the canvas in order to clear out locales or zones (color-patches)” (FB 81).

14. It is worth noting that though Deleuze always affirms the time of the middle and time of the meanwhile [*entre-temps*] in his analysis of *Bartleby*, Deleuze will come closer to the virtuality of the future. If in *Superpositions* becoming arises as a critique of the future, in the *Bartleby* text becoming-revolutionary will bring becoming closer and closer to the future.

15. To be minor is to be in becoming, it’s to be in the time and space of variation, in the middle. “It is neither the historical nor the eternal but the untimely. A minor

author is precisely that—without future or past, s/he has only a becoming, a middle (*un milieu*), by which s/he communicates with other times, with other spaces” (OLM 242). It’s a question of antihistoricism.

16. In “The Exhausted,” Deleuze still speaks of “potentiality,” but only spatial potentiality. Indeed, potentiality becomes a characteristic of space, for example, the square in (see CC 160–1, 163–8).

## Chapter 7

# Event and Assemblage

## *The Statement and the Haecceity*

### INTRODUCTION

Before the appearance of *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze published *Dialogues* in 1977, with Claire Parnet. The general tonality was that of a balance sheet of his encounter with Félix Guattari. After the effect of *Anti-Oedipus* on the Marxist and Lacanian communities and after the displacement of several canonical categories of literary theory proposed by the Kafka book, the moment had come to establish a fundamental continuity between the books before and after the meeting with Guattari. The structure of *Dialogues* is eloquent. First, the question of the new forms of subjectivity in the experiment of a writing by several hands—where *Dialogues* itself is offered as a veritable exemplum with its indistinction between the words of Deleuze and those of Parnet. Next, the three lines of force of Deleuze’s thought: literature, psychoanalysis, and politics. A chapter for each territory. The chapter is dedicated to the concept of a minor literature, under the title of the superiority of Anglo-American literature. Psychoanalysis, above all its metaphysics of the imagination, is once again *mise en abyme*. Invoking Beckett and his destitution of the imagination as functional pivot in *Imagination morte*. *Imaginez*, the third chapter has as its title, “Psychanalyse morte analysez.” The last chapter is designated by a simple word: “Politics.” This is the aftermath of 68 without Oedipus, but revisited with Kafka, Proust, Fitzgerald, Kleist, Hölderlin, and Virginia Woolf.

Unfortunately, this happy review of his previous books leads Deleuze to the illusion of a perfect resonance among all his theses, among all his concepts, before and after *Anti-Oedipus*. The most paradoxical case is that of the concepts of the “event” and the “assemblage,” truly those that reveal the greatest break produced by his encounter with Guattari. Deleuze totally

erases the border between the ontology of the incorporeal effects of sense and the physics of “machinic” individuations. This is the moment when he explains to Parnet that *The Logic of Sense* and *Kafka* have a perfect continuity. Deleuze again takes up the great Stoic theses on the logic of propositions and their ontology of incorporeal events, at the same time that he returns to the idea of a minor literature, to Kafka’s abstract machines, his collective enunciations, in short, his assemblages. Deleuze speaks indistinctly of the event and the assemblage, as if they had always been interchangeable pieces of the same theoretical mechanism.

The most obfuscating effect arises from the fact that this dilution of the difference between these two concepts occurs in the context of a new presentation of the idea of minor literature. This all takes place in Chapter 2, “On the Superiority of Anglo-American Literature.” The first part of the chapter is a proclamation of literature as experimentation, as program of life. Deleuze critiques the idea of interpretation in order to affirm literature as an affair of becoming-imperceptible through the creation of lines of flight. Literature is defined as the art whose goal is “to produce the real, to create life, to find a weapon” (D 49). The concept of the “assemblage” will be introduced in order to define what Deleuze presents as the atomic component, as the ultimate element of the statements [*énoncés*] of this literature of life, of this real-literature: “The minimum real unit is not the word, the idea, the concept or the signifier, but the *assemblage*. It is always an assemblage which produces utterances [*énoncés*]” (D 51). Not the word, not the concept, not the signifier, not the idea, in short, neither the materiality of language nor the depths of a subject are the atoms of sense of American literature. The greatness of authors like Kerouac, Miller, Virginia Woolf, or Melville is to create a new dimension of subjectivity, which Deleuze designates as an assemblage, this third term between speech and thought. The minor writer is the writer who inhabits this intermediary domain of social machines of enunciation, but who is first of all “machined” by these cogwheels that surpass and invent the writer.<sup>1</sup>

On the same page, when he is presenting the thought of the assemblage and how it produces statements, Deleuze invokes the event. The statement is the product of an assemblage, but it has as its object other things that are not assemblages. These other things are of a very specific nature. They are nonphysical collectives. Here Deleuze includes multiplicities, becomings, and, surprise of surprises, events. “The utterance is the product of an assemblage—which is always collective, which brings into play within us and outside us populations, multiplicities, territories, becomings, affects, events” (D 51). It might seem that the concept of the event is not used here in a technical sense, that it does not refer to the ontology of incorporeals of *The Logic of Sense*. But this is not the case. Events express the ultimate

instance of these incorporeal realities in the form of a multiplicity to which the collective enunciations refer or which they put in play. Deleuze here wants to establish a technical relation between the concepts of the assemblage and the event. The assemblage is presented as a collective reality; it is the work of the enunciation of a community. It produces collective literary statements that create lines of flight, passages, and departures. It is in itself already the putting into play, in the writer, and in his or her act of writing, multiple realities, experimentations of him/herself, and of the earth. In the set of these nomadic and plural dimensions, Deleuze points toward a gradation of immateriality: there are populations, multiplicities, becomings and affects, and, finally, events. Assemblages thus are the putting into play of events through collective statements. And these events, as we will show, are weighty realities in the Deleuzian lexicon.

It is worth stressing that this relation between the event and the assemblage is thought here for the first time in Deleuze's oeuvre. Up to *Dialogues*, as we have indicated, there were books constructed around the concept of the event—such was the case with *Difference and Repetition*, and especially *The Logic of Sense*. After *Anti-Oedipus*, the concept of the event simply disappears. One finds this same disappearance in *Kafka*. We have also stressed that the concept of the assemblage emerges timidly in *Anti-Oedipus*. It appears in its literary guise in the conclusion of the Proust book (1973) and takes a central place in the Kafka book (1975). *Dialogues* thus inaugurates something paradoxical: the simultaneous use of these two concepts, which were up to this point so disjointed.

This usage is so unexpected that it justifies, in this book, an analysis of possible connections and reciprocal implications between these two concepts. However, we find here only the simple juxtaposition of these two concepts as well as the two theoretical universes they condense. Rather than justify this relation, Deleuze conducts a brief recapitulation of the concept of the event, based on his reading of the Stoics in *The Logic of Sense*, and of the concept of the assemblage, according to the central theses of the Kafka book. In the section "On the Stoics" (D 62–9), Deleuze dedicates an entire paragraph to the concept of the event, which summarizes the key points of *The Logic of Sense*. In this summary, the concept of the event always involves the concept of the assemblage. Immediately thereafter (D 69), and with no transition, Deleuze dedicates an entire paragraph to the question "What is an assemblage?," to a schematic recapitulation of this concept as it is developed in *Kafka*. Here, also, he relates the concept of the assemblage to that of the event, as if they had always belonged to the same lexicon. One has the impression that Deleuze recounts the logic of the Stoics on the basis of *Kafka* and that he reestablishes his analysis of collective assemblages of enunciation on the foundation of the ontology of incorporeals of *The Logic of Sense*. In both cases, there

is no innovation as concerns either concept, except that innovation produced, precisely, by their being put into relation with one another.

*The Logic of Sense* and *Kafka*, in the light of *Dialogues*, seem to have been written under the same inspiration. Most surprising is that Deleuze nowhere admits that the concept of the “assemblage” was not present in his journey to the land of the Stoics, nor does he acknowledge that the concept of the event is absolutely missing in the *Kafka* book. Although the entirety of this book with Claire Parnet concerns more than twenty years of work, Deleuze (or Parnet?) avoids any history of the fundamental concepts that organize the collection of books that serve as the basis of their dialogue. The illusion is complete. The reader who first enters the work of Deleuze through *Dialogues* could only take the concepts of the event and the assemblage as being mirror images of one another.

We must counter this illusion. To better understand the theoretical violence that is at play in the naive mutual contamination of the concepts of the event and the assemblage, we must return to *The Logic of Sense*. As we will show, nothing there brings to mind the concept of the assemblage—just as in the *Kafka* book one can see that the concept of the event exists only in a condition of absolute absence. However, one must keep in mind that the theory of the event itself is a late construction. Deleuze only formulates it systematically in *The Logic of Sense*. Thus, one must trace its archaeology before considering its completed version. And that archaeology has two moments. The first, which we have already considered, is found in *Masochism*. It concerns the construction of the transcendental approach to the theory of the phantasm. The second must be sought in *Difference and Repetition*, around the theory of the virtual (where the phantasm is the condition par excellence of the virtual) and the theory of problems. Although in a still vague fashion, as the correlate of the ideal (virtual) of problems, here, for the first time, the concept of the event is formulated. *Difference and Repetition*, as we will see, marks the moment of transition from a psychology of the virtual (as phantasm) to an ontology of the virtual (as event).

## GENESIS OF THE CONCEPT OF THE EVENT

### *Difference and Repetition: Sense and the Problem*

In *Difference and Repetition*, the concept of the event is only approached as a thematic concept in Chapter 3, titled “The Image of Thought.” The concept is discussed in terms of the problem of sense in its relation to the proposition and its paradoxes. However, one does not find in this chapter the thematization that it will receive later. All the theories that are presented here, such as those of the sign, the univocity of being, the proposition, or sense, are

understood exactly in the same fashion as in the later works, and principally in *The Logic of Sense*. What is most surprising, considering that they are later associated with the event, is that these theories do not yet invoke the concept of the event. As a matter of fact, *Difference and Repetition* sketches the concept of the event but in its thematic absence. Everything is already present here, and all the problems that organize the theory of the event are formulated, without the concept itself (although the word is introduced) being treated as a theme. *Difference and Repetition* is the laboratory of the notion of the event as key concept of the philosophy of difference.

This paradoxical status of the event is often the sign of an ambiguous utilization. On one hand, it is taken as the equivalent of quotidian and ordinary facts; on the other, it functions as a philosophical concept, almost as we find it in *The Logic of Sense*. Let's consider a few examples of the ambiguity of this concept. First, as concerns its, shall we say, trivial signification, in that it designates a "fact," or that which happens to someone, or again that which is produced in time. It's in the context of the analysis of figures of repetition without a concept that Deleuze takes into consideration this experience of the return to memory of weak chapters in our biography, without our recognizing them as such. These concern those parts of a life that are described as "events." In the introductory chapter (on the principal characteristics of difference and repetition), Deleuze analyzes the case of the "natural blockage" of repetition, which does not derive from a resemblance in thought or a limitation (logical blockage), but from a real opposition that puts in play a force capable of preventing the concept from specifying itself, from differentiating itself. He distinguishes three cases: nominal concepts (with a finite comprehension), concepts of nature (with an indefinite comprehension, without memory), and concepts of freedom (with an infinite comprehension, endowed with memory, but without self-consciousness). In these three cases, it's a matter of recognizing something in my memory as belonging to me, although this something seems strange to me, that is, where it's a matter of establishing a relation between a representation of myself, as subject of an occurrence, and the I, that Deleuze says can embrace "all the particularity of an act, a scene, an event, or a being" (DR 14). (See also DR 104, where the event is same as the "scene," and DR 19, where it is presented alongside the "person" of the analyst.) "Event" has no specific signification. It belongs to the series of personal representations. It is a moment of a life, and a moment "already thought and recognized as past, the occasion of a determinant change in inner meaning" (DR 14). The event is that which returns to my memory as a moment of my life, but which is not recognized as such once "it is *played*, that is to say, repeated, enacted instead of being known" (DR 14).

In this impersonal dimension that is deeper than the I, which is played as a change in inner sense, the concept of the event already anticipates the theory of surface effects of *The Logic of Sense*. On one hand, the event is real



without being actual. As Deleuze says in *The Logic of Sense*, “The agonizing aspect of the pure event is that it is always and at the same time something which has just happened and something about to happen; never something which is happening. The  $x$ , with respect to which one feels that *it* just happened [. . .] and the  $x$  which is always about to happen. [. . .] The pure event is both tale and novella, never an actuality” (LS 63). The event is not of the order of presence, of the time of action, of actuality. It is doubled; it goes from the time of action toward the time of enunciation. Its temporality, in repeating itself, in doubling itself, introduces difference into the heart of the event. This is why, on the other hand, the event is that which happens to me without being personal. And as is explained in *The Logic of Sense*, “the splendor of the ‘one’ [*on*] is the splendor of the event itself or of the fourth person. [. . .] Everything is singular, and thus both collective and private at the same time” (LS 152; trans. modified).<sup>2</sup>

It is in this sense that Deleuze recognized the great revolution realized by psychoanalysis. As he says, “Freud gave up, in certain respects, the hypothesis of real childhood events, which would have played the part of ultimate disguised terms” (DR 17). The representations of memory need not be taken as factual events. Representations are found between memory, imagination, and the will. The event is what Freud called a “phantasm.” It is a traumatic infantile scene that has never taken place and that, nonetheless, organizes all the acts preserved in memory. The concept of the event appears, for the first time, in *Difference and Repetition* precisely in order to think the concept of the “phantasm,” this theoretical pivot of *Masochism*, published one year earlier. The central concept is still that of the fantasy. It’s the reality of frozen scenes produced by denegation and the suspension of pleasure by the masochistic imagination that Deleuze wants to think in *Difference and Repetition*. But now, what he emphasizes is its effect of repetition, endowed with memory, without self-consciousness, its effect as an impersonal event, beyond the issue of the deferral of masochistic desire. The “phantasm” here becomes a transcendental concept, common to all forms of desire, in this implicit equivalence of the fantasy and the event. In *The Logic of Sense*, as we have seen (“Event and Phantasm in *The Logic of Sense*,” Part I, Chapter II), the fantasy is the correlate, in the imagination and in memory, of the incorporeal event, and in its condition as primitive universal scene of Oedipus, it becomes the *Eventum-tantum*.

### ***Difference and Repetition: Sense and Event***

The second technical approach to the concept of the “event” in *Difference and Repetition* emerges in the theory of sense. The event, solely as ideal event, defines the mode of existence of sense and its ontological condition. This reciprocal determination of sense and the event, as we will see, will form

the center of *The Logic of Sense*. But in *Difference and Repetition* it is only the solution, scarcely articulated, to what Deleuze calls the paradox of sense, that is, the paradox produced by the distinction between, on one hand, the set “manifestation, designation and signification,” and on the other hand, sense, that is, that which is expressed.

Sense, according to Deleuze, is the effect of the doubling essential to language, that is, the process of the production of something that accompanies the proposition and that is not to be confused with the proposition itself, with that which it formulates, or with the object upon which it bears. Sense is the “double of the proposition. [. . .] It is distinguished from the proposition itself because it relates to the object as though it were its logical attribute, its ‘statable’ [*énonçable*] or ‘expressible’ [*exprimable*]” (DR 156). To distinguish it from the object and from the proposition, sense must be stated in the infinitive or participial form. Deleuze gives the following examples: not “God” but “to-be-God” [*Dieu-être*] or “God-being” [*Dieu-étant*], not “Sky” but “being-blue of the sky.” And to determine the mode of existence of this complex reality, he uses the concept of the “ideal event”—“This complex is an ideal event” (DR 156). On the same page, Deleuze defines the ideal event: “It is an objective entity, but one of which we cannot say that it exists in itself: it insists or subsists, possessing a quasi-being or an extra-being, that minimum of being common to real, possible and even impossible objects” (DR 156). Here we find all the major attributes of the event that *The Logic of Sense* will later explore in depth. But this is all; while one awaits the development of this ontology of “quasi-being,” of “extra-being,” which arises from the correspondence between sense and the ideal event, *Difference and Repetition* displaces its entire analysis of sense toward the domain of a theory of problems. Instead of an ontology of sense, Deleuze develops a transcendental description of problems, their presentation starting from the condition of possibility of their birth. As he says, “Sense is located in the problem itself. Sense is constituted in the complex theme, but the complex theme is that set of problems and questions in relation to which the propositions serve as elements of response and cases of solution” (DR 157). Only a theory of problems will allow a complete determination of this double of the proposition, of this “Vapour which plays at the limit of things and words” (DR 156), that is, sense. But, as we shall see, this transcendental theory of problems will lead Deleuze anew to a theory of the event. And yet, even within this theory, *Difference and Repetition* does not attain the heights of the concept of the event whose invention this book inaugurates.

### *Difference and Repetition: Idea and Problem*

If the event defines the mode of existence of sense as ideal insistence, it is not yet determined in itself. The sole ontological characterization of the concept

of the event must be sought in the modal context. Only as “problematic,” in the Kantian sense, following the analysis of the transcendental concept of the “idea,” do we find what one may call a moment of true determination of the event. Deleuze here will establish a correspondence between the idea and the event through the intermediary of the concept of the virtual. He begins by recalling, in Chapter 4, “Ideal Synthesis of Difference,” that, in Kant, ideas are essentially “problematic” and that inversely, problems are ideas themselves.<sup>3</sup> Secondly, Deleuze explains that the term “problematic” signifies both a class of subjective acts and a dimension of objectivity as such, invested by these acts.<sup>4</sup> As dimension of objectivity, objectivity is achieved in a movement of differentiation; ideas are thought precisely as “differentials of thought” (DR 169), that is, “an unconditioned rule for the production of knowledge of quantity” (DR 175).

The idea is problematic because, on one hand, it has as its object problems, and on the other, its mode of existence is stated neither by assertoric judgments that refer to actualities [*effectivités*] nor by apodictic judgments that refer to necessities, but by problematic judgments. According to Kant, these problematic judgments have possibilities as their correlates. Now, of course, Deleuze will replace this concept of “possibility” with that of “virtuality.” In this way Deleuze can establish a series of equivalences among “idea,” “problem,” and “event.” “Ideas are by no means essences. In so far as they are the objects of Ideas, problems belong on the side of events, affections, or accidents rather than on that of theorematic essences” (DR 187). Double inscription: of the idea in the problem, and of the problem in the world of events. This inscription is aimed above all at anchoring the problematic in the assertoric, that is, the virtual in the actual [*effectif*]. The idea does not belong to essence, but to existence. It has problems for its object, and problems, although ideal, have the real world of affections and accidents as their domain of solutions. The idea is a differential movement of thought. In contrast with essence, where there are only substances that exist in the vertical plane of organization, of order, the idea’s object is problems, disorders, accidents. “These questions are those of the accident, the event, the multiplicity—of difference—as opposed to that of the essence, or that of the One” (DR 188).

This return of the idea to the problem and of the problem to the world of events allows the establishment of a difference interior even to events: between real and ideal events. The first are of the order of solutions of the problem; the second pertains to its condition. As Deleuze writes: “Problems are of the order of events—not only because cases of solution emerge like real events, but because the conditions of a problem themselves imply events such as sections, ablations, adjunctions. In this sense, it is correct to represent a double series of events which develop on two planes, echoing without resembling each other: real events on the level of engendered solutions, and

ideal events embedded in the conditions of the problem” (DR 188–9). What status does the concept of the “event” have here? Once again, it designates, not the world of things and bodies, but that of affections and accidents. The term “event,” in the immateriality that it seeks to designate, makes possible a new approach to the concept of reality and ideality. Furthermore, it makes possible a new articulation of these two series. Deleuze distinguishes two types of events—that of the problem and that of solutions. But if “a problem does not exist, apart from its solutions,”<sup>5</sup> or if “a problem is determined at the same time as it is solved” (DR 163), the conditions of the problem and the levels of solutions do not belong to a single plane.<sup>6</sup> It’s at the same time that the problem is formulated and resolved. The determination and the solution of the problem are simultaneous.

However, the determination of the problem is ideal, whereas the solution is real. “The ideal series enjoys the double property of transcendence and immanence in relation to the real” (DR 189), considering that “these events are ideal events, more profound than and different in nature from the real events which they determine in the order of solutions” (DR 163).<sup>7</sup> Reality is simple and unique, whereas ideality is double. The ideality of determination thus belongs to an ampler and deeper dimension than that of reality. Does the depth of events have no connection with the depths of the power/capacity of the intensity? Deleuze never explains this difference between ideal and real events. The first defines sense itself, as quasi-beings or extra-beings. But what could real events be?

Everything was made ready for a theory of the event in *Difference and Repetition*. On the plane of time, on the plane of the idea, even within a theory of problems—the concept emerges as inevitable. And yet, it is never constituted by itself as an object; it is never a theme. This shows us to what extent the ontology of the event we find in *The Logic of Sense* truly constitutes a revolution in Deleuze’s thought. As we will show, this ontology gives the concept of the fantasy an ideal reality, freeing it from its relation to the imagination and its mechanisms of unrealisation [*irréalisation*] and denegation. The equivalence between fantasy and event that constitutes the speculative center of *The Logic of Sense* no longer goes back to a theory of the faculties, but to an ontology, to a description of the modes of existence of these quasi-beings on the surface of states-of-things and bodies.

### *The Strata of the Event in The Logic of Sense*

*The Logic of Sense* is presented as a book on the nature of the proposition (between logic, ontology, and linguistics). However, the big question that traverses this immense cartography of the paradoxes of sense, in its nonreduction to the proposition’s planes of signification, designation, and

manifestation, addresses the nature of thought. “What is thinking? What image of thought makes us think?” The Deleuzian approach to the concept of “thought” is a radicalization of the Kantian question, “What does it mean to orient oneself in thought?”<sup>8</sup>

In *The Logic of Sense*, Deleuze uses the metaphor of “orientation” to lead the theory of thought toward a physics of the surface. “When one asks, ‘what is it to orient oneself in thought?,’ it appears that thought itself presupposes axes and orientations according to which it develops, that it has a geography before having a history, and that it traces dimensions before constructing systems. Height is the properly Platonic Orient. The philosopher’s work is always determined as ascension” (LS 127; trans. modified). Against the Platonic thought of transcendent heights, Deleuze poses the thought of surfaces, where the philosopher takes a walk on the ground, on the earth. It’s a matter of a plane thought [*pensée plane*]. Thought is constructed and effectuated, on the surface. The surface is like the map where thought is inscribed. For Deleuze, the movement of thought is comparable neither to creative inspiration nor to its inscription of a surface as a blank page. Rather, thought is geographic and stratigraphic; it is a metamorphosis, a becoming. For this reason, Deleuze says that “Deeper than any other ground is the surface, the skin” (LS 141; trans. modified). The surface as a block. A block of thought. It’s as if thought walks around on the surface and as if thought realizes itself on its own skin.

From *A Thousand Plateaus* on, we discover a subtle change in the idea of orientation in thought and, thus, in the idea itself of thought. It’s always a question of a geography, but this time thought is the skin of the nomad body that loses its organs. Thought is the earth, it is territory, and it is the very movement of territorialization. “Thinking takes place in the relationship of territory and the earth [. . .] [however] the earth constantly carries out a movement of deterritorialization on the spot, by which it goes beyond any territory: it is deterritorializing and deterritorialized” (WP 85). According to *A Thousand Plateaus*, thought exists only in the plane of immanence, through a nomadic becoming. The relation with the earth, with the territory, is a mode of disappropriation, of loss of all territory proper to thought, and this means that thought is deterritorializing. This nomadism has two dimensions or zones of indiscernibility. On one hand, deterritorialization, which is the movement of the territory to the earth, and on the other, reterritorialization, which takes place from the earth to the territory (see WP 85–6). Thus, what is proper to philosophy is geographical being. Nomadism, disappropriation, and indiscernibility have no sense except in a geographic thought. “Whether physical, psychological, or social, deterritorialization is *relative* insofar as it concerns the historical relationship of the earth with the territories. [. . .] But deterritorialization is *absolute* when the earth passes into the pure plane of

immanence of a Being-thought, of a Nature-thought of infinite diagrammatic movements. Thinking consists in stretching out a plane of immanence that absorbs the earth (or rather, ‘adsorbs’ it)” (WP 88). History is thought as the limit and geography as the absolute. Becomings and deterritorializations are always absolute.<sup>9</sup>

Although the idea of “stratum” provides the fundamental organization of *A Thousand Plateaus*, it first appears in *The Logic of Sense* in order to offer praise to the surface. The opposition depths/surface, which corresponds to that of body/event, structures the entire work. The surface, thin layer of the earth, the object of a geography. As Deleuze writes: “Is it the case that every event of this type—forest, battle, and wound—is all the more profound since it occurs at the surface? The more it skirts bodies, the more incorporeal it is. History teaches us that sound roads have no foundation, and geography that only a thin layer of the earth is fertile” (LS 10; trans. modified). Paradoxically, the fact that the concept of the event is used to designate only one of the strata—the surface—leads Deleuze to tacitly multiply the analytic strata that compose the concept of the event itself. We believe that it is possible to identify here the physical, ontological, temporal, and modal levels.

It is very significant that from the moment Deleuze explicitly introduces a theory of strata—which one finds only in *A Thousand Plateaus* (in *The Logic of Sense* this theory is only implicit)—he is then able to think the specific stratum of the event: he will define it as the taking of a territory from milieus. However, to designate this stratum, Deleuze will no longer use the concept of the event, but as we shall see, the concept of the *assemblage*. This concept does not exist in *The Logic of Sense*, nor could it exist. It belongs to the universe of a philosophy of Nature that Deleuze only inaugurates with *Anti-Oedipus*. And if the concept of the event returns in *Dialogues*, after having been abandoned in *Anti-Oedipus* and *Kafka*, it’s in order to respond to problems inscribed in the concept of the assemblage, not in order to take up again the universe of the theory of sense and the fantasy of *The Logic of Sense*.<sup>10</sup> Let’s look at the strata of the event in *The Logic of Sense*.

Although the theory of the event from the outset is grounded in the question of the mode of existence of sense, Deleuze introduces the concept of the event through its physical dimension.<sup>11</sup> The event is the product of relations that things establish among themselves; it is the result, the product, of the effect of affections that bodies produce among one another. Yet, as effect of a corporeal cause, the event is not corporeal but incorporeal. The question of the event is thus displaced toward that of the incorporeal. Deleuze formulates it in various ways. The incorporeal is “the logical or dialectical attribute” of things, “the verb,” “the impassive,” that is, “the result of actions and passion,” and it is also the infinite, “unlimited Aion, the becoming which divides itself infinitely in past and future and always eludes the present” (LS 4–5). The

incorporeal has no being, properly speaking. It “subsists” or “insists” in bodies and on their surface. This nonexistence or subsistence on the surface of being explains why “incorporeal effects are never themselves causes in relation to each other; rather, they are only ‘quasi-causes’ following laws which perhaps express in each case the relative unity or mixture of bodies on which they depend for their real causes” (LS 6). Deleuze conceives of corporeal causes as real, but when he considers incorporeal causes, “quasi-causes,” he conceives of them as “unreal,” “ideal,” and “fictive.” Likewise, as concerns the relations among incorporeal events. As Deleuze writes, “events [. . .] enter the relations of quasi-causality, unreal causality” (LS 33; trans. modified). Hence, double causality. “The event is subject to a double causality, referring on one hand to mixtures of bodies which are its cause and, on the other, to other events which are its quasi-cause” (LS 94). This double causality expresses the essential duality between the corporeal dimension (things and causes) and the incorporeal dimension (events and effects). The corporeal reality produces incorporeal unreality.

On this stratum, the event must be analyzed in its surface position. The surface is at once the product of the actions and passions of mixed bodies and the site of a quasi-cause, of a superficial energy that exists only through the surface and on the surface. And this quasi-cause is a metaphysical surface. “There is therefore an entire physics of surfaces as the effect of deep mixtures. [. . .] And, to the physics of surfaces a metaphysical surface necessarily corresponds” (LS 125).<sup>12</sup> The event here is a metaphysical surface, but a metaphysical surface which, rather than being a foundation, is only the product of a corporeal physical reality.

The event is double. It is at once the incorporeal as the manner of being of things and the corporeal as effectuation in things. The event is at once surface effect and principle of production, as the expressed of the proposition. It is at once condition and effect. Furthermore, this duality is prolonged in time. This is the duality of Chronos, which concerns bodies, and Aion, which concerns the incorporeal event.<sup>13</sup> From the ontological point of view, the central problem is that of the determination of the event as singularity. It’s a matter of thinking what makes it such that an event is one, that is, unique, singular, and not a reflection of multiple events as pure repetitions. Deleuze differentiates singularity, first, from a state of things designated by a proposition, and then from the personality of the individual who expresses him/herself in a discourse, and finally, from the generality or the universality of the concept. The singularity “is essentially pre-individual, non-personal, and a-conceptual” (LS 52).<sup>14</sup> The singularity is the expression of the neutrality or indifference regarding the three dimensions of the proposition, and, hence, of specification. This neutrality of the event corresponds to the neutrality of sense itself—that is, it corresponds

to the fact that the event and sense are independent from consciousness and the relation between bodies.

If events are singularities, singularities are events. But they are events that provide the condition of all other events, in which case “Singularities are the true transcendental events” (LS 102–3). Singularities are the ultimate conditions, not of possibility, but of the actuality [*effectivité*] of states of things. True, Deleuze claims to break with the thought that brings identity into that which is founded [*le fondé*]. He wants to think outside the dichotomy originary/derived and condition/conditioned. In its place, Deleuze thinks an “ungrounded [*effondré*, ‘collapsed’], informal chaos,” or “transcendental field.”<sup>15</sup> These transcendental events are the background of all individuation; they are the surface, the milieu of difference.<sup>16</sup> Hence, it’s a matter of a field that is constructed on the metaphysical surface of events. The transcendental field of singularities is a preindividual, a-subjective, unconscious, and impersonal field.<sup>17</sup> It is a field where singularities not only are on an unconscious surface, but they are themselves nomadic, that is, they have an immanent principle of autounification and mobility.<sup>18</sup> These singularities are anonymous because they are removed, free from every form of identity. They are in a nomadic and anonymous field.

As preindividual and impersonal—that is, as distinct from the individual, the person—singularities are intensive quanta or intensities constituted by resonant differences.<sup>19</sup> Singularities, by being intensives, are differential elements that are always related to other differences. It’s in this sense that Deleuze considers singularities as a collective impersonal subject, the fourth person, or the splendor of *one*. This neutrality of the singularities presides over differentiation, over actualization—in short, over the genesis of individuals and persons.<sup>20</sup>

Deleuze shows that the singularity is transcendental and at the same time anonymous through the concept of the virtual.<sup>21</sup> The virtual is the transcendental element, when it forms part of the conditions of actuality [*effectivité*]. The virtual is already present, as condition, in the real. However, once rid of its effective reality, the virtual acquires a new reality. It acquires (as event) a *nonexistent reality*.<sup>22</sup> Deleuze also calls it a crystal. “Everything happens at the surface in a crystal which develops only on the edges” (LS 103). We thus see that one of the images of the event is the crystal. As Deleuze states, “events are like crystals, they become and grow only out of the edges, or on the edge” (LS 9).<sup>23</sup>

This equivalence between the event and the crystal affords us a new understanding of the event. For Deleuze, the crystal is also the image of time. It expresses the splitting between the present and the past. Or rather time doubles itself in the past and present, or again time doubles the present in two different directions: the past and the future.<sup>24</sup> Time as event, the event as nonorganic



life, the three as crystals. Given that time doubles itself, the event itself is “never present, but always already in the past and yet to come” (LS 136).<sup>25</sup>

The singularity is this crystal of neutrality that is not yet personal, which is a personality to come. The singularity, however, is different in nature from the personalities that it creates. Thus, one understands that singularities “preside over the genesis of individuals and persons; they are distributed in a ‘potential’ which admits neither Self nor I, but which produces them by actualizing or realizing itself, although the figures of this actualization do not at all resemble the realized potential” (LS 103). Consciousness, sendentarianism, individualism, finally, the personal characteristics of individuality, are all moments of actuality [*effectivité*] in consciousness and of an “I.” To Kant Deleuze opposes Nietzsche, who also wants to conceive of a world of impersonal and pre-individual singularities, “a world he then called Dionysian or of the will to power, a free and unbound energy. These are nomadic singularities which are no longer imprisoned within the fixed individuality of the infinite Being (the notorious immutability of God), nor inside the sedentary boundaries of the finite subject (the notorious limits of knowledge)” (LS 107).<sup>26</sup> Nietzsche is our era’s founder of this Stoic discourse, the discourse of the event itself.<sup>27</sup>

We may now recapitulate the five aspects that characterize the transcendental field, the field of singularities-events: (1) “singularities-events correspond to heterogeneous series which are organized into a system which is neither stable nor unstable, but rather ‘metastable,’ endowed with a potential energy” (LS 103). The transcendental field is thus a doubly heterogeneous system. It is not only potential energy, that is, the genesis of differences between any actualization, but it is also metastable, that is, process of individuation; (2) “singularities possess a process of auto-unification, always mobile and displaced” (LS 103). This process of auto-unification is made possible by the paradoxical element which, traversing the series, makes them resonate; (3) “singularities or potentials haunt the surface” (LS 103). The inverse of the organism, where there is always the duality interior/exterior, at the surface the interior is in contact with the exterior space. The surface is like a skin, a membrane where this contact takes place. The process of individuation is superficial, in this sense, “the deepest is the skin”; (4) “the surface is the locus of *sense* [ . . . ] this world of sense, with its events-singularities, offers a neutrality which is essential to it” (LS 104). Sense is anterior to every actualization and to every determination. Sense is neutral, it has no direction; and (5) “this world of sense has a *problematic* status” (LS 104). It is not possible to deduce its nature from its existence. As neutral and superficial, sense is undetermined.

The singularity of the event is inscribed directly in its temporality. The event is in time through its singularity, and in the surface of time through

its neutrality. This double condition is the consequence of the itself-double condition of time. Time always has two readings. The past, the present, and the future are not three dimensions of a single time, but rather two different readings of time. “On one hand, the always limited present, which measures the action of bodies as causes and the state of their mixtures in depth (Chronos); on the other, the essentially unlimited past and future, which gather incorporeal events, at the surface, as effects (Aion)” (LS 61). The present of Chronos is corporeal, as the time of corporeal mixtures, the time, and the process of incorporation.<sup>28</sup> The past and the future are thus the dimension of the passivity of bodies. As time of incorporation, the present is limited; it is the delimitation of bodies and their actions. But it is also infinite, circular, “in the sense that it encompasses every present, begins anew, and measures off a new cosmic period after the preceding one, which may be identical to the preceding one” (LS 163). As time of incorporation, Chronos is the time of the depths.

The measure of Chronos is Aion, the time of surfaces, as the plane of singularities. In this time, the past and the future are the only temporal dimensions that insist or subsist. “Always already passed and eternally yet to come, Aion is the eternal truth of time: *pure empty form of time*” (LS 165).<sup>29</sup> The differences between the two times are numerous, all founded on the Deleuzian premise according to which “nothing ascends to the surface without changing in nature” (LS 165). First, Chronos expresses the dimension of bodies, their actions, and their corporeal qualities, whereas Aion expresses the dimension of incorporeal events and their attributes: “the *attribute* does not designate any real *quality*” (LS 5). Second, Chronos is the field of causality and the (full) form of bodies, such that bodies fill it as its cause and its matter, whereas Aion is the void, empty form [*la forme vide*] haunted only by effects. Third, Chronos is limited and infinite as the now, whereas Aion is unlimited as past and future, and finite as the instant. Finally, Chronos is circular and the site of accidents, whereas Aion is a straight line and unlimited in both directions (see LS 164–6). Chronos avoids the present with the force of the now, and Aion with the power/capacity of an instant. The event is never present because it is a now and an instant. Its neutrality and its singularity aptly suggest its avoidance of the present. The entire line of Aion is traversed by the instant, which “is endlessly displaced on this line and is always missing from its own place” (LS 166). For its part, the instant extracts singularities from the present, singular points projected into the future and the past, that is, forming the pure event.<sup>30</sup> It is through this double reading of time that Deleuze explains the double character of the event, the fact that the event is always said in the future, by an impersonal community, but as past. Here is the virtuality of the event: it is found only as lost—it exists only as regained [*retrouvé*].

The event is the incorporeality of things; it is the nonbeing of things. However, it is constitutive of things, because it is their manner of being, their mode of being. But this modality of the being of things is only superficial, it is not, and it subsists only at the limit of being. In fact, the event as modality of being cannot change the nature of being because it is only the effect of being. The event does not trace back to the same dimension as being. It subsists only on the surface of being, which makes the event a nonbeing. “The event, for its part, must have one and the same modality, in both future and past, in line with which it divides its presence *ad infinitum*. If the event is possible in the future and real in the past, it is necessary that it be both at once, since it is divided in them at the same time” (LS 33). It thus follows that the event has no present as such, that is, that it never subsists or insists as a present. It is always a past or a future to come. For this reason, it is virtual, that is, to be actualized.

Its actualization determines the modal condition of the event. Hence, Deleuze does not define the modality of the event as necessity (which would imply the use of the principle of the contradiction of future contingents), but as fatalism. The event is thus “neither possible, nor real, nor necessary, yet fated” (LS 34). A strange modality, this “fated” [*fatal*]. It derives from a paradox that is found throughout the definition of the reality of the event. The event cannot be defined as real, as possible, or as necessary. According to Kant’s classification of modalities, no other solution remains. Deleuze thus defined as “virtual” this modality he described in the Proust book, in the Bergson book, and above in *Difference and Repetition*. The virtual is outside the possible and thus outside Kant’s trinity of the possible/real/necessary. Why present the event as “fated”? Doesn’t the event already signify the virtual?

After having defined the event as fated as opposed to necessary, Deleuze seems to affirm a second definition: the impossible. Hence, one must think in terms of three beings. “If we distinguish two sorts of beings, the being of the real as the matter of denotations and the being of the possible as the form of significations, we must yet add this extra-being which defines a minimum common to the real, the possible *and the impossible*. For the principle of contradiction is applied to the possible and to the real, but *not* to the impossible” (LS 35). Deleuze says that “impossible objects [. . .] are of ‘extra being’—pure, ideational events, unable to be realized in a state of affairs” (LS 35). But this contradiction, this affirmation of both a fatalism and an impossibility, is only apparent. In truth, Deleuze is in the process of defining two dimensions of the event: that of actuality [*effectivité*], or possibility, and that of inactuality [*ineffectivité*], or impossibility. The event may or may not be effectuated, be effectuated in a state of things, and it is its actuality [*effectivité*] or inactuality [*ineffectivité*] that determines its modality. But does noneffectuation

correspond to inactuality [*ineffectivité*]? Can the noneffectuation of the event be deduced from its impossibility?

There is still a distinction to be made in the citation given earlier. In saying “pure ideal unrealizable events” [*purs événements idéaux ineffectuables*, translated as “pure, ideational events, unable to be realized”] (LS 35), Deleuze is in the process of affirming that actuality [*effectivité*] is part of the field of reality, and that inactuality [*ineffectivité*] is part of the field of ideality. He is thus in the process of making a second opposition, this time between reality/actuality [*effectivité*] and ideality/inactuality [*ineffectivité*]. All that is not actual [*effectif*] is ideal. How, then, explain the affirmation according to which “impossible entities are ‘extra-existents,’ reduced to this minimum, and insisting as such in the proposition” (LS 35)? Must we conceive of events as being always impossible, since they are also extra-beings and since they also insist in the proposition? Are there real impossibles? Are there levels of the real and “minimums” of impossibility? Deleuze thinks the ideal as real. However, the actuality [*effectivité*] of the event seems to be very different from the event itself. Better, it doesn’t seem to be a dimension of the event but a dimension apart, distinct from the event. It seems to characterize another dimension, as if actuality [*effectivité*] and the event were both dimensions in themselves. In fact, Deleuze affirms that “The distinction however is not between two sorts of events; rather, it is between the event, which is ideal by nature, and its spatio-temporal realization [*effectuation*] in a state of affairs. The distinction is between the *event* and the *accident*” (LS 53). The effectuation of the event does not define the modality of the event, but changes the nature of the event itself. It’s only in this way Deleuze can say that “Events are ideal” (LS 53).

The problem of the modal condition of the event seems to be resolved when Deleuze returns in *The Logic of Sense* to the Husserlian solution offered in *Difference and Repetition*. He defines the mode of the event, starting from Kant, as problematic: “The mode of the event is the problematic” (LS 54). But the problematic is defined ontologically as Husserl had done in *Logical Investigations*: as ideality. “The problematic is both an objective category of knowledge and a perfectly objective kind of being. ‘Problematic’ qualifies precisely the ideal objectivities” (LS 54). Ideality goes back to the concept of a single and same ideal event. Deleuze thus must distinguish between an event and the Event. “If the singularities are veritable events, they communicate in one and the same Event which endlessly redistributes them” (LS 53). Also, “the instance-problem and the instance-solution differ in nature—as they represent respectively the ideal event and its spatio-temporal realization [*effectuation*]” (LS 54). But why say that events are ideal rather than saying the single Event is ideal, when events are the effectuation of the Event? Is the Event the “horizon” of events?

There are many questions surrounding the theory of the event that are not completely clarified in *The Logic of Sense*. Thus, it's not surprising that the concept of the event is totally missing in *Anti-Oedipus*. And it's not surprising that a new metaphysics of sense appears in *Kafka*, which centers, not on the event, but on the assemblage.

### *The Individuation of Assemblages*

As was the case for the concept of the event, the most decisive question within the concept of the assemblage is that concerning individuation. Deleuze and Guattari return to the concept of the “haecceity,” already elaborated upon in regard to Duns Scotus and Spinoza in *Difference and Repetition*. But, because of this return, the concept of the assemblage becomes progressively absorbed by that of the event.

Alogical sequences, rhizomatic multiplicities—the only modes of individuation that this plane admits of—are haecceities, that is, singularities, rhizomatic multiplicities, and concrete individuations that govern the metamorphosis of things and subjects, or, as Deleuze says, “subjectless individuations [*individuations sans sujet*]” (ATP 266). The only modes of individuation on the plane of immanence are longitude and latitude: “Nothing develops, but things arrive late or early, and form this or that assemblage depending on their compositions of speed. Nothing subjectifies, but haecceities form according to compositions of nonsubjectified powers [*puissances*] or affects. We call this plane, which knows only longitudes and latitudes, speeds and haecceities, the plane of consistency or composition (as opposed to the plan(e) of organization or development)” (ATP 266). The plane of immanence or consistency acts via the middle, consolidates, produces consistency, is populated by particles, “anonymous matter, [. . .] infinite bits of impalpable matter entering into varying connections” (ATP 255). This anonymous matter is not a dead, homogeneous matter. On the contrary, it is an intensive matter, living, in movement. This plane “is permeated by unformed, unstable matters, by flows in all directions, by free intensities or nomadic singularities, by mad or transitory particles” (ATP 40).

Deleuze and Guattari distinguish two fundamental modes of individuation: that of a body—according to its form and the ensemble of material elements that belong to it under relations of movement and rest, speed, and slowness—and that of an entirely different reality which, possessing a perfect individuality, is neither a thing nor a subject. This second mode they call “haecceity.” Example: “A season, a winter, a summer, an hour, a date” (ATP 261). How can one determine the haecceity without reducing it to the simple environment [*décor*] of things and subjects, to the simple inscription of its movements in the framework of time and space? The answer first goes

through the concept of the assemblage. The haecceity has the reality of the assemblage, and every assemblage is individuated as a haecceity. “It should not be thought that a haecceity consists simply of a décor or backdrop that situates subjects, or of appendages that hold things and people to the ground. It is the entire assemblage in its individuated aggregate that is a haecceity; it is this assemblage that is defined by a longitude and a latitude, by speeds and affects, independently of forms and subjects, which belong to another plane” (ATP 262).

What exists is, for example, the assemblage, “the street” that “enters into composition with the horse,” the “dying rat” that “enters into composition with the air,” or again, “the beast and the full moon” that “enter into composition with each other” (ATP 262). Thus, as Deleuze and Guattari say, it’s as a single element that one must read: “the animal-stalks-at-five-o’clock” (ATP 263). Or, “The street is as much a part of the omnibus-horse assemblage as the Hans assemblage the becoming-horse of which it initiates” (ATP 263). What exists or subsists is not the horse, the street, Hans, but the assemblage *becoming-horse-of-Hans-in-the-street*, and its individuality as the reality of the haecceity. The concept of the assemblage, thus, finds in this dimension of the haecceity its highest force of explication of the fundamental condition of the singularity that constitutes the earth. The assemblage is the ultimate reality of the World from the point of view of the haecceity.<sup>31</sup>

We must now return to the question of the relation between the concepts of the assemblage and the event. As we have seen, the theory of the assemblage, first elaborated on the basis of a theory of the collective enunciation in *Kafka* and systematically developed only in *A Thousand Plateaus* in the framework of a philosophy of Nature, is formulated in a fashion totally independent of the concept of the event. It thus seems inexplicable that, starting in *Dialogues*, Deleuze presents these concepts as being almost equivalent. The moment has come to look anew at this 1977 book.

### THE THREE PLATEAUS OF THE RELATION ASSEMBLAGE/EVENT

#### *Events as What Is Put in Play by Statements Produced by Assemblages*

In *Dialogues*, Deleuze begins by presenting the event as something belonging to an ontology of the incorporeal. And this ontology he explicitly takes from his reading of the Stoics. He scrupulously summarizes, almost line by line, *The Logic of Sense*. It is in this fashion that the event is introduced as the “incorporeal vapor” that rises from bodies, that “surveys” [*survole*] them, the

“metaphysical surface” of things as their attribute, as a result, effect of actions and passions among bodies. But the event is also expressed of a proposition, for (and it is here, according to Deleuze, that we find the force of the Stoics) there is a separation, not between the soul and the body, but between things and events, that is, the proposition belongs to the sphere of the attributes of things. Proposition and attribute are both said of the event (see the section “On the Stoics,” D 62–6). The event as incorporeal effect of things is impassible and unqualifiable; it is the expressed of a verb in the infinitive that refers to states of things.

At the moment of thinking this relation between verbs in the infinitive and events that express them, Deleuze formulates a surprising thesis. These infinitive verbs, which Deleuze also defines as becomings, not only have a relation with events. They refer back to events, but they also are attributed to states of things. And to define these states of things, Deleuze now uses the concept of the assemblage. As Deleuze says, “infinitive-becomings have no subject: they refer only to an ‘it’ of the event (it is raining) and are themselves attributed to states of things which are compounds or collectives, assemblages” (D 64). In *Dialogues*, the assemblage is related to the concept of the state of things. And the event, in the plane of expression, is no longer identical to verbs in the infinitive. The infinitive itself acquires an autonomous ontological status. It appears as an “infinitive-becoming.” Infinitives-becomings—what reality can they have? Neither events nor assemblages, they exist only as a new entity that allows us to think the relation between the event and the assemblage. But one cannot understand why the relation between events and assemblages is not direct. Now, it is no longer events that “are attributed” to assemblages, but only the infinitives-becomings verbs. These infinitives-becomings always look in two directions: they refer [*renvoient*] and, at the same time, they are attributed, that is, they refer to events and they are attributed to assemblages. Suddenly, we find a triple reality: infinitives-becomings, events, and assemblages.<sup>32</sup> Infinitives simultaneously bring together the sphere of events and the sphere of assemblages. Events constitute that part of the real to which infinitives refer [*renvoient*] and of which the assemblages are the reality to which they are attributed. And they cannot be attributed to assemblages without their being, at the same time, referred to ideal events. These are the ideal realities that bring together, in things, the assemblages to which infinitives are attributed.

The confusion grows when Deleuze introduces the question of the effectuation of events. He says that events are effectuated in other things. And among things, he includes assemblages. As he says, in regard to contemporary science, “Scientists are more and more concerned with singular events, of an incorporeal nature, which are effected in bodies, in states of bodies, incompletely heterogeneous assemblages” (D 67). Here is a true ontological

progression in the relation event/assemblage. Events begin by being defined by what one says of assemblages, and then, they are described as that incorporeal dimension in which statements in the form of the infinitive refer [*renvoient*] in such a way as to be attributed to assemblages, in order to become, finally, from the point of view of effectuation, the mode of existence of assemblages.

This equivocity of the ties between the event and the assemblage is not exhausted, in *Dialogues*, with this drift which, while making the assemblage a correlate of the speaking of events, goes all the way to designating the assemblage itself as the effectuation of events. The format of the mini-encyclopedia of Deleuze's corpus that traverses *Dialogues* renders this equivocity less blurry. Indeed, after the rehearsal of the theory of the event, after this return to the landscapes of *The Logic of Sense*, Deleuze turns to the question of the nature of the assemblage. And as in Kafka, this question will be pursued via a new approach to literature. Deleuze dedicates the last pages of this chapter on the superiority of Anglo-American literature to the question, "what is an assemblage?" He begins by telling us that the assemblage has two faces: one of the states of things, of states of bodies; the other of statements [*énoncés*], regimes of statements.<sup>33</sup> But what truly defines the assemblage is the unity of its two faces. The assemblage is the "co-functioning," "symbiosis," and "alliance" among these parts. "Utterances, no less than states of things, are components and cog-wheels in the assemblage. There is no base or superstructure in an assemblage. [. . .] Utterances are not content to describe corresponding states of things: these are rather, as it were, two non-parallel formalizations, the formalization of expression and the formalization of content" (D 71). The assemblage functions at once as a formalization of expression, on the side of statements, and as a formalization of content, and on the side of states of things. Statements and states of things are thus like a single and same cog-wheel of the machine-assemblage, but distinguished by their formalization: expression or content.

However, at the moment he explains the unity of the statement and content as the unity of that which the statement says and the attribute of states of bodies, Deleuze introduces anew the concept of the event as this single and same plane that simultaneously assembles [*agence*] signs and bodies, statements, and attributes. "One is only assembling signs and bodies as heterogeneous components of the same machine. The only unity derives from the fact that one and the same function, one and the same 'functive,' is the expressed of the utterance and the attribute of the state of body: an event which stretches out or contracts, a becoming in the infinitive" (D 71). In *Dialogues*, there is a single and same thing that is the expressed and the attribute, that is the expressed of the statement and the attribute of states of things. But what could this unique thing be? Surprising response: an event, but an event now



presented as a synonym of infinitive-becoming, or the “becoming-infinitive [*devenir à l’infinitif*]” as Deleuze here formulates it.

At this point we see the earlier ontological tripartition fall apart. It’s no longer a matter of a becoming in the infinitive that refers to the incorporeal event as its ideal sense, and which is attributed to the assemblage as its referent or its denotation. It’s becoming in the infinitive itself that is the event and the two are a single and same “functive,” at once the expressed and the attribute. The fundamental unity of the two faces of the assemblage, the unity of the expressed and content, depends, thus, on the introduction of the concept of the event. With, however, a radical change in its status, the event is now presented as identical to the reality of the infinitive-becoming. From three ontological terms, Deleuze moves to two: (a) assemblages and (b) events/becomings in the infinitive that are the expressed of the statement and that are attributed to assemblages.

We find the same ontological reduction a few pages later, no longer in the chapter on Anglo-American literature, but in the chapter on psychoanalysis. Deleuze denounces the way psychoanalysis impedes the formation of statements. Against the reduction that psychoanalysis performs on the chapters of a biography of individuals, of things, or of fantasies, Deleuze proposes a concept of “life” edified by the concept of the assemblage. And he makes a double presentation of this concept. From the point of view of their content, assemblages that make up a life are collective bodies, like packs or tribes. From the point of view of their expression, they handle forms of language that refer to determined, differentiated, though impersonal realities, in the group in which one finds events. It’s worth reading the entire passage. “Assemblages—in their content—are populated by becomings and intensities, by intensive circulations, by various multiplicities (packs, masses, species, races, populations, tribes . . .). And in their expression, assemblages handle indefinite articles or pronouns which are not at all indeterminate (‘a’ tummy, ‘some’ people, ‘one’ hits ‘a’ child . . .)—verbs in the infinitive which are not undifferentiated but which mark processes (to walk, to kill, to love . . .)—proper names which are not people but events (they can be groups, animals, entities, singularities, collectives, everything that is written with a capital letter, A-HANS-BECOMING-HORSE)” (D 79). Fantastic ontological doubling goes from multiplicities such as packs to collective entities like groups. The first are realities that people assembles. The last are events. As for their content, assemblages are peopled by packs, masses, and populations. In their expression, assemblages utilize, or “handle,” linguistic elements that are at once indefinite, infinitive, and impersonal. As Deleuze stresses, assemblages are said with indefinite articles or pronouns like “a” belly, with verbs in the infinitive, like “to walk,” and with impersonal proper nouns, like collectives, like groups,

or like collective singularities—which are like the paradigmatic sequence A-HANS-BECOMING-HORSE.

Events belong to the limit of the scale. They are that which is said, not with indefinite pronouns, not with verbs in the infinitive, but with proper names. They are distinguished from the collective “some” people and from the infinitive like “to walk.” But above all, Deleuze indicates that they are distinguished from assemblages, which are peopled by collectives like populations or tribes. And yet, the question remains: what is the difference between the assemblage in its content, as pack, and the assemblage in its expression, as event? How may we distinguish the reality of the assemblage “pack” from that, for example, of the event “group”? Furthermore, if we take into consideration the fact that the example of an event given in *Dialogues*—“A-HANS-BECOMING-HORSE”—is presented in *A Thousand Plateaus* as the instance, not of the event, but of an assemblage, we must thus admit that the boundary between the event and the assemblage is absolutely absent.<sup>34</sup>

It is thus very significant not only that Deleuze recapitulates his approach to the Stoics in the second part of his chapter on literature, but also that this recapitulation is itself made in two moments, one where it’s a matter of thinking the event, the other the assemblage. It’s as if Deleuze, while considering literature as a matter of the individuation specific to the haecceity, recognized that this mode of individuation is not always the same throughout his work and wavers between the event and the assemblage.

This can only be seen as a tentative conceptual articulation, since it may arise simply from the format of this dialogue with Claire Parnet. Deleuze speaks of all of his books with someone who seeks consistencies, lines of continuity, and internal harmonies in his oeuvre. The book thus moves, with the swiftness of a bird, from Nietzsche to Lewis Carroll, from Spinoza to Freud, from Hume to Lawrence, or from literature to the analysis of singular propositions. Everything resonates, and everything is in dialogue. In none of these cases does Deleuze introduce any innovation. When he looks at the work behind him, he only recapitulates it. In other words, *Dialogues*, from beginning to end, is a book on the assemblage—which is interrupted only at the moment it is related to *The Logic of Sense*. But, how can we explain the naivete of wanting to conjoin the physics of assemblages with the ontology of events?

If in *Dialogues* this rapprochement of such distant theoretical universes is read as the effect of a retrospective illusion of unity in his works, one cannot say the same of *A Thousand Plateaus*. There, the return to the ontology of the event plays a decisive role within the physics of assemblages. In three determinant moments, the Stoic theory of incorporeals responds to theoretical problems that are related to the central program of *A Thousand Plateaus*. The first concerns the ontological foundation of the pragmatics of

assemblages of enunciation. When Deleuze and Guattari want to think the status of transformations in the real produced by assemblages of enunciation, they have recourse to the solution of *The Logic of Sense*, where the sense or the expressed of a proposition is not signification, designation, or manifestation, but the incorporeal event on the surface of bodies and their mixtures. The pragmatic transformations produced by statements are presented in *A Thousand Plateaus* as incorporeal events inserted into the things to which they are attributed. The sense of the statement, instead of being simply the expressed of the event, thus finds a strange physical efficacy, really affecting the things that it speaks.

The second moment is found in the chapter “Becoming-Intense, Becoming-Animal, Becoming-Imperceptible,” in the section “Memories of a Haecceity.” The central question of this section is that of the modes of individuation that are not reducible to those of a person, a subject, a thing, or a substance. This is the case of realities such as a season, a winter, an hour, and a pack. Deleuze and Guattari call these modes of individuation “haecceities,” thus taking up a key concept of Duns Scotus, who created it, as they recall in a note, not from the word “ecce” (behold), but from “haec” (this thing). They begin by distinguishing between haecceities of assemblages and interassemblage haecceities. But, at a certain point in their exposition, every haecceity is thought of as an assemblage. The problem emerges at the moment that an assemblage is detached from a singular type: that which disengages an event. There, as we have stressed, we fall into complete obscurity regarding the nature of a haecceity.

In *A Thousand Plateaus* Deleuze once again condenses the three dimensions of the relation assemblage/event: (a) that which produces incorporeal transformations as attributes of things, in “Postulates of Linguistics”; (b) that of the mode of individuation of the haecceity in the chapter on becomings; and (c) that of vagabond essences in “Treatise of Nomadology: The War Machine.”

### *A Realist Pragmatics*

In “Postulates of Linguistics,” the definition of the concept of the assemblage as collective assemblage of enunciation is drawn up with an enormous ambiguity. The refutation of the first postulate of linguistics, that is, that language is informational and communicational, starts with the affirmation that the order word is the only component of language. All language is commandment, the issuing of orders. Language codifies the world, bodies, and actions. And Deleuze and Guattari offer the concept of the assemblage to take into account this exchange between words and things as production of effects of language on things and bodies.

Deleuze and Guattari want to think an immanent theory of language where language is first the relation of something spoken [*un dit*] to something else spoken [*un autre dit*], rather than the relation of something spoken to things. Although content and expression each have a form and a substance, and although they are extrinsic heterogeneities, they are thought as an immanent relation, in reciprocal presupposition. The assemblage is the sphere of synthesis between language and the world and between expression and content. From the perspective of something spoken to something else spoken, the assemblage takes on a central role: it appears as protocol, as instance of the effectuation of the conditions of language in a given social field.

The collective assemblage of enunciation allows the affirmation of a theory of collective and social enunciation as positive (without lack) process of production that operates in the real. Deleuze and Guattari defend a politics inherent in every statement. The statement is not the result of an individual faculty but the product of the social machine. Every statement expresses the connection [*branchement*, “plugging in”] of the individual with the social. The collective assemblage of enunciation is the expression of a social collectivity; it is thus the enunciation of a machinic and impersonal *it*, free indirect discourse. However, as expression of a group, of a collectivity, the assemblage is not a double of the subject, and it is not the subject of the statement of a supposed empirical subject of enunciation. The assemblage is the very expression of the effectuation of language in a social field in a collectivity. It is the expression of the immanence of language within a collectivity. Deleuze and Guattari thus replace the figure of the subjectivity that speaks in words, to designate the world, with the collective assemblage of enunciation that functions in the world, that expresses the world in its immanence, in its relation of reciprocal presupposition with words.<sup>35</sup>

The concept of the assemblage of enunciation condenses a key aspect of the pragmatics of language. Deleuze and Guattari define it in a multiple fashion, along two axes. According to the first, horizontal axis, the assemblage has a segment of content, where it is the machinic assemblage of the body, of actions and passions, and a segment of expression, where it is the collective assemblage of enunciation and of statements and acts. The assemblage is, in terms of content, nondiscursive, in terms of expression, and discursive. According to the vertical axis, the assemblage has on one hand territorial sides, which stabilize it, and on the other, points of deterritorialization that carry it away. The collective assemblage of enunciation is thus one of the four faces of the assemblage, that which corresponds to the horizontal axis, and on that axis, at the level of expression.<sup>36</sup>

As production of effects, the assemblage has an illocutionary dimension. Deleuze and Guattari present it as the ensemble of effects on the bodies of participants in language actions. These transformations are incorporeal. The

example provided is the transformation of the accused into the convicted, and this attribute is the effect of the expressed of the sentence.<sup>37</sup> Incorporeal attributes are the instantaneous product or effect of statements. However, at the moment of classifying the assemblage in its pragmatic dimension as that which produces effects on things, Deleuze and Guattari consider it according to these same attributes, that is, as the ontological dimension of incorporeal transformations of things. Certainly, the statement and its effects are instantaneous and simultaneous. But this doesn't mean that they are a single and same thing. On the contrary, the incorporeal effects are the product of statements, the consequence in bodies of a discursive act of speaking [*un dit du discours*].

The entire problem thus occurs because Deleuze and Guattari want to include, within the collective assemblage of enunciation, the incorporeal transformation that order words produce in bodies. On one hand, they say that the real definition of the collective assemblage is “the set of all *incorporeal transformations* current in a given society and *attributed* to the bodies of that society” (ATP 80). This means that the assemblage produces transformations which, although incorporeal, are attributed to bodies. These transformations become incorporeal properties of bodies and no longer properties of statements. In fact, in the example of the sentence of a magistrate who transforms an accused into a convicted individual, the sentence, as language act, produces incorporeal transformations that affect the body of the convicted, transforming him or her precisely into a convicted person. The property of the convicted is an incorporeal. However, on the other hand, Deleuze and Guattari at the same time claim to reduce the reality of this transformation to the condition of the expressed of the statement. Incorporeal properties don't seem to go beyond the reality of statements that they produce at the moment they are attributed to bodies where they pass into existence as incorporeals. This ambiguity is most flagrant when, at the end of this same page, one reads, “the incorporeal transformation is recognizable by its instantaneousness, its immediacy, by the simultaneity of the statement expressing the transformation and the effect the transformation produces” (ATP 81).

So, we ask: Is the incorporeal transformation different from the effect produced by the statement that expresses it? Is there, outside the incorporeal transformation, another effect of the statement, another product of the collective assemblage of enunciation? Deleuze and Guattari, at the same time that they recognize an effect on bodies that is produced by the statement, want to preserve this effect as immanent to the statement, in saying that the incorporeal transformation is only the expressed of the statement. They speak of an effect on bodies, of a production of enunciation, but they do not want to admit that this effect is the set of incorporeal attributes that the bodies acquire. This equivocation is clearly present when they ask: “What incorporeal transformation is expressed by these dates, incorporeal yet attributed to

bodies, inserted into them?" (ATP 86–7). Here, they play on a triple register: (a) expression; (b) attribution; and (c) the insertion of attributes into bodies. Incorporeal transformations are, first, properties of statements as their expressed; then, attributions to bodies as effects or products of statements; and, finally, they are inserted into bodies, and effectuated in them. Deleuze and Guattari thus recognize that the relation between the statement and bodies is made on several strata. This relation goes from the expression of incorporeal transformations to the attribution of these transformations to bodies and from the attribution to bodies to the insertion of these transformations into them. Incorporeals are thus inserted into bodies, at the same time as they are expressed in statements and attributed to statements.

What Deleuze and Guattari thus must be saying is that the collective assemblage of enunciation instantaneously expresses the machinic assemblage, as incorporeal transformation of bodies. The collective assemblage produces incorporeal transformations in the act itself of enunciating. And this act of enunciating simultaneously produces effects in bodies. The statement at the same time produces and expresses the attribute, because the attribute is produced instantaneously as incorporeal property in the body in which it is inserted. Hence, there are three instantaneous but distinct dimensions: a performative, that of order words; an illocutionary, that of transformation that language produces in bodies; and a third, ontological, that of incorporeal properties of bodies affected by order words. And yet, acts of enunciation and statements, and even, incorporeal transformations, are all put together in an undifferentiated fashion, as simple properties of the collective assemblage of enunciation.

Deleuze and Guattari seem to take a nominalist position in regard to incorporeal attributes, in regard to transformations of bodies produced by assemblages of enunciation. To reduce attributes to the condition of the expressed is to reduce incorporeals to the content of a statement. But we know that such a nominalism was totally rejected by Deleuze in *The Logic of Sense*, precisely as regards the ontological status of incorporeals. In *A Thousand Plateaus*, in order to reinforce this rejection of nominalism, Deleuze and Guattari explicitly return to this Stoic doctrine of incorporeals. What's more, at the moment they explicate the nature of transformations produced by statements, they again take up the concept of the "event." And they take it up in what would be its Stoic purity. "The Stoics were the first to theorize this independence: they distinguished between the actions and passions of bodies (using the word 'body' in the broadest sense, as applying to any formed content) and incorporeal acts (the 'expressed' of the statements). The form of expression is constituted by the warp of expressed, and the form of content by the woof of bodies. When the knife cuts flesh, when food or poison spreads through the body, when a drop of wine falls into water, there is an *intermingling of*

*bodies*, but the statements, ‘The knife is cutting the flesh,’ ‘I am eating,’ ‘The water is turning red,’ express *incorporeal transformations* of an entirely different nature (events)” (ATP 86).

At the most difficult moment of the ontology of incorporeal transformations produced by assemblages of enunciation, Deleuze and Guattari have recourse to the concept of the event. But the confusion only increases. Are incorporeal transformations provoked by assemblages of enunciation of the same nature as those of which the Stoics speak in *The Logic of Sense*? The transformation produced on the convicted, by the act of language of the magistrate at the moment of the sentence—is it comparable to incorporeal transformations expressed by statements like “the water is turning red” or “I am eating”? Do assemblages of enunciation produce, express, attribute, insert themselves into the bodies of incorporeal transformations, that is, events? If the answer to all these questions is affirmative, the Stoic concept of the event would be understood as the effect of an assemblage of enunciation. In such case, the theory of incorporeals would find a new foundation: the pragmatics of language.

However, Deleuze and Guattari are not concerned by the need of a foundation for the Stoic theory of the event. It’s precisely the opposite. They want to take this ontology of incorporeals as the solution to the ontological problems of the pragmatics of collective assemblages of enunciation. The concept of the event of *The Logic of Sense* is peaceful. One understands that the turning red of the water is a reality different from that of mixtures of bodies produced by the drop of wine emptied into the water. The mixture is corporeal, whereas the turning red of the water is incorporeal. One understands that Deleuze calls this an “event.” It’s the passage of the condition of the accused to that of the convicted through the sentence of the magistrate that causes the problem. Is it of the same ontological order as the turning red of the water through the mixture of a drop of wine?

The distinction between the machinic assemblage and the collective assemblage of enunciation indeed goes back to the Stoic difference between the mixture of bodies and incorporeal transformations. And this difference is superimposed on the difference between bodies and events. Furthermore, in order to stress the by no means unique linguistic character of these incorporeal transformations, to leave no ambiguity in the fact that these incorporeals are “of an entirely different nature,” that is, that they are realities independent of the statements that attribute them to bodies, Deleuze and Guattari again invoke the theory of the event of *The Logic of Sense*: “The paradox gets us nowhere unless, like the Stoics, we add that incorporeal transformations, incorporeal attributes, apply to bodies, and only bodies. They are the expressed of statements but are *attributed* to bodies. The purpose is not to describe or represent bodies; bodies already have proper qualities, actions

and passions, souls, in short forms, which are themselves bodies. Representations are bodies too! If incorporeal attributes apply to bodies, if there are good grounds for making a distinction between the incorporeal expressed ‘to become red’ and the corporeal quality ‘red,’ etc., it has nothing to do with representation” (ATP 86). Incorporeal attributes are indeed conceived of according to the model of *The Logic of Sense*. The example is that of “turning red.” It is a transformation of bodies, but an incorporeal transformation. It is attributed to the corporeal quality “red,” but not in order to represent it. For what purpose, then? The response leaves us perplexed. We must follow the text. “In expressing the incorporeal attribute, and by that token attributing it to the body, one is not representing or referring but *intervening* in a way” (ATP 86). What does intervene mean? And how can intervention through assemblages of enunciation produce incorporeal transformations that are inserted into bodies?

Deleuze and Guattari pose this problem to themselves. “But when we use a word as vague as ‘intervene,’ when we say that expressions intervene or insert themselves into contents, are we not still prey to a kind of idealism in which the order-word instantaneously falls from the sky?” (ATP 87). Indeed, isn’t belief that statements produce the real an extreme anti-materialism? To believe that every act of speech is a “fiat,” that every attribution of properties to bodies through an act of language has the effect of real transformations in bodies, isn’t this a sort of biblical creationism? We can only follow Deleuze and Guattari in this fear of a fall into the realist interpretation of the adage, “speaking is doing” of Austin’s pragmatics. But how escape the idealist interpretation of the pragmatics of assemblages of enunciation without at the same time falling into nominalism?

What is new in the physics of assemblages faced with the ontology of events as response to both idealism and nominalism is that assemblages are always enunciations, they are always statements that produce effects in bodies. All assemblages of enunciation are social and political assemblages. In *The Logic of Sense*, bodies are physical bodies that receive transformations, hence events, in relations of action and passion upon one another. The incorporeal is the effect of a body on another body that suffers the action of the first. Bodies are corporeal, actions and passions are incorporeal, and they are events.

In *A Thousand Plateaus* the concept of bodies changes significantly. They are political and social bodies. All the examples present refer to the body of a convict, to the body of passengers on an airplane who, suddenly, are transformed into hostages and whose airplane becomes their prison. *A Thousand Plateaus* does not speak of trees, water, the flesh in contact with the knife, as was the case in *The Logic of Sense*. There are only collective bodies and body-machines, like the ship-machine, hotel-machine, castle-machine,



and tribunal-machine. All are examples of machinic assemblages that are expressed in collective assemblages of enunciation. And Kafka is the most extreme case of the functioning of these body-machines in order to put together the two axes of the assemblage.<sup>38</sup> On the side of bodies, the side of machinic assemblages, there are only actions and passions, and there are only mixtures of bodies reacting to one another. But, then, where are incorporeal transformations, transformations produced by the assemblage of enunciation? Aren't they attributed to bodies? Don't they belong to the domain of actions and passions, in this case, actions and passions that are not corporeal, but incorporeal?

Once again, it is an appeal to the Stoics of *The Logic of Sense* that leads us to the answer. The vague word "intervene" signifies the work of an alternative carving up of the time and space of the content of expression in order to convert it into a production of real transformations of the warp of modifications of things in a continuous becoming. "In expressing the noncorporeal attribute, and by that token attributing it to the body, one is not representing or referring but *intervening* in a way; it is a speech act. The independence of the two kinds of forms, forms of expression and forms of content, is not contradicted but confirmed by the fact that the expressions or expressed are inserted into or intervene in contents, not to represent them but to anticipate them or move them back, slow them down or speed them up, separate or combine them, delimit them in a different way. The warp of the instantaneous transformations is always inserted into the woof of the continuous modifications. (Hence the significance of dates for the Stoics. From what moment can it be said that someone is bald?)" (ATP 87). Deleuze and Guattari believe that they've clarified the vague concept of "intervene" in this paragraph. But the opposite is true.

They begin by saying that to intervene is not to represent contents, but to insert into contents to "delimit in a different way" [*les découper autrement*; "cut them up differently"], that is, to modify them in their expression of time and space, to slow them down or speed them up, or to detach or unite them according to different assemblages. However, the question remains. Do statements intervene in contents alone, when they anticipate, move back, slow down, speed up, separate, or combine? Are incorporeal transformations only modifications of the mode of enunciating the temporality or the spatial carving up of expressed contents? Are we, again, in nominalism, in this case a nominalism of temporal and spatial variations on the expression of a single and same state of things?

The text responds with a double solution. On one hand, Deleuze and Guattari explicitly say that expressions or the expressed are inserted in contents, *intervene* in contents. The entire labor of the modification of temporal and spatial expressions is related solely to contents. However, on the other hand,

this solution cannot satisfy them. Thus, one understands why Deleuze and Guattari formulate a nonnominalist thesis that they can justify, however, only with a wink to the truth of *The Logic of Sense*. As one may see, immediately after the sentence “the expressions or expressed are inserted into or intervene in contents, not to represent them but to anticipate them, or move them back, slow them down or speed them up, separate or combine them, delimit them in a different way [*les découper autrement*],” they declare: “The warp of the instantaneous transformations is always inserted into the woof of the continuous modifications. (Hence the significance of dates for the Stoics. From what moment can it be said that someone is bald?)” (ATP 86). The argument moves from a thesis on the nature of the intervention of expressions in contents, which thesis has as its condition the fact of intervening in contents in such a way as to modify their temporal and spatial form, to a thesis on the insertion of the warp of instantaneous transformations into what they designate “the woof of continuous modifications,” the example of which is the classic Stoic sorites paradox of someone’s becoming bald or of the becoming of “a pile” through a quantitative augmentation that begins with a small number of elements.

The transition from the plane of content (which one may “divide up differently” [*découper autrement*]) to the plane of things themselves (e.g., bald people) is performed with a double equivocity. First, by the displacement of the vague concept “intervene” to that of “insert,” and, in a second moment, by the use of the repeated verb “insert.” On the plane of contents, “to insert” is synonymous with “to intervene.” We read, “expressions or expressed are inserted into or intervene in contents.” And then, with no justification, they use this same “insert” to say that the warp of instantaneous transformations “is always inserted into the woof of the continuous modifications. (Hence the significance of dates for the Stoics. From what moment can it be said that someone is bald?).” Are we thus to conclude that it’s the *intervention* of statements in contents, dividing up differently their way of being expressed according to time (to anticipate them, move them back, slow them down, or speed them up) or according to space (separate or combine them), that produces discontinuities in continuous modifications, instantaneously transforming, for example, someone who has hair into someone who is bald?

Deleuze and Guattari do not give us an answer. For them, it is enough to have recourse to the theory of the event such as it was presented in *The Logic of Sense*. But it is the equivocity such a recourse produces that effaces the problem. This equivocity is the result of an equivalence never explicitly stated between, on one hand, the concept of the incorporeal in the theory of the assemblage (as transformation produced in bodies by assemblages of enunciation), and, on the other hand, the concept of the incorporeal in the theory of the event (as the effects of mixtures of bodies among themselves

that are expressed by verbs in the infinitive such as “to redden”). One will never know to what extent the vague concept of “intervene” is a sort of idealism. One will never know what is the status of the reality of the instantaneous transformation into a convicted person that a judge’s sentence produces on or in an accused. Confusions between the concepts of the assemblage and the event seem to dispel the problem which, however, remains at the theoretical center of the chapter “Postulates of Linguistics.”

A similar erasure of key questions in the theory of the assemblage occurs in two other chapters of *A Thousand Plateaus*. In “Becoming-Intense, Becoming-Animal, Becoming-Imperceptible,” and in “Treatise of Nomadology: The War Machine,” the unjustified approximation between the concepts of the assemblage and the event also brings about a collapse of the physics of assemblages. This collapse is produced, in the first case, around the problem of the singularity, and in the second, around the nature of vague or vagabond essences.

### *The Question of Individuation and Individuality*

The question of the assemblage plays a central role in the theory of becomings. It assures the modality of the reality of processes of change in individuation and of changes in individuality. To enter into relations of a pack or group, to compose one’s individuation with that of an hour, a season, or become an other, change one’s nature, become woman, become child, become animal—these are neither symbolic effects, analogies of proportion or of proportionality, nor imaginary effects, that is, metamorphoses of the imagination, oneiric constructions, or fantasies. Contrary to the structuralist interpretation of animal becomings and totemic phenomena, as well as the psychoanalytic interpretation of transfer and processes of unconscious identification, Deleuze and Guattari construct a realist physics of becomings. “A becoming is not a correspondence between relations. But neither is it a resemblance, an imitation, or, at the limit, an identification. The whole structuralist critique of the series seems irrefutable. To become is not to progress or regress along a series. Above all, becoming does not occur in the imagination, even when the imagination reaches the highest cosmic or dynamic level, as in Jung or Bachelard. Becomings-animal are neither dreams nor phantasies. They are perfectly real” (ATP 237–8).

Deleuze and Guattari want to escape the alliance between Lévi-Strauss and Lacan in understanding phenomena of becoming, an alliance to which Deleuze himself had fallen prey in the 1960s, both in his approach to the difference between differentiation (as relation between singularities in a structure) and differenciation (as actualization of a virtuality), and in his analysis of the role of the imagination in the construction of fantasies of horses and

bears that make up masochistic experiences. Here, the destitution of the illusions of the symbolic and the imaginary is brought about by the affirmation of the univocity of the real. Everything is real, and there is only the real even in de-realization, even in changes, transformations—in short, becomings. The question now is one that concerns the reality of becomings. As process of subjectivation, to be an other, to be, for example, a wolf, a horse, is not an effect of imitation, of a dream, or a fantasy. Becoming really produces a wolf, or put otherwise, a becoming-wolf, and this becoming-wolf or becoming-horse is real. “Becoming produces nothing other than itself. We fall into a false alternative if we say that you either imitate or you are. What is real is the becoming itself” (ATP 238).

This reality of becoming can only be thought through the new concepts of individuation and individuality. On one hand, one must understand the mode of existence of things without defined form, such as an hour, a wind, a degree of heat, an atmosphere, or of a pack or of some people [*des gens*]. These are beings that exist only through relations of movement or rest, by differential dimensions of speed and slowness, intensive longitudes and latitudes, or by local and instantaneous composition. These beings are in themselves becomings, mutations. On the other hand, one must understand anew regimes of individuality that allow us to seize the singularity of beings. Deleuze and Guattari thus take up Duns Scotus’s concept of the “haecceity.” “A season, a winter, a summer, an hour, a date, have a perfect individuality lacking nothing, even though this individuality is different from that of a thing or a subject. They are haecceities, in the sense that they consist entirely of relations of movement and rest between molecules or particles, capacities to affect and be affected” (ATP 261). The concept of the haecceity concerns not only a metaphysics of individuation and individuality. It also touches on the essence of literature. Deleuze and Guattari connect the composition of characters, faces, loves, with the wind in Charlotte Brontë, or the intensity of hours of the day in D. H. Lawrence or Faulkner. Haecceities are degrees of latitude that can combine with other intensities, like the white of a landscape or the coldness of a body, to form a new individual.<sup>39</sup> The concept of the haecceity lets us understand to what extent literature is the expression of this disharmony between the individuation of a life and the individuation of a subject that leads that life or supports it.

In order to advance in the being of literary expression, one must develop a typology of haecceities. Deleuze and Guattari thus invoke again the concept of the assemblage. “You have the individuality of a day, a season, a year, *a life* (regardless of its duration)—a climate, a wind, a fog, a swarm, a pack (regardless of its regularity). Or at least you can have it, you can reach it. A cloud of locusts carried in by the wind at five in the evening; a vampire who goes out at night, a werewolf at full moon. It should not be thought that

a haecceity consists simply of a décor or backdrop that situates subjects, or of appendages that hold things and people to the ground. It is the entire assemblage in its individuated aggregate that is a haecceity; it is this assemblage that is defined by a longitude and a latitude, by speeds and affects, independently of forms and subjects, which belong to another plane” (ATP 262). The haecceity is not the fuzzy part of the real; it is not the atmosphere, the hour, the season, or the décor that only offers the frame of things or substances, that constitutes the ground of the becoming of a person or a life. A life, an hour, a climate, and also a pack, a vampire, these are all haecceities, and there is nothing beyond haecceities.

To underline this univocity of the mode of existence of individuations through longitude, latitude, and intensity, *A Thousand Plateaus* establishes a total equivalence between the haecceity and the assemblage. As Deleuze and Guattari say, “It is the entire assemblage in its individuated aggregate that is a haecceity” (ATP 262). There is the assemblage “five-o-clock-in-the-evening” or the assemblage “cloud-of-locusts-at-the-end-of-the-day-in-summer.” Each assemblage is a haecceity. Nonetheless, Deleuze and Guattari distinguish between haecceities of assemblages and interassemblage haecceities. The first are bodies whose individuation is the effect of compositions of longitude and latitude, whereas the interassemblage haecceities are the milieu of the increase of assemblages, haecceities of lines that intersect, rhizome haecceities.<sup>40</sup>

However, at the moment they define the singularity of these types of individuation through assemblages, Deleuze and Guattari recuperate the concept of the event from *The Logic of Sense*. Suddenly, an entity appears that has, not one, but two haecceities. In regard to certain processes of becoming, like becoming-wolf, becoming-horse, or becoming-child, one reads, “It is the wolf itself, and the horse, and the child, that cease to be subjects to become events, in assemblages that are inseparable from an hour, a season, an atmosphere, an air, a life” (ATP 262). Obscurity is inevitable. What’s surprising is that, at the precise moment Deleuze and Guattari most closely identify the concept of the assemblage with the traits of the event in *The Logic of Sense*, at the moment one cannot distinguish the incorporeal event as the seeing-Hans-crossing-the-street-the-horse-at-five-o’clock from the assemblage becoming-horse-of-Hans, they are forced to invoke once again the concept of the event, which, however, had been completely replaced by that of the assemblage.

Suddenly, in a dozen pages, the concept of the event returns as if it had always belonged to the theoretical lexicon of the assemblage. For example, in regard to the function of the proper name in literature, establishing an equivalence between “event” and “haecceity,” they write: “The proper name fundamentally designates something that is of the order of the event, of becoming or of the haecceity” (ATP 264). In another passage, the equivalence is made

with three terms. They write: “they lack nothing when they introduce haecceities, events, the individuation of which does not pass into a form and is not effected by a subject. The indefinite then has maximum determination: once upon a time; a child is being beaten; a horse is falling. . . . Here, the elements in play find their individuation in the assemblage of which they are a part” (ATP 264). Deleuze and Guattari explicitly state that the individuation of events is not made by events themselves, for events “find their individuation in the assemblage of which they are a part.”

How can we explain this doubling of the process of individuation with the haecceity? “Haecceity” and “event” here are synonymous concepts. In themselves, they are already individuations that do not take place through a form or a subject. They articulate elements; they are put in play there. But the individuation of these elements is found only in the assemblage of which it forms a part. Why then say that there are individuals who are of the order of the event, that is, of the order of the haecceity (to distinguish them from formed beings of the type of subject or substance), without this haecceity of the event sustaining itself in itself as an event? Why consider events not only as parts of assemblages, but above all as having their individuation only in the assemblage of which they are a part?

It seems thus that the assemblage, which is already a haecceity, is the principal material of the individuation of the event. There is a type of haecceity of the assemblage that is formed in relation to the event that it releases [*dégage*]. Indeed, a few lines later, we read: “Blanchot is correct in saying that ONE and HE—*one* is dying, *he* is unhappy—in no way take the place of a subject, but instead do away with any subject in favor of an assemblage of the haecceity type, that carries or brings out [*dégage*] the event” (ATP 265). Here, it is not the assemblage that is a haecceity, but there are assemblages of the type haecceity. And these assemblages “carry” or “release” the event. The “one” and the “he” are not events directly, as *The Logic of Sense* puts it. Now, they are assemblages. And it’s as assemblages that they release the corresponding event.

There always remains the question of the difference between the assemblage “one” and the event “one.” Deleuze and Guattari tell us that they are both haecceities. But are there two kinds of haecceities? Are there haecceities of the event and haecceities of the assemblage? This problem returns in the chapter “Treatise of Nomadology: The War Machine.”

### *Vague Essences*

Within the definition of the “collective body” Deleuze and Guattari again set in parallel the concepts of the assemblage and the event. They want to think a type of fuzzy organization, a collective body as rhizome and not as

hierarchical organism. Taking up the thesis of Georges Dumézil, Deleuze and Guattari say that packs, bands, and groups of the rhizome type are those who first used the war machine to escape the formation of organs of power, of social forms constructed as structured organisms. “No doubt the war machine is realized more completely in the ‘barbaric’ assemblages of nomadic warriors than in the ‘savage’ assemblages of primitive societies” (ATP 359). They want to understand why war machines belong to nomadic, barbarian forms of organization; how they are opposed and even irreducible to the State apparatus; in what ways they come from elsewhere and are external to the sovereignty of the State.

War machines are thus opposed to the State form of organization and only become machines of the State after they are appropriated by this organism. To support this hypothesis, which is presented in the form of an axiom, Deleuze and Guattari present propositions that suggest that, in mythology, in ethnology, and in epistemology, the war machine is truly first and exterior to the State apparatus. It’s at the moment of thinking the third proposition, that which concerns epistemology, that Deleuze and Guattari take up Husserl’s idea of proto-geometry, as the science that studies vague morphological essences, in order to think the mode of existence of minorities that inhabit the margins of collective bodies. They oppose two forms of science, a “royal” science of the State and a “nomad” science of the war machine. Royal science is hylomorphic; that is, it always presupposes an organizing form for matter, and a matter prepared to receive the form. In this sense, “all matter is assigned to content, while all form passes into expression” (ATP 369). Royal science is a science of fixed ideal essences or of sensible formed things, of stable substances and subjects. Nomad science, by contrast, follows connections between singularities of matter and traits of expression. In nomad science, matter “is never prepared and therefore homogenized matter, but is essentially laden with singularities (which constitute a form of content). And neither is expression formal; it is inseparable from pertinent traits (which constitute a matter of expression)” (ATP 369).

Husserl’s proto-geometry is of the nomad type of science. According to Deleuze and Guattari, vague or vagabond essences—the object of Husserl’s proto-geometry, like the round that is distinguished both from the circle as fixed ideal essence, and round things like a vase, a wheel—belong to the ontological domain of the border.<sup>41</sup> Just as proto-geometry “is neither inexact like sensible things nor exact like idea essences, but *anexact yet rigorous*,” vague essences exist between ideal essences and sensible things. Deleuze and Guattari give two examples. The first is from the domain of geometry. It’s the case of variations of a theorematric figure, as transformations, deformations, ablations, or augmentations that form the problem of a figure, of its singularities. The second example is that of collective bodies. These bodies are not

reducible to an organism, “any more than esprit de corps is reducible to the soul of an organism” (ATP 366). They form a new individuation. They are bodies endowed with a corporeality that is more than thinghood [*choséité*], in the sense that they are only bodies because they are combined through a certain “esprit de corps,” like lineages in families where agnatic solidarity dominates.

We must stress that, in the geometric example and in the example of collective bodies, Deleuze and Guattari no longer use the concept of the haecceity. In the chapter on becoming-animal, as we saw, the haecceity designates, among other things, the reality of bodies defined by a longitude and a latitude, that is, by the set of material elements composed in concrete individuations that have validity in themselves. Now, in the nomadology chapter, they prefer to introduce the concept of the haecceity through the more phenomenological concept of “vague essence.” As regards singularities, it’s a matter of emphasizing first the condition of essence more than that of individuation. And as regards essence, emphasizing its dimension of corporeality that goes beyond thinghood [*choséité*]. “It could be said that vague essences extract from things a determination that is more than thinghood (*choséité*), which is that of *corporeality* (*corporéité*), and which perhaps even implies an esprit de corps” (ATP 367). Vague essences affect things, or rather release [*dégagent*] determinations that go beyond the thinghood of things, to reveal these as corporealities. This corporeality is that condition of the *dispars*. Contrary to the idea of an invariable form of variables, or of a variable matter of the invariant that founds the hylemorphic schema of ideal essence, the *dispars* refers back to material-forces rather than to matter-form, and it is a force that is constituted on the outside, starting on the fringes, the phenomena of the limit.

It’s in order to think this process of a matter force of the outside that puts variables themselves in a state of continuous variation and constitutes them as a new corporeality, as an esprit de corps, that the concept of the “assemblage” is once again invoked. “Collective bodies always have fringes or minorities that reconstitute equivalents of the war machine—in sometimes quite unforeseen forms—in specific assemblages such as building bridges or cathedrals or rendering judgments or making music or instituting a science, a technology” (ATP 366). These are assemblages that effect the constitution of a new corporeality. If vague essences can be released, in a diverse set of elements, a corporeality, a collective body, it’s because, on the outside, in the fringes, there is a new type of assemblage. And this is no longer an individuality as compositions of acts, and of places and atmospheres such as “Hans who crosses the street at five o’clock,” nor even an enunciation such as a verdict that transforms an accused into a convicted individual, but collective tasks, activities that mobilize multitudes.



It's the assemblage "build a cathedral" that creates the collective body of masons and causes them to become a vague essence of the corporeality type. Nomad science is fulfilled in the concept of the assemblage. As collective activity on the fringes of states that deploys a specific ontological dimension—corporeality or *esprit de corps*—the assemblage is the correlate par excellence of vague essences. Neither ideal nor empirical, these vague essences are also a proper individuation. Can the concept of the assemblage, designating a collective activity, furnish an adequate understanding of this individuation?

But once again, Deleuze and Guattari confuse our approach to the concept of the assemblage. When they want to think the individuation of vague essences, the way they divide up material forces, the way they seize the singularities of matter instead of constituting a general form, they write: "They effect individuations through events or haecceities, not through the 'object' as a compound of matter and form; vague essences are nothing other than haecceities" (ATP 369). Vague essences, although constituted through assemblages, are said to effect individuations through events or haecceities. But, why not use the concept of the assemblage to designate individuations effected on matter, on material forces? Must one think that the difference between the assemblage and the event is similar to that between material cause and formal cause? Is the assemblage the mode of production of a singularity, whereas the event is the individuated form that is released [*dégagerait*] from this singularity of matter? Indeed, a few pages after this ontological division of the assemblage and the event, we find again the concept of the vague essence that Deleuze and Guattari take from Husserl.

The question is always that of the constitution of singularities. In this case, it's the singularity cut out [*découpée*] by machinic operations on technological lineages. Deleuze and Guattari give the example of two lineages or two different phyla, such as the invention of the iron sword and the steel saber. They note that these two instruments of war belong to very different processes of deformation or transformation. The steel saber implies the melting of iron at a high temperature and then successive decarbonations, procedures such as polishing, sharpening, where designs traced through crystallization result in the internal structure of cast steel. The iron sword, by contrast, is forged, not cast, molded, quenched, and not air-cooled, produced by the piece and not in number. There is thus a phylum of the iron sword and a phylum of the steel saber, that is, becoming as process of deformation or transformation, ideally continuous, a flux of matter in variation that allows us to trace different singularities or traits of expression that lead from the dagger to the sword and from the knife to the steel saber. In the same way that the steel saber implies the actualization of a first singularity (which is the melting of iron at a high temperature), then a second (that of decarbonations), and finally a third

(that of polishing or crystallization), the phylum of the steel sword goes back to singularities such as being forged, quenched, produced by the piece. On the continuous flux or “machinic phylum” of each technical object singularities are constituted, singularities that are accompanied by traits of expression. These singularities are always collective operations of different materials and affects (hardness, weight, color, polish, and designs). “Each phylum has its own singularities and operations, its own qualities and traits, which determine the relation of desire to the technical element (the affects the saber ‘has’ are not the same as those of the sword)” (ATP 406).

Deleuze and Guattari here work with a new concept of singularity. It’s no longer the collective body or *esprit de corps* that releases a new condition of the corporeality of a disperse multitude. It’s no longer the singularity of an hour or a day. It’s the singularity of the form of a technical object (like a sword) within a series of transformations produced by collective machinic operations that act on the flow of matter movement and that are found in particular “cultures” or “ages.” The concept of “assemblage” will be invoked a final time in order to think this new concept of singularity. “We will call an *assemblage* every constellation of singularities and traits deduced from the flow—selected, organized, stratified—in such a way as to converge (consistency) artificially and naturally; an assemblage, in this sense, is a veritable invention” (ATP 406).

In this chapter on nomad science and the war machine, the assemblage has the status of a collective invention that selects, organizes, stratifies matters, either cutting up technical phyla into differentiated lineages, such as those that distinguish the lineage of the sword from the lineage of the steel saber; or introducing small deformations or transformations that make the form of the dagger pass into the form of the iron sword, and the form of the knife into the steel saber. In anonymous, collective operations, “assemblages may group themselves into extremely vast constellations constituting ‘cultures,’ or even ‘ages.’” (AATP 406). However, Deleuze and Guattari do not want to attribute to assemblages the sole active role in the history of the mode of existence of technical objects. In opposition to a static representation of materials, they stress a creative dimension of phyla, the work of matters-movements on assemblages. They appeal to the fundamental vitalism of Bergson: “It is thus necessary to take into account the selective action of the assemblages upon the phylum, and the evolutionary reaction of the phylum as the subterranean thread that passes from one assemblage to another, or quits an assemblage, draws it forward and opens it up. *Vital impulse [Élan vital]*?” (ATP 407). The production of technical singularities thus is not solely the effect of assemblages. There are also formative movements in matter that act on assemblages; there are also singularities in phyla that are also formed essences.

Deleuze and Guattari return here to Husserl's concept of "vague essence." However, in this case, at issue no longer are formal vague essences, like geometric variations, that is, variations of a theorematized figure with its ablations, its calculated disfigurements, nor the corporeality of collective bodies. Instead, it's a matter of vague material essences. Without ever establishing the distinction between the concept of vague essence as variation (that of the vague essence as collective body), and that of vague material essence (like the subterranean line that passes from one assemblage to another and that imposes its proper singularity on them), Deleuze and Guattari introduce "vague essence" again through a reference to the proto-geometry of Husserl. "So how are we to define this matter-movement, this matter-energy, this matter-flow, this matter in variation that enters assemblages and leaves them? It is a de-stratified, de-territorialized matter. It seems to us that Husserl brought thought a decisive step forward when he discovered a region of *vague and material* essences (in other words, essences that are vagabond, anexact and yet rigorous), distinguishing them from fixed, metric and formal, essences. We have seen that these vague essences are as distinct from formed things as they are from formal essences" (ATP 407). Between the empirical domain of formed things and the ideal domain of forms, vague material essences are the real principle of the singularity of matter, of materials.

Deleuze and Guattari thus bring together the proto-geometry of Husserl and Simondon's critique of hylomorphism. For Simondon, formed or formable matter lacks a complement. One must add an energetic materiality in movement, which, as Deleuze and Guattari say, already "bears *singularities or haecceities*." These singularities of materiality are like "implicit forms that are topological, rather than geometrical" (ATP 408). These implicit forms, according to Deleuze and Guattari, are presented above all in a very precise matter: metal. The *machinic phylum*, the flux of matter that enters into assemblages that produce technical objects, is essentially metallic or metallurgical. Although the examples they take from Husserl and Simondon involve wood, stone, or clay, for Deleuze and Guattari, it's as if metal and metallurgy disengage something that is only hidden in other matters. "In short, what metal and metallurgy bring to light is a life proper to matter, a vital state of matter as such, a material vitalism that doubtless exists everywhere" (ATP 411).

This ontological promotion of metal to the condition of matter par excellence, where forms and vague material essences are implicit, extends to the affirmation of metallurgy as the phenomenology of matter. "Metal is the conductor of all matter. The machinic phylum is metallurgical, or at least has a metallic head, as its itinerant probe-head or guidance device. And thought is born more from metal than from stone: metallurgy is minor science in person, 'vague' science or the phenomenology of matter. [. . .] Metal is neither

a thing nor an organism, but a *body* without organs” (ATP 411). Implicit form or vague material essence takes on the sense of a body. The singularity or haecceity of matter-movement or of matter-energy has a corporeality, similar to the corporeality of collective bodies produced by assemblages. In this way, the question of singularity is played out on two planes of the haecceity: the plane of the assemblage that cuts out lineages or phyla, or cuts out deformations or transformations of a continuous flux of matter; and the plane of vague material essences, which are carriers of implicit forms and which have their most rigorous expression in metal. The machinic phylum, which is above all metallurgic, is the result of these two planes of singularity and formativity.<sup>42</sup>

How, then, may we distinguish the two dimensions of the singularity? How can we think material and vague essences, their condition as vagabond essences, that is, their state of permanent deformation or transformation, in permanent change, without reducing them to the concept of the assemblage that Deleuze and Guattari always invoke to define this nomad reality? How may we approach the corporeality of individuated forms implicit in matter outside collective operations (of assemblages) that disengage objects (swords, bridges, or cathedrals)? According to Deleuze and Guattari, vague essences of matter disengage a corporeality. And this corporeality is constituted as passage to the limit, as change of state, through processes of deformation or transformation. However, at the moment of determining these processes of the change of state of deformation, Deleuze and Guattari, rather than present them as assemblages, take up the concept of the event. Here we must cite at length: “We have seen that these vague essences are as distinct from formed things as they are from formal essences. They constitute fuzzy aggregates. They relate to a *corporeality* (materiality) that is not to be confused either with an intelligible, formal essentiality or a sensible, formed and perceived, thinghood. This corporeality has two characteristics: on the one hand, it is inseparable from passages to the limit as changes of state, from processes of deformation or transformation that operate in a space-time itself anexact and that act in the manner of events (ablation, adjunction, projection . . .); on the other hand, it is inseparable from expressive or intensive qualities, which can be higher or lower in degree, and are produced in the manner of variable affects (resistance, hardness, weight, color . . .). There is thus an ambulant coupling, *events-affects*, which constitutes the vague corporeal essence” (ATP 407–8).

Nowhere are the concepts of the assemblage and the event put in relation to one another. Never do Deleuze and Guattari tell us if they regard this difference as technical, as the expression of two distinct realities. They simply tell us that the vague corporeal essence (or material and vague essence) that confers on matter its condition of energetic materiality in movement, carrier

of singularities or haecceities, has the nature, not of a material assemblage, but of an event. Yet, when they present the concept of the event, to define the mode of individuation of vague material essences, they fall into a vicious circle. The event is presented as a pure geometric operation on a plane of variation—ablation, adjunction, and project. These operations are precisely the same that Deleuze and Guattari had used initially to present the concept of vague essence. The event is thus reduced to a particular case of Husserl's proto-geometry.<sup>43</sup> On the other hand, it is promoted to the ontological status of the singular form implicit in matter, to the vague essence that disengages a material corporeality in matter in variation that enters into assemblages. And as such, the event is the fundamental reality; it is that which grounds the possibility of a new science, which Deleuze and Guattari call nomadic science, vague science, or “the phenomenology of matter.”

Such is the surprising destiny of the Nomadology chapter. This chapter sets out to think the vague essences of war machines and a new science—the science of machinic assemblages—but it gradually moves to an ontology of the vague essences of matter. And these essences of matter have no relation to assemblages. They are events, in the sense of transformations—in space and time—of topological essences. They are processes of passage to the limit, of changes of state. The entire theory of the assemblage—at once a physics of nomadic essences and a politics of collective operations—is absorbed by an ontology that can be qualified as metallurgic. Hence, it's not surprising that the concept of the assemblage disappears after *A Thousand Plateaus*. It functions only in the cinema books, but solely to designate montage. Afterward, it will only be a question of the event.

The concept of the assemblage was created to escape from the concept of the event. It was a matter of including a pragmatic dimension in the problem of expression. Deleuze needed to leave the event since this concept was too imbued by psychoanalytic concepts, such as the fantasy and Oedipus. Deleuze sought to affirm a univocity of being outside the symbolic and the imaginary, an immanence of the real. It's in this way that the assemblage appears in its double guise, at once as the expressed of the real and the production on the real [*production sur le réel*]. Everything is real (hence the concept of Real-Literature) since everything is a relation of forces, demarcation of territories, in short, politics.

It's only within a theory of machines as theory of Nature that the assemblage appears. And this theory arises only in a precise period, between *Anti-Oedipus* and *A Thousand Plateaus*. *A Thousand Plateaus* thus constitutes the platform for a new, and final, change in Deleuze's thought. It prepares for the coming of *The Fold*, the great book on the event. With the event a totally new paradigm emerges, one that allows a friendly return to the concept of the “concept” and to the concept of the “possible.”

## NOTES

1. “The writer invents assemblages starting from assemblages which have invented him” (D 51–2).

2. As Jean-Clet Martin explains, “‘And you will be able to say: ‘I was there!’’ first concerns the future. ‘You will be able to say’ about the event that it will take place, but this place is in the future that it sets forth, through a very large collective subject that is incarnated by no one” (Martin 1998: 135).

3. “False problems result from an illegitimate employment of Ideas. [. . .] This is why ‘regulative’ means ‘problematic’” (DR 168).

4. “There is neither identification nor confusion within the Idea, but rather an internal problematic objective unity of the undetermined, the determinable and determination” (D 170). “Ideas appear in the form of a system of ideal connections [*liaisons*]*—*in other words, a system of differential relations between reciprocally determined genetic elements” (DR 173).

5. As Éric Alliez observes, the fact that Deleuze conceives of the problem as always emerging from the reality of its solution is a sign of his Bergsonism (Alliez 1998: 249).

6. For this reason, José Gil argues that “‘to problematize’ an Idea means to establish the conditions of its conceivability as problem, at the same time that it creates in thought the movement itself of the establishment of its conditions.” Gil concludes later: “To pose the problem and to resolve it thus implies a strange calculus that seeks less to bring solutions than to open endlessly the virtual problems contained in the given problematic body” (Gil 1998a: 16, 18).

7. Constantin Boundas sees in this character of the transcendence and immanence of Ideas in regard to solutions, a new relation between Deleuze and Kant: “Just like Kant, Deleuze believes that Ideas are indeed problem-setting imperatives. But unlike Kant, Deleuze believes that the ability of a problem to be solved must be made to depend on the form that the problem takes. [. . .] Only under these circumstances, can the Kantian idea become the model for a sign of invention and for a new kind of thinking without representation” (Boundas 1996: 88–9). See also Salanskis (1996: 58–60).

8. As concerns the image of thought, Deleuze’s readings generally stress the project of a philosophy of affirmation and of the outside. If it is true that thinking otherwise is not a resonance of representation, but a creation of concepts (see Mengue 1994: 15) or a becoming other as line of flight from territories of the already-thought (Zourabihvili 1994: 7), we believe that one must also take seriously all the topological concepts of Deleuzian noology. This means that the cartographies of thought must also guide us in our understanding of Deleuze’s oeuvre itself.

9. “Nietzsche has at his disposal a method of his own invention. We should not be satisfied with either biography or bibliography; we must reach a secret point where the anecdote of life and the aphorism of thought amount to one and the same thing. It is like sense which, on one of its sides, is attributed to states of life and, on the other, inheres in propositions of thought. There are dimensions here, times and places, glacial or torrid zones never moderated, the entire exotic geography which characterizes

a mode of thought as well as a style of life” (LS 128). “Nietzsche founded geophilosophy” (WP 102).

10. The radical difference within the theory of the event, developed first in *The Logic of Sense*, abandoned in *Anti-Oedipus* and *Kafka*, but cautiously brought back in *Dialogues* and *A Thousand Plateaus* and then constituted anew as the center of Deleuze’s ontological thought in *The Fold* and *What Is Philosophy?*, has been completely ignored by readers of Deleuze. In great part, this is the effect of one of the finest books ever written on the Deleuzian theory of the event. We are thinking of Zourabichvili’s *Deleuze: A Philosophy of the Event*. Zourabichvili, whose recent death has closed off one of the most rigorous lines of access to Deleuze, presents the entirety of Deleuze’s oeuvre in terms of the event. He creates the illusion of an unbroken continuity from *Empiricism and Subjectivity* to *What Is Philosophy?* around the theory formulated in *The Logic of Sense*. This continuity depends on the erasure—unconscious—of the role played by *Anti-Oedipus*, *Kafka*, and *A Thousand Plateaus* in the invention of Deleuze’s major theses, such as those that concern a thought without image, the plane of immanence, the transcendental field, the critique of the negative, the heterogeneity of time, and free indirect discourse. It is no surprise that Zourabichvili never refers to the theory of the assemblage, nor even to those moments of *Dialogues* and *A Thousand Plateaus* where it is a question of the relation between the concepts of the event and the assemblage. His book offers one of the finest accounts of Deleuze’s thought ever written. But he does so by sacrificing the question of the assemblage.

11. “It is the characteristic of events to be expressed or expressible, uttered or utterable, in propositions which are at least possible. There are many relations inside a proposition. But which is the best suited to surface effects or events?” (LS 12; trans. modified). “The Stoics discovered it along with the event: sense, *the expressed of the proposition*, that incorporeal on the surface of things, an irreducibly complex entity, a pure event that insists or subsists in the proposition” (LS 19; trans. modified).

12. Buci-Glucksmann says that “the event is never reduced to the single state of things of a ‘this happens’ [*ça arrive*] Its virtuality, its immateriality and even its ‘unlivable’ side are related to its always heterogeneous between-time, like a gigantic crystal in retardation. The event will always take place on the edges” (Buci-Glucksmann 1998: 110).

13. “Which is as much as to say that the event is produced in—and produces—the ‘pure empty form of time,’ the line that traces an incessant, double and mobile projection in the ‘always already passed and eternally still to come’” (Wahl 1998: 131).

14. This definition of singularity comes from Gilbert Simondon. In *The Individual and Its Physico-Biological Genesis*, Simondon delineates the process of individuation outside the fundamental contradiction that classical metaphysics conferred on it. In his opinion, metaphysics explained individuation only on the basis of the individual itself, that is, by presupposing that which it was supposed to explain.

15. The question of ungrounding [*effondrement*, also translated as “collapse”] is central in Deleuze. It’s a matter of the immanence of the Outside as the nonrepresentable (the outside of representation) and of the consistency of this nonrepresentation (the Outside as informal field of relations). Informal ungrounded chaos, or the Outside, is thus identified with the plane of immanence. Both are the informal plateau

of heterogeneous and external relations. As Zourabichvili explains, “The *plane of immanence* is Deleuze’s name for this transcendental field where nothing is presupposed in advance except the exteriority that precisely challenges all presuppositions” (Zourabichvili 2012: 74). As concerns immanence, Spinoza is the philosopher who most influenced Deleuze. As Deleuze himself put it, “Spinoza knew full well that immanence was only immanent to itself and therefore that it was a plane traversed by movements of the infinite, filled with intensive ordinates. He is therefore the prince of philosophers. Perhaps he is the only philosopher never to have compromised with transcendence” (WP 48).

16. In other passages, Deleuze presents the transcendental field, the ground of the groundless, as the eternal return. “The freedom of the non-mediated ground, the discovery of a ground behind every other ground, the relation between the groundless [*sans-fond*] and the ungrounded [*le non-fondé*], the immediate reflection of the formless and the superior form which constitutes the eternal return” (DR 67).

17. As Pierre Zaoui writes, “what Deleuze attacks in the idea of identity is above all its double status as ontological category (the primacy of identity over difference in the real) and as conceptual category (the primacy of identity in the concept), but not identity in itself. [. . .] On the contrary, when identity is second, when it does not subordinate difference but is produced by it, then it acquires an entirely new conceptual pertinence, allowing the designation less of resemblance or analogy than the becoming of a pure difference, that is, the repetition of the different” (Zaoui 1995: 78–9).

18. As José Gil explains, “it is a nomadic distribution, in which the absence of rules defines a game of chance or ideal game that is the function of the singularity of each point. Unlike sedentary or fixed distribution, the situation of each singular point depends on the entirety of chance that is at play in each throw of the dice. One thus cannot determine the singular point except via chaos” (Gil 1998a: 24).

19. As Mireille Buydens explains, “if one truly wants to go beyond the sphere of the individual (and thus of form), one must give singularities a nature that no longer implies the individual: that would be the intensity” (Buydens 1990: 18). In another article by the same author, she says that it is the nomadism of singularities that explains the Deleuzian conception of human freedom. “This metaphysics where only the intensity (the informal) is given *a priori* allows in its turn the foundation of human freedom: if no form is imposed in the last instance, if nothing is engraved in the marble of necessity, then everything is still to be done and everything must be created” (Buydens 1998: 53).

20. As Frédéric Gros says, “all actualization, at the same time that it is integration, is differentiation: it’s in the movement itself of its actualization that divergence operates” (Gros 1995: 53).

21. “The actualization of the virtual is singularity whereas the actual itself is individuality constituted” (D 149–50).

22. The reality of the virtual is always half-absent. Eternally lacking. “Contemporaneous with itself as present, being itself its own past, pre-existing every present which passes in the real series, the virtual object belongs to the pure past. It is pure fragment and fragment of itself” (DR 102). There is a fundamental (or natural) sadness in the virtual: “*It is always a ‘was’*” (DR 102).



23. “The Deleuzian crystal is neither a metaphor nor a simple object. Rather, it is a thought-image, which defines a territory and functions as matrix of a ‘geo-philosophy’ of art. Image of itself and image of the universe, it is the first ‘abstract machine,’ the first ‘monad’ of an aesthetic and philosophical virtual that is conceivable only in its multiple refractions and reflections. Also, a fold of glass that renders the infinite, the crystal is omnipresent in the entire oeuvre of Gilles Deleuze, from *The Logic of Sense to Essays Critical and Clinical*. Doubtless because the crystalline plane is the model of the event as plane of immanence” (Buci-Gloucksmann 1998: 101).

24. Deleuze returns to this image of time as crystal in *Cinema 2: The Time-Image*: “We see in the crystal the perpetual foundation of time, non-chronological time, Cronos and not Chronos. This is the powerful, non-organic Life which grips the world. The visionary, the seer, is the one who sees in the crystal, and what he sees is the gushing of time as dividing in two, as splitting” (C2 81).

25. As Buci-Glucksmann says, “the ‘crystal-image’ joins the two essential aspects of all art. Small crystalline seed, interior limit of all circuits, the crystal amplifies everything, such that it envelops the world, ‘an immense crystallizable universe.’ The crystal is always at the fleeing limit between image and thought, past and present, real and virtual, singularity and destiny” (Buci-Glucksmann 1998: 99).

26. On the Deleuze/Nietzsche connection through the figure of the singularity, see Badiou (1998: 29–30), who argues that this connection through power/capacity and the neutrality of the singularity leads to the question of life.

27. We should not forget the connection between the metaphysical and political approaches to the singularity. It’s in this sense that the event finds its greatest amplitude. As Philippe Mengue writes, “Deleuzian politics thus seems to lead us to the ethics of the event” (Mengue 1994: 80).

28. “To temper or to temporalize is to mix” (LS 162).

29. Peter Pál Pelbart explains that “the void is infinite [. . .] with no determination, no action on the bodies that are in it. The site is the interval of the void, but the interval that proceeds from the body that occupies the site. [. . .] The void is actualized in the site of the infinite; it becomes finite, but always in relation to a body. Just as the void and the site are in relation as the whole and the part, thus time unfolds itself in [. . .] total time, Aion [. . .] which, like the void, is infinite in its two extremities: the past and the future. It is the totality of time, eternity. [. . .] On the other hand, there is the temporal extension that actualizes this Aion, and that accompanies the body, that constitutes its present (without for all that ever being an incorporeal): Chronos” (Pelbart 1998: 67–8).

30. “With the instantaneity of the event, finitude is attached to sense, and unlimitedness—of the past, of the future—is that qualification that time requires. One may think that this last term is Deleuze’s most refined term, a thought of the neutral that only makes the assertive priority of the infinite over the finite” (Wahl 1998: 131).

31. Mireille Buydens aptly emphasizes the extent to which the concept of the haecceity, in its equivalence with the concept of the assemblage, condenses in *A Thousand Plateaus* Deleuze’s project. “The notion of the haecceity henceforth appears as a privileged expression in Deleuze’s thought, since it concentrates the characteristics of linearity (the haecceity is a rhizome), intensity (it is a composition of power/

capacity [*puissance*] and affect), of ‘existentiality’ (it directly concerns our existence, our becoming), contingency (it is produced, never given), and subversion (it makes a transversal cut of the world)” (Buydens 1990: 66). But Buydens never asks why it is only in *A Thousand Plateaus* that this concept of the haecceity is thought via the concept of the assemblage, whereas in all Deleuze’s other works, it is the concept of the event that plays this role.

32. François Zourabichvili speaks of a “paradox of the event”: “the paradox of the event is that, purely ‘expressible,’ it is no less the ‘attribute’ of the world and of its states of things” (Zourabichvili 2012: 172; trans. modified).

33. “First, in an assemblage there are, as it were, two faces, or at the least two heads. There are *states of things*, states of bodies (bodies interpenetrate, mix together, transmit affects to one another); but also *utterances* [*énoncés*], regimes of utterances: signs are organized in a new way, new formulations [*formalisations*] appear” (D 70–1).

34. “This should be read without a pause: the animal-stalks-at-five-o’clock. The becoming-evening, becoming-night of an animal, blood nuptials. Five o’clock is this animal! This animal is this place! ‘The thin dog is running in the road, this dog is the road,’ cries Virginia Woolf. That is how we need to feel. Spatiotemporal relations, determinations, are not predicates of the thing but dimensions of multiplicities. The street is as much a part of the omnibus-horse assemblage as the Hans assemblage the becoming-horse of which it initiates” (ATP 263).

35. It is in this way that Bruno Bosteels explains that “Collective assemblages, then, effectuate diagrammatic conjunctions between semiotic flows and material flows, between machines of the real and machines of signs; they make sense without mediation of ready-made mental representations necessary to assure signification and designation” (Bosteels 1998: 163).

36. “On a first, horizontal, axis, an assemblage comprises two segments, one of content, the other of expression. On the one hand it is a *machinic assemblage* of bodies, of actions and passions, an intermingling of bodies reacting to one another; on the other hand it is a *collective assemblage of enunciation*, of acts and statements, of incorporeal transformations attributed to bodies. Then on a vertical axis, the assemblage has both *territorial sides*, or reterritorialized sides, which stabilize it, and *cutting edges of deterritorialization*, which carry it away” (ATP 88).

37. “In effect, what takes place beforehand (the crime of which someone is accused), and what takes place after (the carrying out of the penalty), are actions-passions affecting bodies (the body of the property, the body of the victim, the body of the convict, the body of the prison); but the transformation of the accused into a convict is a pure instantaneous act or incorporeal attribute that is the expressed of the judge’s sentence” (ATP 80).

38. “No one is better than Kafka at differentiating the two axes of the assemblage and making them function together. On the one hand, the ship-machine, the hotel-machine, the circus-machine, the castle-machine, the court-machine, each with its own intermingled pieces, gears, processes, and bodies contained in one another or bursting out of containment (see the head bursting through the roof). On the other hand, the regime of signs or of enunciation: each regime with its incorporeal

transformations, acts, death sentences and judgments, proceedings, ‘law.’ It is obvious that statements do not represent machines: the Stoker’s discourse does not describe stoking as a body; it has its own form, and a development without resemblance. Yet it is attributed to bodies, to the whole ship as a body. A discourse of submission to order-words; a discourse of discussion, claims, accusation, and defense. On the second axis, what is compared or combined of the two aspects, what always inserts one into the other, are the sequenced or conjugated degrees of deterritorialization, and the operations of reterritorialization that stabilize the aggregate at a given moment. K., the K.-function, designates the line of flight or deterritorialization that carries away all of the assemblages but also undergoes all kinds of reterritorializations and redundancies—redundancies of childhood, village-life, love, bureaucracy, etc.” (ATP 88–9). In *Dialogues*, Deleuze had already said, “the most extreme juridical formalization of utterances (questions and answers, objections, pleading, summing up, reasoned judgement, verdict), coexists with the most intense machinic formalization, the machinization of states of things and bodies (ship-machine, hotel-machine, circus-machine, castle-machine, lawsuit-machine). One and the same K-function, with its collective agents and bodily passions, Desire” (D 71).

39. “Tales must contain haecceities that are not simply emplacements, but concrete individuations that have a status of their own and direct the metamorphosis of things and subjects. [. . .] In Charlotte Brontë, everything is in terms of *wind*, things, people, faces, loves, words. Lorca’s ‘five in the evening,’ when love falls and fascism rises. That awful five in the evening! We say, ‘What a story!’ ‘What heat!’ ‘What a life!’ to designate a very singular individuation. The hours of the day in Lawrence, in Faulkner. A degree of heat, an intensity of white, are perfect individualities” (ATP 261).

40. “The street enters into composition with the horse, just as the dying rat enters into composition with the air, and the beast and the full moon enter into composition with each other. At most, we may distinguish assemblage haecceities (a body considered only as longitude and latitude) and interassemblage haecceities, which also mark the potentialities of becoming within each assemblage (the milieu of intersection of the longitudes and latitudes)” (ATP 262–3).

41. “Husserl speaks of a protogeometry that addresses *vague*, in other words, vagabond or nomadic, morphological essences. These essences are distinct from sensible things, as well as from ideal, royal, or imperial essences” (ATP 367).

42. “In metallurgy, on the other hand, the operations are always astride the thresholds, so that an energetic materiality overflows the prepared matter, and a qualitative deformation or transformation overflows the form. For example, quenching follows forging and takes place after the form has been fixed. Or, to take another example, in molding, the metallurgist in a sense works inside the mold. Or again, steel that is melted and molded later undergoes a series of successive decarbonations” (ATP 410–11).

43. In fact, the first presentation of the concept of vague essence gives the example of transformations of a geometric figure. The transformations of a theorematic figure create a new figure—and that figure is a new essence, but a vague essence. The concept of the event in this chapter on nomad essences has, paradoxically, the same

status. It is reduced to a geometric transformation. One need only juxtapose the two passages. “The circle is an organic, ideal, fixed essence, but roundness is a vague and fluent essence, distinct both from the circle and things that are round (a vase, a wheel, the sun). A theorematic figure is a fixed essence, but its transformations, distortions, ablations, and augmentations, all of its variations, form problematic figures that are vague yet rigorous, ‘lens-shaped,’ ‘umbelliform,’ or ‘indented’” (ATP 367). “This corporeality has two characteristics: on the one hand, it is inseparable from passages to the limit as changes of state, from processes of deformation or transformation that operate in a space-time itself anexact, and that act in the manner of events (ablation, adjunction, projection . . .)” (ATP 408).



### *Part III*

## BECKETT AND MELVILLE

### *The Possibility of Literature*

#### INTRODUCTION: FROM POWER TO THE POSSIBLE

As we have shown, it is possible to trace the archeology of the political approach to the literary question that informs the program of *Kafka* back to Deleuze's reception of Foucault's *Discipline and Punish*.

Is it the same in regard to the chapters Deleuze wrote specifically for his book on Foucault? Is there a similar revelatory effect in tracing the genesis of Deleuze's thought from his reading of Foucault's texts published after *Discipline and Punish*? To what extent do *The Will to Knowledge* (1976), "The Life of Infamous Men" (1977), *The Use of Pleasure* (1984), and *The Care of the Self* (1984), which Deleuze first wrote about in his *Foucault*, lead us to an understanding of books like *The Fold* (1988), *What Is Philosophy?* (1991), and *Essays Critical and Clinical* (1993)?

The hypothesis that orients this chapter presupposes an almost mimetic affinity between Deleuze and Foucault. Deleuze's last books, we believe, focus on the replacement of a theory of power with a theory of the possible, replacing what Deleuze himself saw in Foucault as the guiding thread of his theory. This replacement greatly interests us. It goes beyond the general framework of Deleuze's last works. It is the key to understanding a turn that affects his texts on literature.

As we have seen, *Kafka* and *Superpositions* conceive of creation in language as assemblages of resistance to power, as procedures of minorization or subtraction freeing state, bureaucratic and familial powers/capacities [*puissances*]. But, as we will show, everything Deleuze wrote on the subject of literature after *The Fold*, his great book on the possible, is no longer oriented by the reality of power. The broad questions about literature that had always interested Deleuze, like the nature of events that are incarnated in characters,

the forms of creation of a health, the visions of the writer of a people to come, or those that concern the linguistic procedures of estrangement and stammering, will suddenly be reconfigured within an ontology of the possible and the impossible. Indeed, if Deleuze is suddenly interested in the formula of Bartleby, this paradoxical figure who refuses all order of preference, or if he is attracted to Beckett's television plays, where sequences of movement and statements have the condition of combinatories on the inside of a whole that is always determined, it's because he wants to think a new matter of power [*pouvoir*]: powerlessness [*l'impouvoir*]. It's a matter of a powerlessness that is beyond power. It's a powerlessness that leads to an experience of another mode of the faculty of acting. It leads to a possible.

The focus here will be on underscoring the existence of two paradigmatic figures of this new ontology. The first may be found in the well-known formula of Bartleby. According to Deleuze, the agrammaticality of *I would prefer not to* poses, first, a powerlessness. It enunciates the refusal of any preference, and, hence, the condition of the powerlessness of any action. But it opens onto a new possibility: the possibility of the impossible, the possibility that makes of the impossible no longer the absence of possibility, but the actualization of a mode of existence that has as its characteristic the absolute refusal of all possibles. The characters of Beckett, on the other hand, offer Deleuze a second illustration. In their lassitude, in their pointless activity, they are presented in "The Exhausted" as limit experiences of an exhaustion, not of the real, but of the possible.

Melville invented an inverse Leibnizianism. Bartleby's formula is the expression of the copyist's discovery of an absolute impossibility between, on one hand, the world where he doesn't copy, and, on the other, the world where one awaits his work as a copyist. If to prefer is to put compossible worlds in harmony, nonpreference is the only position available for an ontology of impossibles. According to Deleuze, Bartleby is the visionary of a new metaphysical principle: the principle, not of the best of possible worlds, but of the worst, that is, the principle of the total incommunicability between impossibles.

Beckett must also be seen as a great metaphysician of the possible. He invented a plurality of ontological layers of the possible on the theatrical stage. In each movement inside the spatial square of the stage, in each voice, and in each statement, his theater texts distinguish several possible worlds. But these worlds, rather than opening the action, and rather than disclosing alternatives, intersections of existence, asphyxiate the life onstage. They transform the action into useless gestures and empty statements. And this nothing and this void are not inscribed in an aesthetics of the absurd. It's not a question of the absence of sense for the one who speaks, or of a nothingness in the goals of the one who acts. If the characters are constructed according to a

principle of pure combinatorics of statements, of movement, it's because they are beyond all possibility. Beckett's characters act like marionettes because they are exhausted, because the possible itself is present to each and every one of them, always and already, as exhausted. Beckett's genius is to invent a concept of the possible that, rather than growing as it is realized, exhausts itself.

After the assemblages of minorization that Deleuze discovers in the 1970s in Kafka and in Bene, one can speak of events of exhaustion in Deleuze's reading of Melville and Beckett at the end of the 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s. After a politics that is invented by literature as collective assemblage of enunciation, we see the emergence of an ontology that is expressed by anonymous characters or characters without qualities. From a politics to an ontology and from a microphysics of assemblages to a choreography of events, the central concept of Deleuze's thought shifts. Like Foucault, Deleuze arrives at a "beyond" of power. But that beyond must not be sought among the Greeks or the Romans. We are all Greeks and Romans. And no one better than Melville and Beckett tells us as much. This beyond of power in a paradoxical possible is found in *Bartleby* and the anonymous characters of Beckett's theater. Literature is no longer a matter of resistance to power but, to quote Deleuze on Foucault, a matter of the folding of force on itself, where the relation to the self gains independence, constituting an inside that hollows itself out [*un dedans qui se creuse*]. This inside is a power that one exercises on oneself. Or better, it is no longer a power, but layers of possibilities that one exhausts or that one posits in their impossibility.

We thus need a second hypothesis. Can we say that this movement that led Deleuze from a theory of power to a theory of the possible, from a politics to an ontology, in short, from a minor literature or a literature of less to a literature of the impossible or of exhaustion, not only reproduces this same movement that Deleuze finds in Foucault's final thought, but is indeed a consequence of this path itself that affects the work of Foucault? In this case, Deleuze would have, despite himself, brought his method of the history of philosophy to its extreme point. In writing his book on Foucault, Deleuze enters into a becoming-Foucault, he invents what one may call, according to his procedure of collage, at once a Foucault *philosophically* coiffed, and a Deleuze *philosophically* bald.

Deleuze's reading of what is called an ethical turn in Foucault's late thought is also the explanatory turn in his view of literature. From Kafka and Bene to Melville and Beckett represents not only a displacement of the object of analysis. It is something more decisive. The universes of Melville and of Beckett, as visions of paradoxical layers of the possible, become literary laboratories of a turn in Deleuze's thought that is itself ethical. And this turn is understandable only in terms of the way Deleuze understands this same turn in Foucault, this figure closest to him.



There is a very significant passage in an interview with Claire Parnet, in 1986, regarding his book on Foucault, which had just appeared. Deleuze there expressly refers to what he describes as a movement that led Foucault from the question of power to the question of the possible. When speaking of the silence that befell Foucault after the publication of *The Will to Knowledge*, Deleuze says, “But I think he must have come up against the question of whether there was anything ‘beyond’ power—whether he was getting trapped in a sort of impasse within power relations. He was, you might say, mesmerized by and trapped in something he hated. And it was no use telling himself that coming up against power relations was the lot of modern (that is, infamous) man, that it’s power that makes us speak and see, it wasn’t enough, he needed the ‘possible’. [. . .] Perhaps Foucault had the feeling that he must at all costs cross that line, get to the other side, go still further than knowledge-power” (N 109; trans. modified).

In his Foucault book, Deleuze proposed the speculative narrative of the immense movement that led Foucault from a theory of knowledge in *The Archaeology of Knowledge* to a theory of power in *Discipline and Punish*, and then from a theory of power to a theory of knowledge-power in *The Will to Knowledge*, to end up in a beyond of power, that is, a theory of the possible, with *The Use of Pleasure* and *The Care of the Self*. But, as we will show, this passage from the question of power to the question of the possible in Foucault’s late thought concerns above all Deleuze’s own thought. That’s why it took so long to formulate. In the Foucault book, the concept of the “possible” does not appear. The beyond of power only takes the form of the fold, of the inner folding of force as power over oneself, as care of the self. One must await the Leibniz book, two years later, in order to see Deleuze ground this concept of the “fold” in an ontology of the possible. Only there does Deleuze find the instruments for an ontology of the possible, as interior folds of force in the soul that Foucault discovered in the Greeks, but that Leibniz had revealed in every monad as the mode of existence of the world before its realization.

### The Folds of Power

After Foucault’s death, Deleuze returns to *The Archaeology of Knowledge* and *Discipline and Punish*, but in order to read them in the light of the two final volumes of *The History of Sexuality* published that same year in 1984. He dedicates his Tuesday seminar to the reconstitution of the three periods of Foucault’s thought—knowledge, power, and subjectivation. These seminars form the horizon of the second part of *Foucault*, published in 1986. The structure of this second part follows this chronological tripartite division. The first chapter, “Strata or Historical Formations: The Visible and

the Articulable (Knowledge),” presents an analysis of *The Archaeology of Knowledge*. The second, “Strategies or the Non-Stratified: the Thought of the Outside (Power),” treats *Discipline and Punish* and *The Will to Knowledge*. The third, “Foldings, or the Inside of Thought (Subjectivation)” concerns *The Use of Pleasure* and *The Care of the Self*. The overall effect is a bit strange. After having reprised the articles he had written earlier on *The Archaeology of Knowledge* and *Discipline and Punish* in part one of the book, Deleuze returns to these works of Foucault in the second part, but in order to place them in a three-stage chronology, in which the final books of *The History of Sexuality* appear with a Hegelian tonality, as if the question of subjectivation had been the resolution of theoretical impasses in Foucault’s approach to the question of knowledge and power.

From the beginning of the second part of the book—written after 1984—Deleuze, with a disenchanted regard, treats the pragmatics of statements, and the microphysics of power, as being wounded by a theoretical malaise of origins. This malaise is revealed progressively, slowly, from inside the delicate analysis of Foucault’s broad theses on knowledge and power. This malaise has a single name—the Outside.

According to Deleuze, the Outside haunts the relation between regimes of the statement and ways of seeing or perceiving in *The Archaeology of Knowledge*. Visibility is not to be confused with visual, or more generally sensible, elements, such as qualities, things, objects, or combinations of objects, but is composed by forms of luminosity or a light-being that is not opened by fields of statements. For its part, the enunciable [*énonçable*] refers to a language-being that renders statements enunciable, sayable, or readable. “From the beginning, one of Foucault’s fundamental theses is the following: there is a difference in nature between the form of content and the form of expression, between the visible and the articulable [*énonçable*]” (F 61). For Deleuze, this difference in nature is also a nonrelation or a relation of exteriority of essence between the visible and the enunciable. There is no linkage [*enchaînement*] that goes from the visible to the statement or from the statement to the visible. Between speaking and seeing, it’s a matter of an impossible conjunction. Deleuze thus asks, “How, then, is the non-relation a relation?” (F 65). How can one speak and see at the same time without seeing what one says in the same way that one does not see what one speaks about?

Deleuze charts the different responses to this problem that Foucault proposed. The first is that of the metaphor of a battle, of an embrace or double insinuation. Statements and visibilities are simultaneously established one against the other as fighters who struggle or capture one another. However, in Deleuze’s view, this solution does not take account of what is fundamental for Foucault, that is, the primacy of the statement. For this reason, Foucault seeks another solution, which has a Kantian inspiration. It’s a matter of

attributing to the statement a condition of spontaneity, whereas the visible is the receptive correlative of the spontaneity of the statement: “This is a second response to the problem of the relation between the two forms: only statements are determining and revelatory, even though they reveal something other than what they say” (F 67). But this solution is also weak, that is, it has the same weakness as its Kantian inspiration.<sup>1</sup> Foucault also needed a third entity between the enunciable and the visible, just as the schema served in the relation between the spontaneity of the understanding and the receptivity of intuition for Kant. This third entity, in Deleuze’s analysis, is found only in another form of the nonrelation. No longer the nonrelation of the exteriority between language and visibility, but as something external to the exterior. Deleuze calls it “the outside.” And, as in the 1975 reading of *Discipline and Punish*, he regards this outside as Foucault had instituted it in the central concept of his approach to the nature of thought, but with this small, nonphenomenological mutation: it is force, or rather, the relation of force with other forces, in short, it is power.<sup>2</sup>

We are faced with an enormous displacement. This time, power does not concern disciplinary mechanisms [*dispositifs*], or what Deleuze in 1975 called abstract machines, such as panopticism—indeed, the very concept of the “abstract machine,” like that of the “assemblage,” simply disappears from the 1986 text. Power, the central concern of *Discipline and Punish*, in Deleuze’s 1986 view, is a Kantian concept; it is essentially relation, relation of forces. It is as such that it functions as a response to the fundamental question of the nature of the nonrelation between speaking and seeing. And Deleuze says so quite openly. Power is the third solution to the problem of Kantian schematism discovered by Foucault. Between the spontaneity of the statement and the receptivity of seeing, there is the analogue of an intermediary faculty between understanding and sensibility.<sup>3</sup>

The concept of the “diagram” is also modified. It simply indicates that forces are always and already hybrid realities, where each force exists only in conflict with other forces, that is, acting on other forces while being affected by them. Foucault’s diagrammaticism, despite all his declarations, is no longer a political concept for Deleuze. It becomes an ontological thesis; it lets us know the nature of force, simultaneously active and passive, simultaneously having the same spontaneity of the statement and the same receptivity of seeing.

Power is indeed the Outside of the nonrelation between the enunciable and the visible. Although diagrammatic, although presupposing the dimension of a closed field where forces, as a whole, find themselves in relations of local and instantaneous conflict always affecting the whole, the outside of power in the 1986 version no longer has the dimension of closure of the 1975 version. On the contrary, Deleuze stresses its openness. Affect, the being receptive of

force, rather than the vulnerability to other forces with which each force is in a relation of conflict, is above all the effect of the outside. "It is always from the outside that a force affects, or is affected by, others. [. . .] The diagram stems from the outside but the outside does not merge with any diagram, and continues instead to 'draw' [*tirer*] new ones. In this way the outside is always an opening on to a future, with which nothing is finished" (F 89; trans. modified). The outside, which at the beginning was seen in the finitude of relations of force, is now transformed into the horizon of infinitude, into the nonlimited field of singularities and nonformal functions. Deleuze presents it progressively as "life." First, as that life that is taken as the object of control as biopolitics of populations. Then, life becomes a metaphysical concept. It is the "plenitude of the possible" (F 91). Finally, Deleuze sees it as a vitalist concept. "Is not the force that comes from outside a certain idea of Life, a certain vitalism, in which Foucault's thought culminates?" (F 92–3). The outside is Life. And life, itself, becomes not simply the outside, but its proper power/capacity [*puissance*].<sup>4</sup>

The outside thus acquires a paradoxical dimension. It is the exterior of the exterior, the nonrelation vis-à-vis another nonrelation, that between the enunciable and the visible, but, at the same time, it is, as life, the most immanent plane of the real. The outside as life inhabits all the dimensions of knowledge, power, and thought. According to Deleuze, Foucault's last two books investigate this paradox. From the concept of biopower or power over life, which Foucault worked on in the first volume of *The History of Sexuality*, he moves to the concept of power of life over itself. In the Greeks and the Romans, relations of forces are established no longer as a conflict among individuals, but as the redoubling of force. From the preceding analyses, the concepts of a knowledge and a power without subject are disengaged. But, with *The Use of Pleasure* and *The Care of the Self*, Foucault not only addresses a problematic of subjectivation, but also, in order to reach a conclusion, breaks with a perspective of finitude in regard to power. He thus thinks something totally different, in a perspective his preceding works had kept on the side: this fold [*repli*] of knowledge and power through which and in which the subject hollows itself out as a site of refuge. It is thus that the great figures of exteriority and the outside give way to those of interiority: if the latter had been, literally, excluded by the former, it was to find themselves recluses in another space that is proper to them. The outside as life and life as power/capacity of the outside lead to the figure of an outside that is effectuated only in an interiority, in an inside that is deeper [*plus profond*] than any interior world. From the relation to a nonrelation, the outside becomes a relation to oneself. *Enkrateia*, the relation to oneself as mastery, this power that one exercises on oneself, is the Greek solution to the question of power as government of others, as well as the solution to the question of the autonomy of knowledge.

If Greece invented autonomous knowledge, a knowledge that is affirmed by itself, if it defined a power of truth that is no longer the truth of power, it's because it founded the power of knowledge on problematizations of the self of power [*problématisations de soi du pouvoir*]. Mastery, the government of oneself as the condition of governing others, thus is presupposed as an operation of the outside and on the outside, a doubling of the outside that constitutes an inside. "The Greeks are the first doubling. What belongs to the outside is force, since it is essentially a relation between other forces: it is inseparable in itself from the power to affect other forces (spontaneity) and to be affected by others (receptivity). But what comes about as a result is *a relation of force with itself, a power to affect itself, an affect of self on self*" (F 100–1; trans. modified).

This movement of doubling of the outside, this snag [*accroc*], this reflection of force on itself that produces an inside, not in the sense of something other than the outside, but the inside *of* the outside. Deleuze calls it "fold [*pli*]" or "folding [*plissement*]." Foucault is the great precursor of the fold.<sup>5</sup> And if he must go back to the Greeks in his archaeology of knowledge and power, it's precisely because—and again, only in the problematizations of pleasures and the care of the self as foldings of force—they concern the center of this operation of the outside which, in its entirety, is folded and produces an inside that is hollowed out and developed in its own dimension. The fold of the outside comes to be revealed as a third dimension of the non-relation between the sayable and the visible, beyond knowledge and power. It's the dimension of subjectivation, the dimension of the self. We thus arrive at what Deleuze calls the ethical moment of Foucault's work, after the epistemological and political moments.

The moment of knowledge was founded on the primacy of the real and on the saturation of the actuality [*effectivité*] of domains of statements, in contrast to the possibility of phrases and the virtuality of interpretations. The moment of power, of abstract machines, was that of the primacy of power and all the other modal concepts associated with it, such as "probability" or "potentiality." The moment of subjectivation is no longer that of power, but that of the "possible." Deleuze never uses the concept of the "possible" as correlate of the self. He prefers calling the inside of the outside "absolute memory" or "memory of the future," where time makes every present pass into forgetting and conserves the past in memory.<sup>6</sup> Developing the concept of the possible will be the task of *The Fold*. In 1988, Deleuze returns to this concept of folding, of the doubling of force, to explicate Leibniz. And in this way, the abandonment of a theory of power in the name of a theory of subjectivation is explicitly accompanied by an ontology of the possible.

### Ethics between the Possible and the Virtual in *The Fold*

*The Fold* marks a new era in Deleuze's thought. It's a return to a great number of concepts. First, the concept of the "event." Second, not a return, but a reconciliation with the concept of the "possible." And the possible is accompanied by the "virtual," which constitutes a third new concept. The fourth theoretical innovation is in the concept of the "concept." After the demolition of the metaphysics of the concept in *Difference and Repetition*, the praise of the "concept" from *The Fold* on is indeed a significant turn.

We know that in *Difference and Repetition*, the program for thinking the essence of difference and the essence of repetition depends on the abandon of the idea that thought takes place through concepts. Deleuze wants to approach an idea of difference that is not reduced to simple conceptual difference, and a concept of repetition that is not reduced to a difference without concept, that is, that is not confused with objects represented under the same concept. Difference must be something completely other than a relation between concepts, and repetition even more than a simple relation between things that belong to the same concept. Because originary difference since Aristotle has always been thought of as conceptual difference and as difference through the concept, that is, as difference as repetition of the concept in the thing, then, to save difference in itself implies, in the 1968 book, a critique not only of the philosophy of the concept, but above all of the localization in the concept of the work of philosophy. Likewise, since repetition was conceivable only within a representation of the identical according to the concept, to let repetition manifest its singularity, without being the singularity of a concept, was succeeded by a new determination of the singular. In both difference and repetition, Deleuze wants to think in the margins of a theory of the concept.

The identification of thought with the work of the concept that one finds in *The Fold* and *What Is Philosophy?* thus signifies a very profound change. We must analyze this metamorphosis of the concept of the "concept." In the same fashion as the archaeology of the concept of the "event," where we accompanied the passage of a theory of the event with a theory of the assemblage, we must reconstitute the stages of the development of the concept of the "concept." We will try to make evident the process that leads Deleuze from an anticonceptual ontology of difference and repetition to a conceptual ontology of the event.

In a schematic fashion, we may say that the theory of the concept makes its first appearance in *Difference and Repetition*; it disappears in *The Logic of Sense* and is only presented anew in *The Fold*. So, what is the significance of this mysterious, almost hidden movement? Is it the expression of an internal radicalization of the thought of the concept?

For Deleuze, all the great speculative programs that attempted a thought of difference had failed, because of their reduction of difference to a conceptual determination. As he explains, “Perhaps the mistake of the philosophy of difference, from Aristotle to Hegel via Leibniz, lay in confusing the concept of difference with a merely conceptual difference, in remaining content to inscribe the difference in the concept in general. In reality, so long as we inscribe difference in the concept in general we have no singular Idea of difference, we remain only with a difference already mediated by representation” (DR 27).<sup>7</sup>

The doctrine of the concept belongs, in its essence, to the same theoretical configuration that makes thought an activity of representation (see DR 134). This is the double relation of the concept with its object, in the sense that the concept is effectuated in a memory and in a consciousness of self (see DR 11–12). The concept is always articulated in terms of identity, opposition, resemblance, and analogy, in brief, as that which blocks repetition and difference. It is that which immobilizes and condenses movement and that which relates things to a consciousness. This artificial blockage of the concept signifies that, in its logical usage, the concept suffers from a limitation. The fact is that “the predicate in the concept is not, by virtue of its becoming other in the thing, a part of that thing” (DR 12). What interests us here is the relation between the concept and representation. Representation thinks the concept only on the basis of the dualism of “possible/actual [*effectif*],” allowing no true approach to the real. That the predicate is not a part of the thing not only signifies that the predicate, as language, is a construction of consciousness, but also that the relation itself between the concept and things of which it is the concept can only constitute a false relation. The concept lacks truth in its relation to the real.

From the modal point of view, the kernel of the critique of the philosophy of the concept is the discovery of its dependence in an ontology of the possible. We fail to understand difference and repetition when we think of them as conceptual difference and as repetition of concepts in the thing designated by the concept. The concept is thus posed as the thing but in its condition as possible thing or as the possibility of the thing. The concept is possible, whereas the named thing is real. In this way, we forget the very nature of difference in the thing, which is not a difference facing its concept but a difference in existence: we also forget the difference of existence and nonexistence. “Every time we pose the question in terms of possible and real, we are forced to conceive of existence as a brute eruption, a pure act or leap which always occurs behind our backs and is subject to a law of all or nothing. What difference can there be between the existent and the non-existent if the non-existent is already possible, already included in the concept and having all the characteristics that the concept confers upon it as a possibility?” (DR 211).

The possible is the category that determines that, from the point of view of the identity of the concept, there is no difference between the possible and the real, since everything is already given in the concept. To accede to the concept is to have the representation of the thing in its possibility. The category of the possible is the correlate of a philosophy of the concept and of representation. The possible always goes back to the form of identity and resemblance in the concept. The possible homogenizes being as much as thought, since representation determines the object as really conforming to the concept, as its essence. "Existence is *the same* as but outside the concept" (DR 211). Existence becomes the repetition of the concept in things, and repetition the simple difference of the thing in regard to the concept, its exteriority. The correlation concept/possibility cancels both difference and repetition since "existence is therefore supposed to occur in space and time, but these are understood as indifferent milieux instead of the production of existence occurring in a characteristic space and time. Difference can no longer be anything but the negative determined by the concept" (DR 211).

How can we think difference in itself without reducing it to the repetition of its possibility in the concept? It's here that Deleuze introduces the Bergsonian concept of the "virtual."<sup>8</sup> The virtual defines existence, not as realization, but as actualization. "The possible is opposed to the real; the process undergone by the possible is therefore a 'realization.' By contrast, the virtual is not opposed to the real; it possesses a full reality by itself. The process it undergoes is that of actualization" (DR 211). Far from realizing through resemblance, the virtual actualizes in differentiating, in such a way that, through the play of a difference without negation, actualization is the creation of the new, individuation. It's not a matter here of determining the ontological condition of the virtual in *Difference and Repetition*. What is important is the way in which the opposition of the virtual and the possible allows a passage to an ontology of difference and repetition, which makes any theory of the concept unviable.

One may then ask: What is the correlate of the virtual in thought? How can one think the virtual without reducing it to the concept, as was the case with the possible? The answer can only seem weak. Deleuze only moves the limits of the "concept" toward the privileged area of the "Idea": "The virtual, by contrast, is the characteristic state of Ideas: it is on the basis of its reality that existence is produced, in according with a time and a space immanent in the Idea" (DR 211). Or again, in another passage, "the possible and the virtual are further distinguished by the fact that one refers to the form of identity in the concept, whereas the other designates a pure multiplicity in the Idea" (DR 211). In opposition to the theory of the concept and its ontology of the possible, what is necessary is a theory of the idea and its ontology of the virtual.<sup>9</sup>



We know that, to an extent, Kant offers Deleuze the field for thinking the idea as problematic field and as immanent to its solutions. This explains why, when Deleuze recuperates the concept of the “concept” as the positive dimension of thought, he will define it in the same fashion as the idea. Hence the disappearance of a theory of the idea in *The Fold* and in *What Is Philosophy?*

It’s surprising that, in an interview on *A Thousand Plateaus* in 1980, the last book in which there is no treatment of the concept of the “concept,” Deleuze says: “as soon as there are concepts, there’s genuine philosophy” (N 32), or again, “Philosophy has always dealt with concepts, and doing philosophy is trying to invent or create concepts” (N 25). Here we find a condensation of the most important features of the problem of the concept from *The Fold* on. Deleuze wants to think philosophy as the creation of concepts. The concept says more about the circumstances than the thing itself that it designates. In sum, the concept speaks the event. “The concept is the contour, the configuration, the constellation of an event to come” (WP 32–3). The concept is this virtual that does not condense but provides an exit [*faire sortir*]: it no longer closes but expedites, and expels the thing, the circumstance, and the event. “It’s not a matter of bringing all sorts of things together under one concept but rather of relating each concept to variables that explain its mutations” (N 31).<sup>10</sup> The concept is a cartography, it is the crossing of diverse planes, and it is difference in itself. With the return of the concept of the “concept,” the concept of the “possible” also returns. In *Difference and Repetition*, the refutation of a theory of the concept accompanies the critique of a metaphysics of the possible. In *The Fold*, “concept” and “possible” appear together. As in 1968, they are reciprocally explained. But in 1988, it’s no longer a question of their common collapse. Quite the contrary: “concept” and “possible” are reciprocally explained because they both explain the “event.” The event will become central in Deleuze’s last books after the collapse of the theory of the “assemblage” in *A Thousand Plateaus*, as we have shown.

If Deleuze’s reconciliation with the concept comes through Leibniz, it’s because Leibniz has an original conception of the concept. “First of all, the concept is not a simple logical being, but a metaphysical being; it is not a generality or a universality, but an individual; it is not defined by an attribute, but by predicates-events” (TF 42; trans. modified). In *The Fold*, the univocity of being finds its maximum expression in the concept of the event.<sup>11</sup> The concept is the couple “predicates-event” and the event in turn is the active unity of a change, that is, the real definition of substance.

The return of the event is inseparable from the theory of the concept. The event is thought as concept, and both are presented as virtuals. “The concept is not a simple logical being, but a metaphysical being; it is not a generality or a universality, but an individual; it is not defined by an attribute, but by predicates-events” (TF 42; trans. modified). Here we find three fundamental

planes that orient Deleuze's reading of Leibniz: the plane of the concept, the plane of the event, and the plane of the singularity. The concept is said not of the thing, but of the event as that which happens to the thing. But it is said from an immanent point of view, and it is said as included in the thing, once what happens to the thing is one of its analytic predicates, one of its intrinsic properties. Thus, the concept is also the reasoning principle of the thing [*le principe de raison de la chose*]. The concept tells why the thing is what it is, it tells not what is universal in the thing, but the thing as absolute individuality, as individual. Since everything that happens to the thing belongs to the thing as its essential predicate, to speak the ensemble of events that composes it, is to speak the thing according to its essence and its singularity. This perfect resonance between the concept and the thing reveals another dimension: the concept itself belongs to the thing, and it is the expression of its singularity. It is not a simple logical being, but a metaphysical being.

All the weight of this equivalence between the concepts of the "concept," the "individual," and the "event" rests on that of the "event." It's precisely the theory of relational predicates, where the predicate is only the relation or event, and where the event, in turn, is only a type of relation, that organizes Deleuze's reading of Leibniz. Deleuze even offers a short history of the philosophy of the event in *The Fold*. Leibniz represents the second chapter in this history, inaugurated by the Stoics, the third chapter of which is Whitehead's philosophy of nature. *The Fold* is built in large part on the inscription of Leibniz's philosophy of the event into the physics of incorporeals as anticipation of Whitehead's creationist theory.<sup>12</sup>

The great originality of Leibniz's logic of the event derives from his theory of the concept. Whereas the event for the Stoics goes back to a logic of sense, and whereas in Whitehead it has as its correlate a theory of "prehensions" (see TF 81), in Leibniz, what corresponds to the event is always a concept. Deleuze will never say it enough. What is fundamental is the rupture with the classical conception of the concept as a being of reason. For Leibniz, "the concept is no longer the essence or the logical possibility of its object, but the metaphysical reality of the corresponding subject. It can be stated that all relations are internal, precisely because the predicates are not attributes" (TF 54). This metaphysical condition of the concept is founded in the monadological theory of substance. For Leibniz, substance is on one hand concrete, determined, individual, and on the other, the subject of inherence or inclusion. Thus, individuation does not go from a genre to species, but from singularity to singularity. This absolute preeminence of the individual is founded precisely on the metaphysical condition of the concept. Because the concept completely exhausts the individual essence, it is never said of universals or of species. For Leibniz, only the individual exists. According to Deleuze, this univocal primacy of the individual is the consequence of the real status

of the concept, and of the ontological status of the event: “it is by virtue of the power of the concept: monad or soul. Thus this power of the concept (to become a subject) does not consist in determining a genre to infinity, but in condensing and in prolonging singularities. The latter are not generalities but events” (TF 64). How can we attribute this principle of individuation to the power/capacity of the concept?

Deleuze’s answer proceeds via a reciprocal return to the concepts of the “event” and the “virtual.” Deleuze distinguishes two planes of the event: (1) the ensemble of the virtual world as being itself a single event; and (2) what is actualized in an infinite number of individual events. The world is defined as a series of inflexions or events, pure emission of singularities. In this sense, “the world is virtually first in respect to individuals that express it (God has created, not Adam the sinner, but the world in which Adam has sinned). *In this sense the individual is the actualization of preindividual singularities*” (TF 64). The world thus has two levels, one through which it is enveloped in virtual monads, and the other engaged in the matter of its actualizations. Both are of the order of the event, event of the virtual world and event of actualized individuals. But this double reality of the event forces Deleuze to reformulate his own theory of the virtual. He drops the opposition between the virtual and the possible that he had maintained in *Bergsonism* and *Difference and Repetition* (see B 96–8 and DR 211–15).

Alongside the couple virtual–actual, Deleuze places the couple possible–real. And the two couples belong to the same world. “The world or the hazy line of the world resembles a virtuality that is actualized in the monads. The world has actuality only in the monads, which each convey it from each monad’s own point of view and on its own surface. But the coupling of the virtual–actual does not resolve the problem. There exists a second, very different coupling of the possible–real. For example, God chooses one world among an infinity of possible worlds: the other worlds also have their actuality in monads that are conveying them. Adam who does not sin or Sextus who does not rape Lucretia. Therefore there exists an actual that remains possible, and that is not forcibly real. [. . .] The world is a virtuality that is actualized in monads or souls, but also a possibility that must be realized in matter or in bodies” (TF 104).

Actualization and realization have different processes, the one by distribution and the other by resemblance. The event is that which at once is actualized and is realized. The neutral singularity, which has characterized the event since *The Logic of Sense*, in *The Fold* is called “inflexion,” that is, that which is the “secret part of the event that is at once distinguished from its own realization, from its own actualization, even though realization does not exist on the outside [. . .] it is pure inflection as ideality, a neutral singularity [. . .]: a pure virtuality and possibility, the world in the fashion of a Stoic Incorporeal, the pure predicate” (TF 105–6).

Actualized monads are only events. But these events do not exhaust the plane of the event. There is always a secret part of the event that is distinguished from its proper realization, even though it does not exist on the outside. As Deleuze says, “if we use Blanchot’s words, ‘the part of the event as much as its accomplishment’ can neither actualize nor realize its carrying out” (TF 105). Deleuze again takes up the term *eventum tantum* that he had used in *The Logic of Sense*.<sup>13</sup> The concept has the power/capacity of the individual precisely because it is spoken in the plane of the pure reserve of events. The concept shapes the event before its actualization and sustains it in its singularity. As we will see, this harmony between the concept and the event and between the virtual and the possible orients the entirety of *What Is Philosophy?*

## NOTES

1. “Kant had already undergone a similar adventure: the spontaneity of understanding did not exert its determination on the receptivity of intuition without the latter continuing to contrast its form of the determinable with that of determination. Kant therefore had to invoke a third agency beyond the two forms that was essentially ‘mysterious’ and capable of taking account of their coadaptation as Truth. This was the *schema* of imagination” (F 69).

2. “The appeal to the outside is a constant theme in Foucault and signifies that thinking is not the innate exercise of a faculty, but must become thought. Thinking does not depend on a beautiful interiority that would reunite the visible and the articulable elements [*le visible et l'énonçable*], but is carried under [*se fait sous*] the intrusion of an outside that eats into the interval and forces or dismembers the internal” (F 87).

3. “Foucault’s diagrammaticism, that is to say the presentation of pure relations between forces or the emission of pure singularities, is therefore the analogue of Kantian schematicism: it is this that ensures the relation from which knowledge flows, between the two irreducible forms of spontaneity and receptivity. And this holds in so far as the force itself enjoys a spontaneity and receptivity which are unique to it” (F 82; trans. modified).

4. “life as power [*puissance*] of the outside” (F 95; trans. modified).

5. “The inside as an operation of the outside: in all his work Foucault seems haunted by this theme of an inside which is merely the fold of the outside, as if the ship were a folding of the sea” (F 97).

6. “If folding or doubling haunts all Foucault’s work, but surfaces only at a late stage, this is because he gave the name of ‘absolute memory’ to a new dimension which had to be distinguished both from relations between forces or power-relations and from stratified forms of knowledge” (F 99).

7. Or again, in another formulation, “Here we find the principle which lies behind a confusion disastrous for the entire philosophy of difference: assigning a distinctive

concept of difference is confused with the inscription of difference within concepts in general—the determination of the concept of difference is confused with the inscription of difference in the identity of an undetermined concept” (DR 32).

8. As Éric Alliez says, “Deleuze in a way doubles Bergsonian processuality by *integrating* his differentialist vitalism with the objective definition of the problem as Idea. The Idea whose differential genesis comes to displace the duality of the concept and of intuition inasmuch as it goes from the virtual to its actualization, from conditions of determinability of the problem to the cases of determined solutions.” And later, Alliez concludes: “Deleuze develops a *Bergsonian ideal of a post-Kantian inspiration*” (Alliez 1998: 253).

9. An ontology that, because it is constructed outside the concept, is nonrepresentable. Thus, Ideas “are multiplicities, systems of multiple differential elements, singular problem-setting structures. And being structures, they are virtual. [. . .] The virtuality of the Idea does not require the assistance of an identical subject or an identical object in order to become real. Representation belongs essentially to consciousness and follows the logic of solutions. The Idea, on the contrary, is in Deleuze’s expression, ‘sub-representative’ and it is fashioned according to the logic of the problem and of the question” (Boundas 1996: 89). See also Salanskis (1996: 59–60).

10. As Phillipe Mengue explains, “the concept, as mobile continuum of variations, cannot content itself solely with grouping its elements or singularities. Unity, the common, is not a universal, it is a *putting in common*, a connection of different variables” (Mengue 1994: 36).

11. “If the true logical criterion of substance is inclusion, it is because predication is not an attribution, because substance is not the subject of an attribute, but the inner unity of an event, the active unity of a change” (TF 55).

12. “That the predicate is a verb, and that the verb is irreducible to the copula and to the attribute, mark the very basis of the Leibnizian concept of the event. In the first place the event is deemed worthy of being raised to the state of a concept: the Stoics accomplished this by making the event neither an attribute nor a quality, but the incorporeal predicate of a subject of the proposition (not ‘the tree is green’ but ‘the tree greens’). They conclude that the proposition stated a ‘manner of being’ of the thing, an ‘aspect’ that exceeded the Aristotelian alternative, essence-accident: for the verb ‘to be’ they substitute ‘to follow,’ and they put manner in the place of essence. Then Leibniz implemented the second great logic of the event: the world itself is an event and, as an incorporeal (=virtual) predicate, the world must be included in every subject as a *basis* from which each one extracts the manners that correspond to its point of view (aspect). The world is predication itself, manners being the particular predicates, and the subject, what goes from one predicate to another as if from one aspect of the world to another. [. . .] A third great logic of the event will come with Whitehead” (TF 53).

13. “It is the expressible of all expressions, the realizable of all realizations, the *Eventum tantum* [. . .] pure virtuality and possibility, the world in the fashion of a Stoic Incorporeal, the pure predicate” (TF 106; trans. modified).

## Chapter 8

# Art as Spiritualization of the Possible

Especially in Chapter 7, “Percept, Affect and Concept,” of *What Is Philosophy?* Deleuze and Guattari enunciate, almost as a balance sheet, what may be considered their last approach to the art of the novel. In a single chapter, we see the emergence of the complete constellation of the concepts “composition,” “sensation,” “monument,” “becoming,” and “fabulation,” on which they will base the theses that direct their thought on literature in the 1990s. As a fundamental idea, here we find a final version of transcendental empiricism. In this version, the condition of the actuality [*effectivité*] of art is displaced from the plane of a genesis of faculties in their transcendental relation with the work to the plane of a spiritual composition of blocks of sensation as the zone of indetermination between thought and a Nature full of souls and full of microbrains. The Kantian table of faculties, in its Proustian version (sensitivity, imagination, memory, and thought), is now transformed into a map of planes. It becomes a philosophy of Nature where one can detach three planes in each block of sensations—the plane of affects, the plane of percepts, and the plane of concepts. Affects, percepts, and concepts, which correspond to three fundamental forms of thought—art, science, and philosophy—are thus revealed as the last metamorphosis of a theory of the faculties, the final implanting in the Kantian tradition of a question that addresses the conditions of experience.

To the idea of aesthetic experience as a block of sensations corresponds the idea of the work of art as monument, as that which conserves itself in itself, as that which holds itself together by itself. The big question that traverses the entirety of *What Is Philosophy?* concerns the mode of existence of the holding-together-by-itself of art. And here we discover a surprising answer: each art-monument is a universe, and this universe is neither virtual

nor actual—it is possible. The possible becomes what Deleuze and Guattari present as an “aesthetic category.”

The ontological condition of the work of art, its holding-together-by-itself, is explicitly distinguished from the condition of the event. This condition is the reality of the virtual, whereas the universes of art are the existence of the possible. Art does not actualize the virtual event but incorporates it. As monument, as possible universe, art conserves the event. Art incorporates the event, that is, renders the event possible. Through art, the virtual event is possible. If, in *The Fold*, the possible and the virtual remain parallel modes, in *What Is Philosophy?* they cross in a single plane of composition. Through incorporation, the virtual passes into the form of existence of the possible. This correspondence between the possible and the universe of art will be decisive for Deleuze’s reading of *Bartleby*’s formula and Beckett’s television plays. As we shall see, the becoming-impossible of *Bartleby* and the exhaustion of the possible in Beckett depend on this discovery of the possible as a mode of existence of the universes of art.

But what is this possible that defines the consistency of every work? Unfortunately, *What Is Philosophy?* does not delineate the contours of the concept of the “possible,” which had been introduced in 1988 with the Leibniz book. We must await the two last great texts of Deleuze on literature, “*Bartleby, or the Formula*,” published in *Essays Critical and Clinical*, and “*The Exhausted*,” published as a postface to four of Beckett’s television plays, to see the development of an entirely new approach to the concept of the “possible.” However, none of the issues in these texts can be read by themselves. It’s only on the horizon of the positions of *What Is Philosophy?* that one can gain access to Deleuze’s basic view of Melville and Beckett.

Art, like science and philosophy, is creation. But, more than creation, art is conservation of what it creates because it is, above all, that which is conserved in itself. The smile of a figure on a canvas endures as long as the canvas, the glance described on the page of a novel, exists on this same page; in short, the artistic expression subsists as long as its material support. But the autonomy of art goes beyond its materiality. Art is a compound [*un composé*] of sensations that are conserved in themselves, as long as the compound exists. *What Is Philosophy?* says that sensations are veritable beings, real existences. In their expression, sensations find an auto-sufficient mode of existence. In diverse materials, art produces beings that subsist as long as their proper expression. “Art preserves [*preserve*], and it is the only thing in the world that is preserved” (WP 153).<sup>1</sup>

Art is the auto-conservable, auto-consistent plane of composition. It sustains itself all alone by itself. The created thing is from its inception independent of its model, as well as the spectator and the artist who created it. Art is a compound [*un composé*] of beings that conserve themselves for themselves,

in themselves, and in the duration of their proper existence, without need of anything that justifies them or sustains them. However, the duration is not restricted to the duration or the resistance of the material support. “What is preserved by right is not the material, which constitutes only the de facto condition, but, insofar as this condition is satisfied (that is, that canvas, color, or stone does not crumble into dust), it is the percept or affect that is preserved in itself. Even if the material lasts for only a few seconds it will give sensation the power to exist and be preserved in itself *in the eternity that coexists with this short duration*. [. . .] Sensation is not realized in the material without the material passing completely into the sensation, into the percept or affect. All the material becomes expressive. It is the affect that is metallic, crystalline, stony, and so on; and the sensation is not colored but, as Cézanne said, coloring” (WP 166–6). There is a coexistence of material and sensation. The two found and create an eternity that subsists beyond the material, for that eternity exists in itself. This eternal existence becomes a being of sensation, an affect, and a percept, and it’s in this way that it becomes an autonomous compound. It’s in this way the affect becomes coloring, metallic, or stony; it engages everything in a becoming-color or becoming-sound, in short, in a becoming-affect.

Deleuze and Guattari also describe this auto-conservation of sensation in art as an autonomous block of sensation. They can thus conclude that the artwork is a being of sensation. “Sensations, percepts, and affects are *beings* whose validity lies in themselves and exceeds any lived. They could be said to exist in the absence of man because man, as he is caught in stone, on the canvas, or by words, is himself a compound of percepts and affects. The work of art is a being of sensation and nothing else: it exists in itself” (WP 164). This autonomy of sensation is created by a double sacrifice, that of the object of sensation and the sensing subject. Sensations, percepts, and affects do not need the human as subject who, in undergoing them, would grant them a consistency or justification. They exist before man [*en deçà de l’homme*]. According to Deleuze and Guattari, sensation is, above all, the process of exceeding the lived and of becoming the expressive qualities of the object. It’s in this sense that artists themselves enter into this ecstasy and into this excess. To the extent that they are present in any material whatever, artists have themselves become affect, composed of percepts and affects: “it is the painter who becomes blue” (WP 181).

These autonomous sensations are the effect of what Deleuze and Guattari call the “wresting” [*l’arracher*] of affects from affections and percepts from perceptions. “By means of the material, the aim of art is to wrest the percept from perceptions of objects and the states of a perceiving subject, to wrest the affect from affections as the transition from one state to another: to extract a bloc of sensations, a pure being of sensations” (WP 167). Aesthetics is



thus transformed into a theory of pure *aisth sis*, not an anthropology of pure affects wrested from affections, nor even a psychology of pure percepts, but an ontology of pure sensations. The goal of art hence may be defined as an antihumanistic goal, for it corresponds to the extraction of all subjective traits of sensation. The goal of art is to attain pure sensation, sensation that is no longer a human sensation, pure affect that is no longer affection, and the pure percept that is no longer subjective perception. The big question of a theory of aesthetic experience thus becomes that of the nature of this “wresting” of an affect or a percept, of this “extracting” of a block of sensations.

First, this “wresting,” this “extracting,” is a procedure for demolishing human, all too human, conditions of experience. “Art undoes the triple organization of perceptions, affections, and opinions in order to substitute a monument composed of percepts, affects, and blocs of sensations that take the place of language. The writer uses words, but by creating a syntax that makes them pass into sensation that makes the standard language stammer, tremble, cry, or even sing: this is the style, the ‘tone,’ the language of sensations” (WP 176). Art is the uprooting of pure affects and percepts from any sphere of subjectivity. It is a process of distillation of sensation. For this process to succeed, there are processes specific to each creator. But all concentrate on a single point: the becoming-inhuman, the becoming-color, the becoming-cry, or pure sound of man.

Then, one must build blocks of sensations, and give them the condition of a monument. If art is a compound of affects that subsist in themselves, if there is an independence of affects from the moment of their expression, from the moment when they take form on a canvas, a page, a stone, the most difficult problem in art is for the artist to reach the point where the compound stands upright by itself. And Deleuze and Guattari stress that the difficulty of such a goal sometimes takes place through physical imperfection, geometric non-verisimilitude, organic anomaly. But all these deformations respond only to an artistic possibility that is greater and larger than physical possibility and that alone makes possible the attainment of the law of the creation of the auto-sufficiency and auto-conservation of the compound. Art is a compound that sustains itself alone only to the extent that art is a monument. “Monument” must not be understood as a lived state [*un v cu*] or a memory of the past, but as a compound of sensations of the present, auto-sufficient and holding together all alone. The monument is not a memory of the past but a compound of plural time that always has the present as its center of gravity.

What is very interesting is that at the moment of thinking the monument, Deleuze and Guattari privilege the art of the novel. It’s in the art of the novel that we see the equivocations in regard to the nature of sensation at play in the act of creation. If in painting, music, architecture, dance, and so on, one can believe that there is an independence of matter in relation to the

life of the artist and in the art of the novel, by contrast, it is more difficult to discern these two planes. Reminiscences of childhood, lived experiences, inner voices, beings of the imagination, fantasies, in short, all the subjectivity of an artist are easily projected on and mixed with the matter that composes a text. “We dwell on the art of the novel because it is the source of a misunderstanding: many people think that novels can be created with our perceptions and affections, our memories and archives, our travels and fantasies, our children and parents, with the interesting characters we have met, and, above all, the interesting character who is inevitably oneself (who isn’t interesting?), and finally with our opinions holding it all together. [. . .] But it is literature that has constantly maintained an equivocal relationship with the lived. We may well have great powers of observation and much imagination, but is it possible to write with perceptions, affections, and opinions?” (WP 170).

We now understand better the process of extracting or wresting affects or percepts from affections and perceptions. As monument, the block of sensations is a centripetal power/capacity [*puissance*]. The block of sensations itself wrests affects and percepts and makes them become the pure matter of the monument-art. In order to negate any vestige of a personal interiority, whether a reverie, fantasy, product of the imagination, or memory, Deleuze and Guattari define the art-monument as being an act of fabulation. Fabulation has the form of One [*on*, anyone, someone], of the neutral, of the collective. “Here the monument is not something commemorating a past, it is a bloc of present sensations that owe their preservation only to themselves and that provide the event with the compound that celebrates it. The monument’s action is not memory but fabulation” (WP 167–8). Monument of the present, block of pure affects and percepts, fabulation without memory, or reminiscences of childhood, such is the compound of artistic sensation as compound that holds itself together by itself alone. The monument thus does not belong to a past or a memory. It does not belong to any personal reminiscence of childhood. It is only the act of a fabulation, which, according to Deleuze and Guattari, is entirely without imagination, memory, dream, fantasy, or lived experience.

Fabulation, a concept that first appeared in Deleuze’s work in the cinema books, is that mental activity that is furthest from the subjective sphere. To fabulate is an impersonal act of creation, because it is directly plugged into a community. To fabulate is to appeal to a community to come, which arises in the form of visions and auditions. Fabulation is thus not a subjective or private affair; rather, it is an affair of becoming and visions. “Creative fabulation has nothing to do with a memory, however exaggerated, or with a fantasy. In fact, the artist, including the novelist, goes beyond the perceptual states and affective transitions of the lived. The artist is a seer, a becomer” (WP 171). Fabulation belongs to the world of pure affects and pure percepts, where a

life is manifest as immanent life, one freed from subjective attachments, a life wrested from personal lived experience. To fabulate is to go beyond the personal world; it's to break with subjective coordinates, uproot human references, and enter absolutely into a world of becomings, a world that is beyond reminiscences, fantasies, perceptive states, and affective passages of lived experience. As Deleuze and Guattari explain, "the percept is the landscape before man, in the absence of man. [. . .] *Affects are precisely these nonhuman becomings of man*, just as percepts—including the town—are *nonhuman landscapes of nature*" (WP 169). Fabulation is this nonhuman becoming of man, this nonhuman landscape of nature where affects and percepts exist for themselves, in themselves, as pure becomings, in the absence of man.

The centripetal effect of the art-monument, which at the same time, wrests affects from perceptions, wrests artists from themselves. The artist is the one who becomes, that is, the one who, in the act of contemplation, rejoins the world, mixes with nature, and enters a zone of indiscernibility with the universe. Van Gogh becomes sunflower, Kafka becomes animal, and Messiaen becomes rhythm and melody. "It should be said of all art that, in relation to the percepts or visions they give us, artists are presenters of affects, the inventors and creators of affects. They not only create them in their work, they give them to us and make us become with them, they draw us into the compound. [. . .] The flower sees [. . .] Whether through words, colors, sounds or stone, art is the language of sensations" (WP 175–6). The artist is the one who inhabits affect, who works with affect, and who lives in affect, the point of indistinction between the human and the animal or the entire world, this zone of indiscernibility between words and things. The artist is the one who speaks the language of images as is the case with Beckett, or who becomes ocean as in Melville, or who becomes mineral like Bartleby.

Affect "is a zone of indetermination, of indiscernibility, as if things, beasts, and persons (Ahab and Moby Dick, Penthesilea and the bitch) endlessly reach that point that immediately precedes their natural differentiation" (WP 173). Affect is the state of a life that precedes natural differentiation between formed beings, the state where every form is dissolved. It belongs to a pre-individual state, where man is not distinguished from animal or vegetable, where all beings are a-subjective. Affect is the creation of a primitive world, which Deleuze had described in Proust, the hermaphroditic and vegetable world. It's the zero-degree of the world. It is not, however, a return to the primitive state of life. Rather, it is its re-creation, the recommencement of the world: "Life alone creates such zones where living beings whirl around, and only art can reach and penetrate them in its enterprise of co-creation. This is because from the moment that the material passes into sensation, as in a Rodin sculpture, art itself lives on these zones of indetermination. The artist must create the syntactical or plastic methods and materials for such a great

undertaking which re-creates everywhere the primitive swamps of life. [. . .] It is a question only of ourselves, here and now; but what is animal, vegetable, mineral, or human is now indistinct" (WP 173–4).

A question haunts the auto-subsistence of art: that of its temporality. What is the time of the existence-in-itself of the monument? Is it the time of eternity? And how can one make the time of the monument and that of contemplation coexist? "How can a moment of the world be rendered durable or made to exist by itself?" (WP 172). How can the event be rendered a being in itself, durable and sustaining itself all alone, independent of the conditions of its appearance, beyond all the circumstances that made it possible?

Deleuze and Guattari here take up the Romantic question of the immanent temporality of the art work via the concept of the event. The art-monument, as block of sensations, has the condition of a pure event. The question then is: How is the event made consistent? Here we must specify further the status of the event in *What Is Philosophy?* It's not a simple repetition of the ontology of incorporeals of *The Logic of Sense*. Nor is it Whitehead's transformation of the Leibnizian theory of the event, which Deleuze discussed in *The Fold*. True, Deleuze and Guattari begin by defining the event as the reality of the virtual. However, the relation event/virtual does not remain the same. It depends for its treatment on three modes, the scientific, the philosophical, and the artistic modes. According to the first, there is no dimension of the event. Science is not concerned with the event, because it is oriented toward the empirical world, the world of actualized states of things. The event is of the order of Aion, the time that exceeds all organizable forms of time and that is presented as an immense empty time. The event, thus, is not the order of classifiable time, the time in which instants succeed one another, but the order of becoming, which belongs to the time of immanence, to the between-time that superimposes itself. In addition, the event is the vapor that leaves states of things, without being confused with them. Hence, it is no longer spatially organizable. Science is concerned with chaos, but in order to understand it and to discover the secret it hides. It claims to order chaos and to extract functions that allow it to regulate states of things. The virtual is thus defined as the actualization of a state of things, their reference, and their provision of spatiotemporal coordinates. Science follows a descending movement from virtual chaos to states of things and tries to give references, that is, to actualize states of things in a body, in a singular time and space.

Philosophy follows the inverse movement. It starts from states of things in order to arrive at the virtual. Here, the event appears as the reality of the virtual, but of the virtual become consistent, become real entity on a plane of immanence. "The virtual is no longer the chaotic virtual but rather virtuality that has become consistent, that has become an entity formed on a plane of immanence that sections the chaos. This is what we call the Event, or the

part that eludes its own actualization in everything that happens” (WP 156). The virtual as event is that which escapes its proper actualization, the part of that which happens that is not actualized. The event is actualized in the state of things, in a body or in a lived experience [*vécu*], but as overflight [*survol*], that is, as entity with a part that is not actualized. Although the event is defined with the determinations of *The Logic of Sense*, as real without being actual, ideal without being abstract, immaterial, pure reserve in a state of overflight of states of things, between-time or empty time of Aion, it must be stressed that in *What Is Philosophy?* we are in the presence of an entirely new concept of the event. The event is actualized in the state of things, but it also has “a shadowy and secret part that is continually subtracted from or added to its actualization” (WP 156). It is this shadowy part that constitutes the virtual, that is the reality of the virtual. The event is thus a very specific virtual, that which, no longer being chaotic, has become consistent or real on the plane of immanence. It is “pure immanence of what is not actualized or of what remains indifferent to actualization, since its reality does not depend upon it” (WP 156). It is a virtual as part that eludes, that escapes, and that remains indifferent to its own actualization. The reality of the virtual does not depend on its actualization because it is pure immanence. Science, seeking a reference for the virtual, engages it in a state of things, and works on the part of the event that is actualized and effectuated, whereas philosophy, in making the inverse movement, works with the virtual part of the event that is not actualized. Philosophy thus conducts a “counter-effectuation”; that is, philosophy thinks that part within what happens that is not actualized. In this way, it renders the virtual consistent.

What path can art follow between the two lines of science and philosophy? In creating works of art, the artist creates states of things, not to actualize or effectuate a virtuality, but to countereffectuate it, to attain and rejoin the virtual, to render sensible that part of the event that is not actualized. Art produces works as states of things, not to order them, but to give them back to chaos, to equal them with the infinite, to express the virtual, in short, to extract the noneffectuable, nontemporal, part of the event, its part that constitutes the very reality of the virtual. One thus may say that art goes in both directions and the same time; it creates the actual but in order to free the virtual, it works on states of things but in order to make events emerge. However, art is not a synthesis of the two lines. “The three thoughts intersect and intertwine but without synthesis or identification. With its concepts, philosophy brings forth events. Art erects monuments with its sensations. Science constructs states of affairs with its functions” (WP 1988–9). Thus, the problem of the temporality of art is double: How can one render durable a moment of states of things? How can one make the event consistent? The event is not of the order of time but of becoming as between-time. This question must thus be

understood as: How can one render durable the between-time or the becoming of the event, that is, the eternal without an eternity? How can one make an event, a becoming, sensible, and actual? The answer is conveyed through the concept of “fabulation.”

There is a correspondence between art as a block of sensation and art as an expression of the event. In its expression, the event acquires an autonomous existence, subsists in itself and sustains itself all alone. This position of the event—as being that subsists for itself and in itself—Deleuze and Guattari define as an act of fabulation. To posit the event, to give it an autonomous existence, is to fabulate, that is, to invent a world and to create a universe. The actual event of a lived experience, or a purely fictional event that has never taken place—both become objects of fabulation. Both become objects of a visionary production of a reality that surrounds them and that functions as their world. To fabulate is to create a universe for an event. And this universe may be a literary universe, a pictorial universe, or a musical universe.

What ontological status do Deleuze and Guattari confer on this universe? What reality does it have? We here witness a return, in all its force, of the concept of the “possible.” To fabulate is to create a universe, a possible world for an event. Neither virtual nor actual, the possible appears as a reality set apart. It’s an aesthetic possible. Deleuze and Guattari thus establish a fundamental difference between “actualization” and “incarnation.” The possible of the monument is not the actualization of a series of events. It is rather the incarnation or incorporation of the event in a work of art. “The monument does not actualize the virtual event but incorporates or embodies it: it gives it a body, a life, a universe. This is how Proust defined the art-monument by that life higher than the ‘lived,’ by its ‘qualitative differences,’ its ‘universes’ that construct their own limits, their distances and proximities, their constellations and the blocs of sensations they put into motion—Rembrandt-universe or Debussy-universe. These universes are neither virtual nor actual; they are possibles, the possible as aesthetic category (‘the possible or I shall suffocate’), the existence of the possible, whereas events are the reality of the virtual, forms of a Thought-Nature that survey every possible universe” (WP 177–8). Nowhere does one find in Deleuze’s work a clearer distinction between these two modal domains. For the first time, one discovers a thesis on the ontological condition of universes created by art—literary, figurative, and musical. They are not actual, and they are not of the order of the effectivity of the enunciable—as Deleuze and Guattari led us to suspect with the concept of the “collective assemblage of enunciation” of *Kafka*. The universes of the art-monument are defined by their nonactuality, their temporality of a between-time, of something that happens but is not actualized. Now we learn that they are no longer virtual. Deleuze and Guattari reserve this mode of existence for events. Events, as they say, “are the reality of the virtual.”

They “survey” [*survolent*; literally, “fly over”] the universes of art, as purely spiritual Nature, as what Deleuze and Guattari call “Thought-Nature.” And these universes are not their actualization, but their incarnation and their incorporation. Art performs the modal conversion of the virtual. Universes that compose each work-monument are the effect of a process of donation of life, of donation of a body to the event. The very act of the work is the movement of the construction of a universe where the world of virtual realities is incarnated. It is a Rembrandt-universe, a Proust-universe, which gives a life to color-events and to love-events.

What is absolutely new is the fact that Deleuze and Guattari seek a specific modal status for these universes of art. Neither actual nor virtual, they can only be possible. But in what sense? Art as monument is the creation of blocks of sensation as sites of the incarnation, incorporation of the event. For its part, the event is the reality of the virtual that surveys the possible worlds of art. It does not necessarily precede them; it can even be created at the same time as the possible world. But the event will always be on the side of the virtual and art on the side of the possible. This possible is not the actualization of a virtual; it does not actualize the event. The possible as aesthetic category is the possible as a being in itself; it’s the affirmation of the existence proper to the possible, which is distinguished from the virtual existence of the event. The monument does not actualize the event nor does it derive from it. The monument incarnates or incorporates the event, gives it a body, a universe, and a life. The possible gives a world to the virtual-event.

And yet, how can we distinguish the virtual from the possible? How can we find, for possible universes, the modes of effectuation that are not confused with the process of actualization that defines the passage to the modality of the fact of virtual worlds? Virtuals are actualized. And possibles? Perhaps one could say that they are also actualized. Do Deleuze and Guattari here take up the distinction that Deleuze made in *The Fold* between on one hand the process of the actualization of virtuals and, on the other, the process of the realization of possibles? But, in this case, aren’t the entire world of the virtual and the entire world of the possible amputated from the condition of reality? If possibles are realized, does that mean that they were not already real as possibles?

This obscurity haunts the entirety of *What Is Philosophy?* It only finds a cautious solution with the concept of “fabulation.” In its literary condition, the possible has a utopian allure. For Deleuze and Guattari, the possible as aesthetic category is not restricted to the sphere of pure fiction. They present it as an ethical condition. To the extent that each art-universe is the creation of a possible, it is also a movement toward the future. The possible-monument, as compound of fabulated sensations, is not the memory of a past. Nor is it the affair of a people who are to come. The monument as aesthetic possible

is the celebration of a future. Fabulation, as Deleuze already explained in his cinema books, is the fabulation of a people who are missing. “This is, precisely, the task of all art and, from colors and sounds, both music and painting similarly extract new harmonies, new plastic or melodic landscapes, and new rhythmic characters that raise them to the height of the earth’s song and the cry of humanity: that which constitutes tone, health, becoming, a visual and sonorous bloc. A monument does not commemorate or celebrate something that happened but confides to the ear of the future the persistent sensations that embody the event” (WP 176). To incarnate the event in the possible universe of a monument is, through the conservation that art achieves through blocks of sensations and affects, to confer an actual sensation to a future sensing [*un sentir futur*]. Art makes a virtual event possible because it puts the event in the state of a promise of sensation in the future. In new sonorous chords, in plastic or melodic landscapes, and in rhythmic characters, an entirely new expression of a world is revealed, and this world is revealed as possible to the extent that it is the movement of becoming sensible in a future. In this look to the future, the monument establishes a possible that is at once aesthetic and ethical. Each chord, each landscape, and each character is fabulated not in place of, or in the name of, but for the people who are missing, for the people who are not there but who are already seen as invested with the state of the ear of the future of sensations. In that they persist in their proper conservation of the work, they belong to a possible world.

The people who are missing are a proper reality through the simple fact of their expression in art. “This possible world is not real, or not yet, but it exists nonetheless: it is an expressed that exists only in its expression—the face or an equivalent of the face.

To begin with, the Other Person [*Autrui*] is this existence of a possible world. “And this possible world also has a specific reality in itself, as possible” (WP 17; trans. modified). The people who are missing is the figure of the Other Person [*Autrui*] that is expressed in each artistic trait, in each chord, in each landscape, and in each character. As people who are missing, the Other Person is the world to come. In its anonymity, it receives a promise: that sensations will persist in the work. Every art-monument holds together all alone to the extent that it holds its promises toward the Other Person as existence of a possible world.

We must make a brief remark. In *The Logic of Sense*, Deleuze had spoken not only of the concept of the possible but also of the concept of the Other Person, and in order to classify the Other Person as expression of a “possible world.” However, at that time, Deleuze was inspired by structuralism, in such a way that he described the Other Person as “*the structure which conditions the entire field*” as “the a priori principle of the organization of every perceptual field according to categories” (LS 309). The Other Person was thus the



a priori of perception or the perceptual field. The possible world as expression of the Other Person was thought at once as horizon or field (structural, a priori) on which is carved out the manifestation of someone, and as the set of gestures or events that compose the future biography of the individual who is seen [*de celui qui se donne à voir*]. It is thus understandable that the example Deleuze suggests to make visible this relation between the “Other Person” and “possible world” is, precisely, that of structuralism: language [*langue*] as a priori structure that is actualized in language [*langage*].<sup>2</sup> After the Other Person as structural Other Person of *The Logic of Sense*, Deleuze now posits the Other Person as the act of fabulation that expresses a people who are missing. And the possible world is no longer the actualization of an a priori structure, but it is that reality that offers persistent sensation to the ear of the future. The possible has become fabulation.

Fabulation, defined as creation of a people who are missing, allows one to take up this dimension of the future that is inscribed in the concept of the possible. Art is the composition of affects and percepts that are beyond every subjective sphere and that belong to the collective dimension, that is, that make an appeal, in their proper creation, to the very constitution of a people to come. Revolution, as art, is the creation of a compound of actual events that are sustained all alone as a monument. And one perhaps understands better what art is for Deleuze and Guattari in reading what they write about revolution and its immanent force as a monument: “But the success of a revolution resides only in itself, precisely in the vibrations, clinches, and openings it gave to men and women at the moment of its making and that composes in itself a monument that is always in the process of becoming, like those tumuli to which each new traveler adds a stone. The victory of a revolution is immanent and consists in the new bonds it installs between people, even if these bonds last no longer than the revolution’s fused material and quickly give way to division and betrayal” (WP 177). Revolution is an immanent movement, and it is seen in the force that is present in vibrations, clinches, openings, new connections that it establishes. Like revolution, the success of art resides in the sensations that the artist makes expressive, and which, even if they last no longer than their matter, always and forever function as fusion between individuals, creation of an event-monument as universal compound in becoming. And as becoming, fabulation is of the order of the untimely, of time as bifurcation between past, present, and future, the time of Aion.

If one can speak of revolution in relation to art, it’s also because art is fundamentally the capture of forces, of forces of time.<sup>3</sup> Art is percept; it is the capture of nonsensible forces that are in the entire world, vibrations, and living lines. Art is the expression of a nonorganic life that exists and that vibrates in the universe. There is a force of life and a force of time that art alone manages to capture. And it does so in risking deformities and physical

and geometrical contortions that do not join the harmony of the real. There is an athleticism of art, and an affective athleticism, as Deleuze and Guattari say. The percept is the production of a possible world as expression of the audition of something to come.

Art is thus related both to the event of the world and to the possible as zone of the indiscernibility of life in the world. Art draws up a double question. It asks, in regard to the event: How can it be made durable and sensible? In relation to the possible, it asks: How can it be saturated, that is, how can it be made capable of expressing the event of a nonorganic life, of a power/capacity that goes beyond every logic and every rule? In the case of Beckett, how can one exhaust the possible? How can one render it impossible in the case of *Bartleby*? Beckett succeeds in making logic fade, and he exhausts the possible that regulate bodies; *Bartleby* becomes mineral, he becomes the wall he regards and fixes his gaze on. Both are examples of the immanent force that works in bodies, the cosmic and inorganic life that overflows them.

Deleuze and Guattari could not be more radical in their antihumanism. Even the flesh is not accepted. This ultimate instance of subjectivity, halfway between an objective body maintained for itself, as pure body, and a sensible consciousness, has too great a humanistic taste. "In short, the being of sensation is not the flesh but the compound of nonhuman forces of the cosmos, of man's nonhuman becomings, and of the ambiguous house that exchanges and adjusts them, makes them whirl around like winds. Flesh is only the developer which disappears in what it develops: the compound of sensations" (WP 183). In this refusal of the flesh, what one finds is the extreme nonmaterialization of sensation, that is, the refutation of Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological project that displaces consciousness toward the body of the chiasmus sensing/sensed [*sentant/senti*]. Sensation exists for itself, without being incorporated by a flesh that supports it and subjectivizes it. For this reason, the flesh, at the moment of sensation, must be effaced, and must disappear. It reveals the object of sensation, at the same time that it reveals sensation itself.

What's very interesting is that, according to Deleuze and Guattari, the refusal of the flesh as corporeal consciousness and the affirmation of sensation as an existence in itself, traversed by nonhuman forces, constitute the base of the definition of sensation as projection of sensation into the universe, into the cosmos, in the inorganic life that works in the nonhuman becomings of man. This antihumanism is achieved in its most extreme formulation; it has become a cosmological project, a study of nonhuman forces, and a topology of inorganic life from rocks and plants up to the nonhuman becomings of man.

As capture of nonsensible forces of the cosmos, art is the plane of composition that removes sensations from chaos. Deleuze and Guattari define chaos as a virtual, which, at absolute speed, is the birth and disappearance of all

possible forms. “Chaos is defined not so much by its disorder as by the infinite speed with which every form taking shape in it vanishes. It is a void that is not a nothingness but a *virtual*, containing all possible particles and drawing out all possible forms, which spring up only to disappear immediately, without consistency or reference, without consequence” (WP 118). Chaos is a virtual that contains all possible forms. However, instead of being a moment of actualization of these forms, chaos is their dissipation. Through absolute speed, it produces all possible forms, all worlds to come.

If art is pure spirit, and if art is the composition of affects that are wrested from affection, it is also Nature, and it is also territory and house. It’s in this sense that Deleuze and Guattari insist on the thesis that the primordial gesture of art is to cut out, to carve out either chaos, or a territory, always in order to make sensations arrive. “Perhaps art begins with the animal, at least with the animal that carves out a territory and constructs a house” (WP 183). To carve out a territory or cut up chaos is the very first moment of artistic creation. “All that is needed to produce art is here: a house, some postures, colors and songs—on condition that it all opens onto and launches itself on a mad vector as on a witch’s broom, a line of the universe or of deterritorialization” (WP 185). Through this mad vector, one absolutely enters the zone of indiscernibility between human and animal, between words and things, in short, between art and Nature. Art becomes the relation between what Deleuze and Guattari call “determinate *melodic compounds*” and the “infinite *symphonic plane of composition*.” They explain it thus: “infinite *plane of composition* [. . .]: from House to universe. From endosensation to exosensation. This is because the territory does not merely isolate and join but opens onto cosmic forces that arise from within or come from outside, and renders their effect on the inhabitant perceptible. [. . .] But if nature is like art, this is always because it combines these two living elements in every way: House and Universe, *Heimlich* and *Unheimlich*, territory and deterritorialization, finite melodic compounds and the great infinite plane of composition, the small and large refrain. Art begins not with the flesh but with the house. That is why architecture is the first of the arts” (WP 185–6).

Thus, there is an apparently contradictory movement in art. Art always goes in two directions at the same time: from the composite sensation to the plane of composition as slice of chaos, as movement of determined definition; and from the plane of composition to the composite sensation as movement of deterritorialization. Between the sensation and the plane, there is a strict coexistence and complementarity, the two correlatively forming and composing at the same time.<sup>4</sup>

This double movement of art between the finite and the infinite, which constitutes the plane of composition as slice of chaos, is that which sustains Deleuze and Guattari’s other definition of art: art as thought. Art is a form

of thought, art thinks as much as philosophy or science. Philosophy gives consistency to the event (concept) and tries to save the infinite. Science, by contrast, renounces the infinite. It gives chaos reference in such a way as to transform it into a function, and into a determinable coordinate (percept). Art creates with the finite and the infinite and gives to the event of the possible a life, a world (affect).

But these three forms of thought are a struggle less against chaos than against opinion and clichés, against rules of a narrow thought, one that is always logical. Rather than struggle against chaos, art makes chaos sensible. Art's concern is to render chaos sensible, for, according to Deleuze and Guattari, "art is not chaos but a composition of chaos that yields the vision or sensation, so that it constitutes, as Joyce says, a chaosmos, a composed chaos—neither foreseen nor preconceived. Art transforms chaotic variability into *chaoid* variety" (WP 204). Art is composition of chaos, and it transforms chaos into chaoid variety by making it leave its state of chaotic variability.<sup>5</sup> All thought is relation to chaos. Not a relation of exclusion, but on the contrary, of inclusion. Thought is the result of an operation that is carried out in chaos; it is the very composition of chaos. To think is to give consistency to chaos. To cut it, to make it consistent, is to give it a proper reality. Chaos becomes Thought, it acquires a reality as Thought or mental chaosmos.

Art is one of the three forms of cutting up chaos. Art, science, and philosophy are the three chaoids, the three forms of the thought and the creation of chaos. On each plane that cuts chaos, a proper reality is created. Thus, according to Deleuze and Guattari, philosophy is produced on the plane of immanence, science on the plane of consistency, and art on the plane of composition. The junction of the three planes is called the brain. The brain does not constitute their unity, it is only their connection, and their map. It's at the moment of thinking the brain that Deleuze and Guattari once more propose a very radical affirmation of their antihumanism: it's not man who thinks, but the brain. "It is the brain that thinks and not man—the latter being only a cerebral crystallization. [. . .] Philosophy, art, and science are not the mental objects of an objectified brain but the three aspects under which the brain becomes subject. Thought-brain" (WP 210). The "brain become thought" is the "brain become subject."

As concerns its status and its determinations, the brain rejoins the concept as pure event. Like the pure event, the brain is in a state of survey [*survol*; overflight], it is copresent with all its determinations; it flies over them at infinite speed. "It is not a brain behind the brain but, first of all, a state of survey [*survol*] without distance, at ground level, a self-survey [*auto-survol*] that no chasm, fold, or hiatus escapes. It is a primary, 'true form' as Ruyer defined it: neither a Gestalt nor a perceived form but a *form in itself* that does not refer to any external point of view [. . .] an absolutely consistent form that surveys

*itself* independently of any supplementary dimension, which does not appeal therefore to any transcendence” (WP 210).

There is thus a resonance between doing, the territorial form of art—house, postures, colors, and songs—and being, the form in itself of a thought-brain. As form that refers only to itself, the thought-brain can be stated in an “I.” The brain is an I, a philosophical “I conceive,” a scientific “I refer,” or an artistic “I feel [*Je sens*],” but an I that is always heterogeneous: “It is the brain that says *I*, but *I* is an other. [. . .] That is why the brain-subject is here called *soul* or *force*, since only the soul preserves by contracting that which matter dissipates, or radiates, furthers, reflects, refracts, or converts” (WP 211).

From sensation to the brain, from the form in itself of the brain to the soul, Deleuze and Guattari arrive at the last dimension of art: art as spiritual activity. More than cerebral, art is of the order of the soul. Art as compound of sensations is the force of contraction and of the resonance of vibrations. To sense is to contract, and it is contraction that conserves and conserves itself. As response to chaos, sensation contracts and conserves vibrations, and it’s in this force of contraction that sensation conserves itself per se. The result of a contracted vibration is sensation, which becomes, at this moment, quality or variety. The soul conserves what matter dissipates and composes itself with other sensations that it contracts in their turn. However, the soul is not an action, it is contemplation and pure passion. The soul is rather a force as faculty of sensing, of capturing, and of contemplating.<sup>6</sup> Sensation contemplates, and at this moment it is filled with itself as that which it contemplates. The soul is a pure internal sensing [*un pur sentir interne*], a passive faculty, a contemplation without action, movement or knowledge, it is a pure internal contraction of auto-fulfillment. The soul is thus a sensation in itself.

The spiritual dimension and the territorial dimension as slices form the two poles of art. Art as spirit may correspond to the definition of art as demarcation of a territory, construction of a house, because the soul is present even at the level of plants and rocks. The soul is not specific to the brain, in its connections or nervous tissues. It also incorporates the most elementary existences, the most embryonic, as pure faculty of sensing. Deleuze and Guattari condense this vitalism essential to every form of existence, this soul of brains as well as of rocks and plants, in a single expression: the inorganic life of things. “Not every organism has a brain, and not all life is organic, but everywhere there are forces that constitute micro-brains, or an inorganic life of things” (WP 213).

The texts on Bartleby and Beckett, which we will examine shortly, reveal the strongest correspondence between an ontology of the possible and an aesthesiology of the spiritual. These texts let us understand the extent to which the spiritualization of art allowed Deleuze to return to the pure image, and

thus to dedicate himself to Beckett's television plays and to privilege them as the ultimate form of literature.

## NOTES

1. "The work of art has value only through its internal consistency according to the principle that aims at the autopoiesis of the created (its independence, its autonomy, its life for itself). Hence, because of this principle, the work resembles nothing, imitates nothing. It must '*hold together all alone*,' through itself alone, without denoting or referring to a world outside itself that it reflects or a subject that expresses it. The literary work is valuable by itself, it is in essence that which stays together, upright: it is a 'monument'" (Mengue 2003: 44).

2. "It is true that the Other [*Autrui*] already bestows a certain reality on the possibilities which he encompasses—especially by speaking. The other is the existence of the encompassed possible. Language [*Le langage*] is the reality of the possible as such. The self [*Le moi*] is the development and explication of what is possible [*des possibles*], the process of its realization in the actual" (LS 307).

3. "And this, first of all, is what makes painting abstract: summoning forces, populating the area of plain, uniform color with the forces it bears, making the invisible forces visible in themselves, drawing up figures with a geometrical appearance but that are no more than forces—the forces of [ . . . ] time. Is this not the definition of the percept itself—to make perceptible the imperceptible forces that populate the world, affect us, and make us become?" (WP 181–2).

4. "But the composite sensation [*la sensation composée*], made up of percepts and affects, deterritorializes the system of opinion that brought together dominant perceptions and affections within a natural, historical, and social milieu. But the composite sensation is reterritorialized on the plane of composition, because it erects its houses there [ . . . ] At the same time the plane of composition involves sensation in a higher deterritorialization, making it pass through a sort of deframing which opens it up and breaks it open onto an infinite cosmos" (WP 197).

5. "A concept is a set of inseparable variations that is produced or constructed on a plane of immanence insofar as the latter crosscuts the chaotic variability and gives it consistency (reality). A concept is therefore a chaotic state par excellence; it refers back to a chaos rendered consistent, become Thought, mental chaosmos. And what would *thinking* be if it did not constantly confront chaos?" (WP 208).

6. "Contemplating is creating, the mystery of passive creation, sensation. Sensation fills out the plane of composition and is filled with itself by filling itself with what it contemplates: it is 'enjoyment' and 'self-enjoyment'" (WP 212).



## Chapter 9

# Bartleby or the Formula of the Impossible

### INTRODUCTION: ART BETWEEN CRITIQUE AND CLINIQUE

*Essays Critical and Clinical* is an unusual book. It's almost a Fellini-like grand finale where Deleuze takes all the names he had visited through his forty years of philosophical combat and makes them dance together. Side by side one finds not only the sequence Nietzsche, Saint Paul, D. H. Lawrence, and John of Patmos (sequence that forms Chapter 6), but also Heidegger with Jarry, Artaud with Kafka and Nietzsche, Spinoza with Plato. Likewise, as regards the names of literature. The analysis of Louis Wolfson's schizophrenic writing, or the analysis of different approaches to what children say, prepare the way for Lewis Carroll, Sacher-Masoch, Whitman, and T. E. Lawrence. Although mixed, sometimes even confused, these writers are nonetheless without relation to one another. Deleuze transforms no text into a perspective on the other texts. Artaud, for example, is not the perception of sense of Nietzsche, just as Nietzsche offers no concept for entering the world of Artaud or of D. H. Lawrence.

The text of the becoming-imperceptible of Buster Keaton in Beckett's *Film* functions as the stylistic center of *Essays Critical and Clinical*. It's the only chapter of the book dedicated to cinema. But it's also the only one in which Deleuze formulates the procedure of the entire book: one must render insupportable the fact of being perceived in order that action, perception, and affection become pure movements of the spirit. One understands why all the names that traverse Deleuze's texts have lost their canonic image. Kant's philosophy is summarized in four poetic formulas and Spinoza's *Ethics* is made transparent in a few pages devoted to three forms of expression—signs or affect, notions or concepts, and essences or percepts. Like mute Buster



Keatons, Spinoza, Kafka, Kant, Nietzsche, Saint Paul, Heidegger, Artaud, and T. E. Lawrence have become imperceptible. They have touched something spiritual. And at this moment, they have condensed the most fundamental aspect of life. As Deleuze says at the end of the chapter of Beckett's film, "Becoming imperceptible is Life" (CC 26).

Thus, it's not surprising that the primordial question of *Essays Critical and Clinical* is that of life, or rather that of the relation between writing and life. The first chapter is titled "Literature and Life." It articulates the basic tonalities of the final encounter of Deleuze's great philosophical and literary intercessors. How can one translate the experiences of health into novels and stories? How can one turn thought, how can one turn all that does violence to perceptions, to affections, and to actions, into a new form of life?

But in all the rhizomatic passages and connections of *Essays Critical and Clinical*, there is a text that expresses in a single formula this relation between life and thought. That's the character Bartleby in Melville's short story. This text is perhaps the privileged site of the entire book. This chapter, "Bartleby, or the Formula," which was published in 1989 as a postface to a new translation of Melville's "Bartleby," condenses the great literary themes of the late Deleuze. The concepts of "agrammaticality," of "becoming," of "zone of indiscernibility," of "stammering," of a "thought without images," of "visioning" [*voyance*], of "fabulation of a people who are missing," of "literary procedure," of the "outside of language," of the "community of bachelors," of the role of the Original, or of "becoming imperceptible," are all present in a single formula that Bartleby never ceases to pronounce: "I would prefer not to." In addition, when he analyzes this formula, Deleuze draws up the ultimate horizon of his metaphysics of the possible—which here will be a metaphysics of the impossible, or rather, of the impossible. Bartleby's formula seems to be the literary illustration of the theoretical universe that Deleuze had presented only one year earlier in *The Fold*. In five words the formula expresses the exit that modern philosophy (above all Whitehead and Bergson) proposed for the conflict in classical reason between what Leibniz had presented as impossible worlds.

*The Fold* showed this transition between a classic reason that the Baroque had tried to reconstitute, which partitioned divergences of causal series as so many possible worlds, making impossibilities into borders between worlds, and a Neo-Baroque reason, "with its unfurling of divergent series in the same world," with its "irruption of impossibilities on the same stage" (TF 82). Bartleby emerges as the hero of bifurcations, of divergences, and of impossibilities. His formula speaks the same "chaosmos" of ever-forking paths that one finds in Joyce, Borges, or Gombrowicz. The Bartleby chapter thus plays a unique role in the set of texts that make up *Essays Critical and Clinical*: not only does it draw out the literary and ethical consequences of

*The Fold* and its metaphysics of the impossible, but it also is the core of Deleuze's last book, one that is at once literary and metaphysical. Rather than remain within the concept of impossibility as two noncommunicating possible worlds, Deleuze discovers the impossible within a single and same actual world. Bartleby is the Neo-Baroque character par excellence.

Jacques Rancière has stressed the unique condition of Melville's text. In his view, "Bartleby, or the Formula" may be viewed as the chapter that condenses all of *Essays Critical and Clinical*. The chapter shows the two central dimensions of the book: the critical side, the dimension of the rupture with the world of representation and the achievement of the autonomy of literature, and on the clinical side, the dimension of nonpreference as expression of a going-beyond of the father and the Law, and, hence, as a matter of health. But what is decisive in the Bartleby chapter, according to Rancière, is the fact that it is the confrontation site of Deleuze's literary theory. As he writes, this chapter "is a good summary of his unique way of reading" (Rancière 2004b: 146). Rancière assigns the formula a paradigmatic status in that it reveals the most singular traits of the aesthetic program of modern literature as a whole. Because it says only what it enunciates, because it is auto-positional: "Bartleby's formula thus achieves in five words a program that could summarize the very notion of literary originality" (Rancière 2004b: 147). Hence Rancière can inscribe Deleuze's literary program in the same lineage as Flaubert and his "metaphysics of unsensed sensation [*sensation insensible*]" (Rancière 2004b: 150), according to which it is not only through the abandon of the norms and hierarchies of mimesis, but also through the abandon of the metaphysics of representation, that literature manages to affirm its proper power/capacity [*puissance*].

Indeed, the indetermination of the formula, the expression of a nonpreference or of an indifference, leads us to this foundational gesture of literature after Flaubert. On one hand, the refrain of the formula autonomizes the matter of language through flamboyant traits of expression.<sup>1</sup> Bartleby's formula represents nothing and symbolizes no other invisible reality. It does posit another world, but this world is produced only on the inside of expression. It is posited, not through what the formula says, but by what it does, by what it produces in the life of the character who enunciates it as well as in those who are affected by it. It posits a world of becomings, of haecceities, and of the absence of reason or preference that exists only in the immanence of literary matter. On the other hand, the formula disorganizes the mind/spirit [*esprit*] and makes thought explode. The power [*pouvoir*] of the formula is ravaging, and its indeterminate consistency troubles life by making visible a molecular unreason that inhabits, beneath and in advance, every principle of reason. In introducing divergent series and undecidable choices, the formula forces thought to fold on itself. Thought and expression thus enter a zone

of indetermination, in a world without reason or principle, pure becomings of singularities, haecceities.<sup>2</sup> In Rancière's eyes, *Bartleby* thus becomes the bearer of the metaphysical formula of the emancipation of expression, and of this metaphysics that makes literature a specific form of art as the immanence of thought in matter. The Deleuzian intervention on literature, thus, is double. It breaks with representation and affirms a literary logic of unsensed sensation [*sensation insensible*].

However, Rancière shows us that if Deleuze begins by affirming that the literality of the formula places it at the antipodes of history and the symbol, nonetheless, it falls into the trap it claims to flee. It maintains the model of mimesis through the role it attributes to the formula's character. Indeed, considering the nature of the works that Deleuze focuses on, one must recognize that he dedicates his attention primarily to the analysis of short works of literature, like the story or the tale, whose unity depends on the coherence of the trajectory of a character. He always engages stories that are operations, as is the case with metamorphoses, becomings of characters, or formulas. In their speech and in their action, these stories in themselves express the performance of a mirror literature, of a literature that seeks the identity of the work's form and content through this folding on itself of the main character of the fable. As Rancière puts it, Deleuze "privileges narratives that reveal, in their fable, what literature performs in its own work" (Rancière 2004b: 153). In Rancière's judgment, Deleuze blurs his anti-representational object with the very world of its making: "He tells us that literature is a material power [*puissance*] that produces material bodies. But, most often, he demonstrates this to us by telling us not what the language or form effect, but what fable tells us" (Rancière 2004b: 153).

As early as *Proust and Signs*, according to Rancière, Deleuze's effort was to think the coherent unity of an immense fictional work like the *Recherche*. But as Rancière emphasizes, the solution Deleuze found led him to an impasse. In later characterizing the *Recherche* as the spiderweb of the schizophrenic narrator, Deleuze would be led to identify the work with madness. In so doing, he shifts the source of the work's coherence from the unity of the life world to a fragmentary unity of the internal world of the mad narrator. Hence, he resolves the problem of the autonomy of expression only by assimilating literary space and clinical space.

According to Rancière, Deleuze's reading of "*Bartleby*" seems to resolve this impasse of a critical approach that entails clinical presuppositions. Because a condensed literary genre is in question, like the fable or the tale, which poses no problem of the synthesis of the heterogeneous, Melville's story can present the character of *Bartleby* as someone between the psychotic and the Original. He is a character in becoming, whose formula condenses in itself the performance of modern literature. And yet, as Rancière shows, this

auto-consistency of literature that the formula attains, if it no longer contains clinical categories, depends on a very old critical presupposition: that of the metaphysics of mimesis, no longer a mimesis of actions, but of characters. The importance granted to becomings and haecceities forces Deleuze to privilege the figure of the hero in the literary enterprise. It's the hero who is the operator of becomings and it is the hero who rejoins the world of haecceities. The fact that Deleuze defined Bartleby as the unique bachelor, as the Original, is also a flagrant indication of this privileging of the hero. In taking up the dramaturgical opposition of Aristotelian poetics, Rancière shows us that Deleuze centers "the literary text on *character* to the detriment of *action*" (Rancière 2004b: 154).

Rancière argues that this resort to *character* would represent a naive return to an Aristotelian aesthetics if it did not have consequences that go beyond literature. It raises a political problem. Deleuze transforms this text on Bartleby into a small manifesto for a certain form of life. If Deleuze concentrates his attention on the main character, it's because he is concentrating on the becoming of someone who abandons the presuppositions of choice and preferences. At the same time, it's in this process of becoming that the hero invents a line of flight and invents a people. The hero intervenes only in order to show the act of inventing a people, of a people who do not exist, but who must be made to come forth. Literature thus becomes an exemplary procedure, not only because it articulates a fable of the becoming of an Original, but also because it makes evident a people who are missing. Literature speaks in the name of a community that, however, only exists through the abyss between this speech [*parole*], which is in itself an act of a community, and the absent reality of the individuals that it expresses, that it makes speak. For Deleuze, the writer sees and hears the cries of a nation that must be invented. And he transfers the capacity of fabulation of this nation and this people to a singular character, a character the writer invents as an Original. If the writer creates a hero, it's not as the spokesperson of a collective that the writer symbolizes through writing, but as the messianic messenger of a promised land, without place or power [*sans lieu ni pouvoir*].

Rancière can thus stress the paradoxical mimetic status of Bartleby. For Deleuze, Bartleby represents nothing; he is the fictional incarnation of no psychological type, no community, and no collective hope. He allows a people to appear only through contrast, at the moment of his own collapse into silence. It's at the limit of antirepresentation that he fabulates a people that, however, he does not make visible and represent. Fabulation is hence a double operator. Bartleby's fable represents him in the process of fabulating a people whom he does not represent, but whom he summons forth through a formula. That fable is the coincidence of what he says and what he does as character of a formula. In his speaking the impossibility of writing and in his becoming

imperceptible, Bartleby becomes an anomalous singularity, and he incarnates the figure of the Original, the figure of an exemplarity without humanity. He thus fabulates negatively, revealing, at the moment of his radical collapse, a fraternity of bachelors to come. Rancière can thus write, “The seeming contradictions of Deleuzian discourse, the privilege given to the mythical character, are thus cleared up: it is the fabulating character who is, after all is said and done, the *telos* of anti-representation. ‘Fabulation’ is the true opposite of fiction. It is the identity of ‘form’ and ‘content,’ of the inventions of art and the powers [*puissances*] of life” (Rancière 2004b: 158–9). Hence, literature takes on the function of the expression of a “mythic combat from which must come a shared fabulation, and a new fraternal people” (Rancière 2004b: 159).<sup>3</sup>

Basically, Rancière’s reading makes Bartleby the bearer of the politics inherent in Deleuze’s metaphysics of literature. Rancière sees in Bartleby the messianic missionary: through the flamboyant traits of expression of his formula, he has the same power/capacity [*puissance*] as the writer, that of breaking with the world of representation. And, moreover, he has the power [*pouvoir*] of denouncing the masquerade of our world. More than a metaphysical figure, Bartleby is the bearer of a political act. “The population of the novel is also the promise of a people to come. This political stake is inscribed in the very project of literature, in the principle of non-preference” (Rancière 2004b: 157). Yet, Rancière asks, what politics can be enunciated through the principle of non-preference? What promise may be found in a people of bachelors? What fraternal community can be symbolized with the image of a multiplicity of original individuals united like a dry-stone wall? Rancière thus completes his long chapter on Bartleby—in its postulate of Deleuze’s text as a condensation of his approach to literature—by displacing all the poetic questions toward the obscure points that make up Deleuze’s politics.

We can only agree with Rancière’s reading. It makes evident the importance of Deleuze’s text on Bartleby, but above all it transforms the essay into the quintessential site of the metaphysical and political stakes of Deleuze’s thought on literature. However, the more devastating Rancière’s objections to the foundations of Deleuze’s poetic/political project, the more a detailed discussion of his arguments is required. We must thus make an immense detour, the detour of a return [*retour*], that is, a re-reading of Deleuze’s entire Bartleby essay. At the same time as Rancière’s view of Deleuze becomes more credible, the metaphysical and political stakes he finds in that essay increase.

## THE FORMULA

Deleuze begins his analysis of Melville’s “Bartleby, the Scrivener: A Story of Old Wall Street” with a paradoxical thesis. While concentrating his analysis

on the character of Bartleby, Deleuze nonetheless presents him as an abnormal literary site. Bartleby does not have an immediately fabulative function, he is neither a metaphor nor a symbol of a form of life. Bartleby is the figure of the explicit, the literal, in the sense that he exists only to say what he says, literally.<sup>4</sup> Bartleby is the character of a formula and of a sonic refrain. He exists in the story only for the time necessary for him to enunciate the formula, and he has only the dramatic density necessary for the formula to take on its devastating consequences. The gradual disappearance of the character, his becoming imperceptible, is like a strategy of the formula itself, in order to display its autonomy and its existence in itself. Melville's story, in its journey toward the abyss of Bartleby's destiny, will itself become a little formula, a refrain where the reader is ungrounded in the act of reading.

This effect of the formula derives, first, from a certain mannerism, a striking solemnity that makes the formula bizarre. The formula is exaggerated. It is not usually employed in the sense of a conditional "to prefer." "I would prefer not to" differs from its customary and more ordinary version "I had rather not." But, besides the bizarre use of the verb *to prefer*, the formula is also strange in its abrupt termination. The fact that it ends in "not to," with no complement, gives it a limit function in its grammaticality. The formula is syntactically and grammatically correct, but it ends in an indeterminate fashion, leaving open the infinitive verb of the action it refers to. Repeated several times, in its entirety, that is, completely undetermined, and pronounced as a murmur, in soft voice, patient and atonal, it becomes, Deleuze argues, unusual, unpardonable, and anomalous. Furthermore, the formula is violently comic, inscribed in the same lineage as Kafka or Beckett, whose statements are pronounced to make a dominant reality explode.<sup>5</sup>

The formula has variants. It is spoken in the present indicative, abandoning the conditional ("I prefer not to"), with a complement ("I prefer to give no answer," "I would prefer not to be a little reasonable," "I would prefer not to take a clerkship," "I would prefer to be doing something else"). But, according to Deleuze, the formula always arises as an enigmatic block that haunts Bartleby's language like a deaf presence.

Deleuze enumerates the ten pronouncements of the formula in Melville's text in order to stress the absurd gradation that grows with each pronouncement. The formula is spoken as a response to the question of the attorney, who, more and more astonished, proposes increasingly desperate things on each occasion. Disorder settles in, provoking a sequence of actions that tend toward a growing madness. After a while, Bartleby no longer writes, he stands immobile facing a blind wall: he literally haunts the office. The attorney orders him to leave the place, but the response is always the same: "I would prefer not to," or "I would prefer not to move at all." In despair, the attorney proposes other solutions, "other unexpected occupations to him (a

clerkship in a dry goods store, bartender, bill collector, traveling companion to a young gentleman . . .). The formula bourgeons and proliferates” (CC 70).

With this privilege granted by the formula, one sees that what is at stake is more than a critical problem. The cancellation of the figurative status of the character (as metaphor or symbol) in order to underline by contrast the performative sense of the formula (as literality) goes beyond the condition of a thesis on the nature of fiction. Deleuze wants to show the existence of a mechanism of machinic enunciation that works from inside throughout Melville’s story. The character increasingly becomes the laboratory of thought for testing the effects of the formula. And the story as a whole is transformed into an ethical and metaphysical experiment. It’s the very advent of sense in writing that is exhausted through this formula. First, as simple polite form of refusal, declining a request, the formula reaches the condition of imploding all formulas, all sense, all language. “At each occurrence, there is a stupor surrounding Bartleby, as if one had heard the Unspeakable or the Unstoppable. And there is Bartleby’s silence, as if he had said everything and exhausted language at the same time” (CC 70). Devastating and upsetting, either at the level of the action it allows or does not produce (in this case, to copy), or at the level of every preference, the formula begins by making literally impossible either the act of copying or the faculty of preference. “It not only abolishes the term it refers to, and that it rejects, but also abolishes the other term it seemed to preserve, and that becomes impossible. In fact, it renders them indistinct: it hollows out every expanding zone of indiscernibility or indetermination between some nonpreferred activities and a preferable activity. All particularity, all reference is abolished” (CC 71). Literality here consists of this plunge into the pragmatic immanence of sense. The formula is literal since it signifies, and manifests nothing. And it is literal in its effects on the person who pronounces it. It is the performance of a metaphysical state, that of impossibility or of the impossible. It allows no other possibility, no other preference to subsist: it abolishes the term on which it bears, allowing nothing to subsist.

The formula has the same role that Deleuze finds in the procedure of the image that Beckett’s characters bring forth on the stage: they produce the unstoppable sequence of a process of exhaustion. First, the exhaustion of language. This exhaustion derives from its agrammaticality. And it is sensed precisely in the ambiguous character of the formula. It is neither affirmative nor negative. The formula has the force of the limit, and it bears the very radicality of every statement. Its formulation, its enunciation itself, provokes such a wave of stupefaction within communicative norms that the formula emerges as an anomaly, an agrammaticality. It thus makes language silent, unspeakable, and unstoppable. As Deleuze says, the formula “hollows out a zone of indetermination that renders words indistinguishable, that creates

a vacuum [*un vide*] within language [*langage*]" (CC 73). But, on a second plane, this anomaly affects the very rules of speech acts. The formula dissolves the difference between negation and affirmation. In suggesting a state of indistinction, what Deleuze calls a "zone of indetermination" or "zone of proximity [*voisinage*]," the formula not only produces a silence, a vacuum, but it blurs rules of interlocution. When Bartleby pronounces it as a response to the requests of the attorney, the entire universe of the pragmatics of language collapses. Disarmed by the politeness of the formula, the boss himself loses his references to speech act roles. The formula "stymies all speech acts that a boss uses to command, that a kind friend uses to ask questions or a man of faith to make promises" (CC 73). It creates an extreme twist in language, and, thence, in the behavior of the boss. Likewise, with Bartleby's office colleagues. The formula proliferates, it burgeons, and it contaminates all who hear it. "With each instance, one has the impression that the madness is growing; not Bartleby's madness in 'particular,' but the madness around him, notably that of the attorney, who launches into strange propositions and even stranger behaviors" (CC 70). Deleuze lists some of the attorney's strange behaviors: "We know to what extremes the attorney is forced to go in order to rid himself of Bartleby: he returns home, decides to relocate his office, then takes off for several days. [. . .] What a strange flight, with the wandering attorney living in his rockaway. . . . From the initial arrangement [*agencement*] to this irrepressible, Cain-like flight, everything is bizarre, and the attorney behaves like a madman. Murder fantasies and declarations of love for Bartleby alternate in his soul. What happened? Is it a case of shared madness [*folie à deux*], here again, another relationship between doubles, a nearly acknowledged homosexual relation?" (CC 75).<sup>6</sup>

Deprived of speech by the formula and also deprived of action by the formula, Bartleby and his entourage enter a process of dispossession through language. The formula becomes a machine of desubjectivation or rather dehumanization within the human. Hence the fact that the characters who grasp it become types at the limit of the human, exposed to the outside of the world and life. Bartleby is the sole character, in all of Melville's books, who exists only through a formula. His story is nothing but the development of the sense he speaks. His formula is a procedure.<sup>7</sup> And all the other names, all the other characters in this story about the Wall Street clerk are haunted by the same nothingness of a statement, of a phrase, of a protocol of sense.

But how should we understand this devastating effect of the formula? Why cancel not only grammar, but also speech act rules, to the point of leading the attorney toward madness?

Deleuze's great thesis is that the formula, by itself, produces a paradoxical real: the reality of the impossible. Once pronounced, not only does it no longer allow Bartleby to copy, but it renders all copies impossible. The formula



exists in two times. Bartleby does not refuse, he only indicates a nonpreferred. Next, Bartleby does not affirm a preferable; he simply puts forward impossibility. What Bartleby does with his formula, according to Deleuze, is put forward the very impossibility of every preference. “The essential point is its effect on Bartleby: from the moment he says I WOULD PREFER NOT TO (collate), he is no longer *able* to copy either. And yet he will never say that he prefers not to (copy): he has simply passed beyond this stage” (CC 70). Bartleby posits the impossibility of the act of copying since he posits above all the very impossibility of the preference of copying. He refuses to copy, not because he affirms another preference, but because he makes all preferences impossible. He does not prefer something else, he simply doesn’t prefer at all. He exhausts all preference and every faculty of willing. “The formula that successively refuses every other act has already engulfed the act of copying, which it no longer even needs to refuse. The formula is devastating because it eliminates the preferable just as mercilessly as any nonpreferred” (CC 71). Thus, in a first moment, the formula affects the will of the one who pronounces it. It ungrounds every movement of inclination or choice. It’s in this sense that it is performative. It affects the form of life of its interlocutors. But, in a second moment, the formula is also a constant, it is an “evidence.” If it indicates the nothingness of every choice, in itself it is an experiment, it is the expression of a knowledge. Through the formula, one enters into a true metaphysical observatory. At the moment Bartleby perceives the content of the formula, he discovers the reality of the impossibility of continuing to copy. What he discovers is a domain other than that of the pragmatics of interlocations. He discovers, as ultimate ground, the very nature of the impossible: the fact that the formula makes all preferences impossible, because it is the existence in itself of the impossible that is made manifest.

### TO POSIT THE IMPOSSIBLE: FIRST METAPHYSICAL APPROACH

We have already seen, first, that the formula posits the impossibility of preference and of nonpreference. To not prefer is to prefer not to prefer by positing the impossibility of preference. But in a second moment, the formula posits impossibility itself. Not the impossibility of a thing or an event, but impossibility in itself. In repeating the formula, we are led to this dimension of the most unthinkable reality: the impossible. And yet, what is this impossible?

At this point, we are confronted with several levels of obscurity. To underline the unusual character of the formula, Deleuze writes: Bartleby “does not accept either, he does not affirm a preference that would consist in continuing to copy, he simply posits its impossibility” (CC 71). And a little later: “His

means of survival is to prefer *not* to collate, but thereby also *not* to prefer copying. He had to refuse the former in order to render the latter impossible” (CC 71). Each time Deleuze takes up the formula, he emphasizes this act of positing the impossible or making a preference impossible. However, two different dimensions of the impossible are always involved. On one hand, the pragmatic dimension, as ravaging, devastating, and contagious effect of the formula, which renders impossible the presuppositions of speech acts that sustain every expectation and every demand of a decision, of a preference. On the other hand, the metaphysical dimension. Here, the impossible seems to correspond to the extremes of the real: the nothingness of the explosion of the limitless, and the nothingness of the implosion into the nonexistent.

For Deleuze, once you put yourself in the skin of someone who pronounces the formula (Bartleby or any other character), the world ceases to be a collection of possibilities. To exist is no longer to contemplate possibles, but rather to note that there are impossibles. The formula is the evidence of the impossible and the place where to exist itself becomes without possibility, becomes impossible. The formula designates the limit of the real, the point where being is dissipated and where it collapses on itself. This impossible is of the order of the inexpressible. Deleuze here returns to the concept of “thought without image,” when he points toward a knowledge of the impossible that goes beyond the general laws of knowledge itself. Bartleby hurls “flamboyant traits of expression that mark the stubbornness of a thought without image, a question without a response, an extreme and nonrational logic” (CC 82–3).

If the impossible is the extreme limit of the real, to inhabit the site of this impossible is to incarnate the Land’s-End of the human. For Deleuze, Bartleby must be understood as the last degree of the typology of limits of the human that traverses Melville’s entire oeuvre. And this typology of forms of the human reproduces the typology of regions of the real. On one hand, the characters with a single will are engaged absolutely in a single desire, in a ceaseless obsession. These are the monomaniacs. They express the impossible as the infinitely large of the real. This metaphysical impossible makes all choice impossible. The impossible as the beyond-the-limit of the will transforms the will into a preference without choice, that is, into a single orientation of the will. The monomaniacal orientation, while remaining a will, is a will that does not have choice as its origin, but a univocal intentionality. It is a unique and obsessed will. Deleuze calls this manifestation of the impossible in the monomaniacal will a “metaphysical perversion.” It’s the case of Claggart in *Billy Budd*; “his is no more a case of psychological wickedness than Captain Ahab’s. It is a case of metaphysical perversion” (CC 79).

The impossible manifests itself in the other extreme of will as the collapse of the real, as the infinitely small real, and as nothingness. This is the domain of hypochondriacs, of anorexics, those who inhabit the nothingness of the

will. Here, the impossible is what makes the will empty through its fall into the abyss of nothingness.

Deleuze identifies Melville's literary labor as the invention of this new anthropology delineated according to the metaphysics of the impossible. This is what he calls "Melvillian psychiatry" (CC 78). "At one pole, there are those monomaniacs or demons who, driven by the will to nothing [*la volonté de rien*], make a monstrous choice: Ahab, Claggart, Babo . . . But at the other pole are those angels or saintly hypochondriacs, almost stupid, creatures of innocence and purity, stricken with a constitutive weakness but also a strange beauty. Petrified by nature, they prefer . . . no will at all, but a nothingness of the will [*un néant de volonté*] rather than a will to nothingness [*une volonté de néant*] (the hypochondriacal 'negativism'). They can only survive by becoming stone, by denying the will and sanctifying themselves in this suspension. Such are Cereno, Billy Budd, and above all Bartleby" (CC 79–80). Melville's literary universe consists of this tension between the will to nothingness, a will that only seeks the movement of its willing to the infinite, and the nothing of will, the fall of being into nonwill. Hence, two limits of nothingness: the will to nothing led by a monstrous preference and the nothing of the will through suspension of all preference. In the monstrous extreme, the monomaniacal characters are determined by an obsessive object of desire and by a decision for life. They reach the extreme of power/capacity [*puissance*] in becoming a pure action in relation to a goal, which is nothing other than the goal of a will without goals.<sup>8</sup> They are demons, and they are nothing as pure power/capacity. The hypochondriacs, at the other extreme, have no power/capacity. They are "petrified by nature" or they become stone. Their action is angelic, without matter or object and without choice or principle.

Deleuze takes up this Melvillian psychiatry to better understand the different becomings of his characters. On the side of the demoniacal will, the will to nothingness, the character is fashioned as someone engaged in a becoming-animal. Such is Ahab in his relation to *Moby-Dick*. He is engaged in a bodily struggle with his object of capture; he enters into lines of life that give him marine properties, the characteristics of a fish. On the side of the angelic will, an entirely different will is in effect. Not a becoming-animal, but a becoming-stone, a becoming-mineral. This character progressively acquires the gravity of the immobile, he or she is crystallized in an absolute point of coincidence of his or her virtuals and his or her monotropic actuality. One understands why a formula is required to attain this limit of the will. Whereas an absolute object suffices for monomaniacs, an object revealed to be nothing, hypochondriacs, by contrast, require a rule, a method for the suspension, the absolute petrification of the will. But, in contrast to all the methods of negating the will, Bartleby's method is not an ascetic negation, not a masochistic denegation, and not even a quietist nonrealization. Counter to all these techniques

for suspending the will, counter to all these mechanisms for the sublimation of desire, counter to every displacement of the power/capacity of acting that humanity has invented and whose course Deleuze has traced since his book on Nietzsche and the traps of the ascetic ideal, Melville conceived of a new formula: the formula of the impossible preference. Melville thus enlarges the human comedy, he creates another typology of the human. He creates new places in this paradoxical condition of the will. Bartleby comes to replace the ultimate category of this long history of abolished wills. “A schizophrenic vocation: even catatonic and anorexic” (CC 90; trans. modified). Only a new method could reach this stage. And only a formula that states a preference of nonpreference could do it. It expresses a fact, it reveals new dimensions of the real—the impossible.

But the idea of the impossible that traverses Bartleby’s formula is not solely the extreme site of the real. It has a condition that goes beyond its grounding in a will, in a power [*pouvoir*] or impotence [*impouvoir*] of the will. Beneath the petrified power of the monomaniac, as beneath the impotence of the anorexic, there is an impossible in itself, which renders any will impossible. We must ask again: What is this impossible?

As we know, the impossible has an enormous tradition in contemporary thought. From the absolute as impossible in Schelling to the impossible justice/donation/hospitality/pardon of Derrida, passing through death as possibility and impossibility in Heidegger and the real as impossible in Lacan, the impossible is one of the most polymorphous concepts and one of the most equivocal in the speculative lexicon. This is indeed a measure of its relevance.

What impossible is at work in Melville’s psychiatry? Let’s consider the domain of the impossible of the monomaniac. Is it a limit, that is, beyond the possible where all possibility ends—like the moment of death for Heidegger, as a possibility among others, but which makes all possibilities impossible?<sup>9</sup> We don’t think so. The demon characters, those who have a monstrous preference, will in an obsessive fashion what they will beyond the nothingness of death. For his part, Bartleby also seems to be a systematic anti-Heideggerian. The impossible at play in nonpreference does not belong to the set of possibles. Unlike in Heidegger, the impossible of his formula is not one possible among others that one can always prefer in a relation of authenticity with one’s proper death. It is not an imminent fact inscribed on the inside of possibles, like that possible event whose actualization implies all at once the end of all other possibilities. Bartleby’s impossible cannot be chosen. It does not belong to the domain of nonpreferables. It is not a fact, and it is not something that happens and that makes impossible all other possibilities. It is that which one lives as such, or that which one renders impossible as such. One posits the impossibility of an act to show its condition of nonpreferable, or one renders a preference impossible through a decision of nonpreference.

The impossible of Melville's psychiatric extremes is also not the impossible real of Lacan.<sup>10</sup> Claggart's metaphysical perversion and Ahab's obsession are not oriented by any ir retrievable object of desire. On the contrary, the monomaniacal will is outside the logic of the law and negation. It's the beyond of desire, and the nothing of preference. And if Deleuze speaks of the impossible as constituted by an act of positing, it is not the correlate of a desirous positing. Likewise, with the formula of the anorexic's will. The positing of the impossible through the formula is, here, the cancellation of all desire. Bartleby's impossible seems to exist before all possibles, before all preferences, before all objects of desire, without, however, it being their condition of possibility, nor even their condition of actuality [*effectivité*]. On the contrary, the impossible of the formula is the condition of the impossibility of every possible: it renders them impossible. It's in this sense that, in Deleuze's view, the formula proliferates. It provokes the collapse [*effondrement*] of all possibility and all actuality [*effectivité*]. It's a condition that implodes, that places in the abyss that of which it is the condition. Through its internal tension, the formula produces holes in the real. It functions through auto-dissipation, drawing with it everything that it touches. Bartleby's formula is the site through which the world finds its disappearance. In short, the impossible is not the imminence of nothingness in death, nor the object in itself, the forbidden object of desire.

Does the impossible Deleuze finds in Bartleby's formula have the form of an obstacle, an actual limit from which other possibles may emerge? But what kind of obstacle? How may one construct impossibles for oneself? How can one "posit" them?

Perhaps we must first look at the question of the positing of an impossible. What does it mean to "posit" something as impossible? Or, what must the impossible be so that it can be the object of a positing? Since Kant, positing is the act of consciousness through which it produces the assumption of the reality of something beyond itself. And, as Kant says, being is not a real predicate. It is only the positing of a transcendent actuality [*effectivité*] by the self [*le moi*].<sup>11</sup> One posits being only as actual [*effectif*]. Only that which is in action, only that which is actually given to a subjectivity, to a consciousness, can be the object of a positing. Consequently, for Kant the impossible can never be given to a consciousness as correlate of a positing. In this sense, the positing of something as impossible is, in itself, impossible.

Heidegger completely inverts the nature of the act of positing. For him, what is the object of an ordinary positing, of the positing that makes possible all other positing acts, is the judgment of the impossible. *Dasein* is the nonthematic act of the certitude of one's death as the only necessary possibility. As such, death is the possibility of the impossible. And death is not only posited, not only the object of a nonobjectual positing, but also the ordinary

positing. Being-there in the world is always and already to take inevitable death as the horizon of all possibilities. Even in inauthentic existence, death is lived in advance as certain, as the most certain of all beliefs. To have the certitude of death is to constitute death as the object of a positing consciousness. The impossible is consciousness's originary positing, although a non-thematic positing consciousness. And this positing does not have the actual as its paradigm, and does not have as its condition the actuality [*effectivité*] of the objectivity given to the hand. The positing of the impossible, the positing of death as mine is constituted in an act of belief, as absolute certitude. Death is truly the only certitude. It's on this certitude that all other beliefs, all other positings of possibilities, and hence of all actualities [*effectivités*], that the horizon of the finitude of *Dasein* comes, that is, that it constitutes its proper world. The positing of the impossible in Heidegger is thus always an act of belief, or rather, the originary belief, the absolute certitude that makes all other beliefs possible. On the certain belief of my death, all other beliefs (uncertain) are founded, as, for example, the belief that sustains objects of perceptual experience. The positing of the impossible is constitutive of the finitude of *Dasein*. Being-there, projected on the ensemble of its own most proper possibilities, is always and already the impossible of all these possibilities as imminence of death. As such, the positing of death founds all other positings, because it founds all decisions, all preference within the horizon of possibles. The positing of the impossible becomes the condition of all choices. In the authentic mode of existence, when one has decided for the finitude of one's life, when one has discovered one's most intimate and unique death as the ground of each decision, of each positing, the impossible that possibilizes every possible is rendered thematic.

The primordial positing of the impossible according to Heidegger does not truly belong to the positing consciousness such as Kant had recognized it in perception, that is, in the relation of a subjectivity to an empirical object that is copresent with an actual consciousness. The positing of the impossible is rather the act par excellence of a belief in an event that, in essence, is not present. Death, for Heidegger, is always the object of a deferred consciousness [*une conscience différée*]. At the moment when death is given in act, consciousness is no longer there to posit it as such. The impossible is posited, but as a positing of something always absent, almost a beyond.

Deleuze seeks an entirely new concept of "positing," not in order to accede to a new understanding of the relation in general between a thetic consciousness and its object, but in order to uniquely think this unusual act of the positing of an impossible. In the monomaniacal will, the positing of an impossible derives directly from the condition of his or her will. In this will, the impossible has the form of the correlate of a monstrous preference. It is the object posited by belief in the absolute that gives content to a univocal will. The

obsessed individual posits his or her unique object, posits the content of his or her mania as what one may call, after Husserl, the exclusive “noematic content” of an act of consciousness of will. He/she posits it as an object of a belief, of a belief itself monomaniacal, that is, a belief that is absolutely confused with its unique object. In this univocal confusion of will and its object, of belief and its noematic correlate, the object can only be impossible and can only have the modality of impossibility, because it is not, in essence, truly an object, truly independent of the act of its positing.

As regards the hypochondriacs’ absence of will, their positing of the impossible is entirely different. It is not inscribed in the will. On the contrary, it is the corollary of the nothingness of the will. The impossible is posited, not through a will, but through a formula. It’s *Bartleby’s* formula that posits the impossible. Instead of a belief in the possible, as belief of a unique object of the absolute will, it’s a matter of an impossible as suspension of the belief in a possible world where the monomaniac’s object lets itself be captured by the will. The formula posits the impossible because it rejects the logic of beliefs as belief in the possible. The formula does indeed posit a belief. But it’s not belief as subjective ground [*fondement subjectif*] of a possibility; it’s not positing through *doxic* consciousness, through the act of belief, of a nonactual mode, but nonetheless this belief is possible, and nonetheless it is still to come as probable.

One becomes a prisoner of the logic of preferences and choices as soon as one accepts the idea that living is the process of realizing possibilities that one presents to oneself in advance as objects of belief, and thus as objects of the calculus of probabilities. The positing of the impossible that Deleuze discovers in *Bartleby’s* formula is the inverse of an act of belief as an act of the positing of a possible. The logic of preferences presupposes a world of possibilities; it is thus founded on a belief in other events, and in other worlds, in worlds that differ from ours because they are not actual [*effectifs*] but possible. To produce the ungrounding of this logic implies not the abolition of belief, but the invention of a belief in this world. And such a belief is not belief in this world as actual [*effectif*], or as necessary, it is belief in this world as impossible. Because the connection of humans to the world is broken through the ungrounding of old forms of faith, by hopes for other world, for possible worlds, a new connection must be invented, through belief in this world as impossible. Deleuze had discovered this new experience of belief in his cinema books. This belief in the impossible he called “faith.” “The link between man and the world is broken. Henceforth, this link must become an object of belief: it is the impossible which can only be restored with a faith. Belief is no longer addressed to a different or transformed world. Man is in the world as if in a pure optical and sound situation. The reaction of which man has been dispossessed can be replaced only by belief. Only belief in the

world can reconnect man to what he sees and hears. The cinema must film, not the world, but belief in this world, our only link" (C2 171–2).<sup>12</sup>

In the Bartleby text, the word "faith" is replaced by "confidence": "not belief in another world, but confidence in this one" (CC 87).<sup>13</sup> And it is this confidence that must found relations, not only between Bartleby and the world, but also among bachelors: "It requires a new community, whose members are capable of trust or 'confidence,' that is, of a belief in themselves, in the world, and in becoming" (CC 88). Confidence rejects preferences and correlates of belief as correlates of positings of possibilities. Bartleby's formula was precisely the method of ungrounding beliefs in possibles and of dissolving presuppositions, in order to open another mode of positing—that of belief as confidence. "And what was Bartleby asking for if not a little confidence from the attorney, who instead responds to him with charity and philanthropy—all the masks of the paternal function?" (CC 88). Confidence is belief in this world, but in this world as impossible, positing this world as impossible, but also belief in oneself, and belief in others in relations of fraternity.

However, the question can only arise again: What is an impossible world in which one can believe, and in which one can have confidence?

### BARTLEBY: A NIHILISTIC ARISTOTLE?

It's not surprising that the question of the impossible in Bartleby's formula should occasion a certain return to Aristotle and his metaphysics of the possible and the impossible. The most remarkable essay in understanding Bartleby's formula through such a return is that of Giorgio Agamben.<sup>14</sup> Going back to *De Anima* (430a and following) where Aristotle compares *nous* (intellect or the power of thought [*pensée en puissance*]) and a blank slate where nothing has yet been written, Agamben transforms Bartleby's formula not only into a laboratory for experimenting on Deleuze's theses, but also into a crossroad of large decisions in metaphysics.

Agamben takes the Aristotelian definition of "potentiality [*puissance*]" as the possibility of something and as the possibility of the nonbeing of that same thing. In both cases, he argues, one is already on the way toward Bartleby's formula, "I would prefer not to." We know that the genius of Aristotle's metaphysics is to have attributed the condition of reality not only to that which is given as actuality [*effectivité*], as act, but also to possibility, as potentiality [*puissance*]. For Aristotle, potentiality can be passive or active. Passive potentiality concerns the capacity to receive external stimuli, the faculty of being affected. By contrast, active potentiality is the potentiality of acting, of producing effects, of creating.



Being possible, all potentiality is, for Aristotle, also potentiality of not-doing or not-being, that is, it has in itself its own nonactuality. Potentiality is also potentiality of nonbeing (*dynamis me einai*). To say that every potentiality has its own nonactuality, its potentiality of not-doing and not-being, does not mean that potentiality is deprived of potentiality, but that its potentiality can, or cannot, be realized, that it *can* its nonactuality [*qu'elle peut sa non-actualité*], that its “non” is possible. For example, Bartleby has the potentiality to write and also to not-write. If he writes, he realizes his potentiality of writing, and if he doesn't write, he realizes his potentiality of not-writing. But in either case, he has two potentialities. Now, if every potentiality is a potentiality of being and power of nonbeing, the passage to the act can be given only in transporting, in the act, the very potentiality of nonbeing, because at each moment of the act the possibility of nonbeing is canceled. The fundamental question is posed: Does the potentiality of nonbeing also allow its actualization? Once the potentiality of nonbeing is a potentiality of potentiality [*une puissance de puissance*], that is, the potentiality of being potentiality [*la puissance d'être puissance*], it *can* pass into the act but it does not, it remains a potentiality. So, is the potentiality of being (that which tends toward the act) the only potentiality that leads directly to the act?

According to Agamben, the formula allows one to think *nothingness* [*le néant*] in a positive fashion. Nothingness is constituted as a third term of potentiality, alongside the potentiality of being and the potentiality of nonbeing (the latter as nonactualization of the former). If one starts with the “principle of sufficient reason” such as Leibniz formulates it (“There is a reason for which something does rather than does not exist”), what is decisive is not that something is (being), nor that something is not (nothingness), but that something that is, is so as more powerful [*plus puissant*] than nothingness, that is, that *something is rather than nothing* [*quelque chose soit plutôt que rien*]. If the dichotomy being/nonbeing is present in this principle, this principle recognizes the reality of a stage anterior to these two terms: the stage of being able to be as nothingness [*le stade de pouvoir être en tant que néant*]. According to this principle, nothingness could be, that is, nothingness is not thought as nonbeing. Nothingness, by contrast, would have a reality, its own proper reality, and it would already be its potentiality of actualized nothingness. It would be a nothingness already of being [*un néant déjà d'être*]. In this sense, Agamben can conclude that there are three levels or types of reality. The level of actuality, that of being; the level of nonactualization, that of nonbeing; and the level of the potentiality of nothingness, that of nothingness as potentiality. The world would be able to remain in the pure state of potentiality, it would be able always to remain in nothingness, and it would already be reality. The passage of potentiality into the act implies that there is a reason for this, because this passage is

not necessary. This passage is realized only when there is a reason for that which is realized.

It's precisely this reason that Bartleby lacks.<sup>15</sup> He has the potentiality of writing, and hence, also that of not-writing. According to Agamben, he preferred to remain in pure potentiality because he had no reason to pass into the act, or, better, because he did not consider the reasons of his boss to be sufficient. Bartleby's formula puts in question Leibniz's sufficient reason. "I would prefer not to" places the accent on "rather" [*plutôt*], an expression that emancipates potentiality. As Agamben stresses, *plutôt* or *potius* signifies "more powerful [*puissant*]," in its connection with a *ratio*, or in its subordination to being.<sup>16</sup> From Agamben's point of view, the center of the formula is found in the word "rather." What makes Bartleby prefer, his "rather," is totally beyond; it is outside all *ratio*. As Agamben says, "a preference and a potentiality [*puissance*] that no longer function to assure the supremacy of Being over Nothing but exist, without reason, in the indifference between Being and Nothing. The indifference of Being and Nothing" is "the mode of Being of potentiality that is purified of all reason" (Agamben 1999: 259). Bartleby's formula leads him up to death, once the nothing to prefer has led Bartleby to the suspension of preferring, of action, of writing. Bartleby is dissolved into the indiscernibility between being and nothingness, he has affirmed death as the being of nothingness and he has renounced all being up to death [*tout l'être jusqu'à la mort*]. His death thus is the consequence of his formula.

Bartleby's formula, in this sense, presents a will determined by a "principle of insufficient reason." In saying "I would prefer not to," Bartleby is in the process of denying the privilege of being, he is in the process of saying no to other worlds that are on the way toward realization. And he does this not to reach a better world (the Leibnizian justification of the reason for being), but to remain in the nothingness of action, up to the moment of definitively ceasing to write, and of dying. The principle of insufficient reason states that, in each act, *there is a reason that something is and that nothing is*. It's no longer the exclusive regime of disjunction implied by *rather*, but the inclusive regime of the conjunction *and*.

In the passage of the potentiality of being into being [*la puissance d'être à l'être*], the power of the most powerful [*le pouvoir du plus puissant*] disappears. Bartleby's formula thus negates Leibniz's principle of the best of all possible worlds, according to which all potentiality [*puissance*], by its essence, tends to be actualized. Leibniz thinks that every potentiality tends toward its actualization because, by definition, the act, or existence in action, is more perfect, more powerful than potentiality [*plus puissant que la puissance*], or existence in potentiality. By contrast, the passage of the potentiality of nonbeing into nonbeing's act of being is the principle of insufficient

reason. Bartleby prefers to remain in the state of pure power [*pouvoir*], now the power of writing, now the power of not-writing. Bartleby has the potentiality of nonbeing. However, as pure potentiality, this potentiality contains the possible of the nonactualization of nonbeing. From this perspective, the problem thus is the concept of the nonactualization of nonbeing.

Agamben here takes up the distinction between the positive and privative dimensions of potentiality. According to Aristotle, as we have seen, the potentiality of something (potentiality that is movement for actualization, for being) includes its nonactualization. In this sense, the potentiality of being is the positive dimension of potentiality.<sup>17</sup> The potentiality of nonbeing is its privative dimension. For Aristotle, nonbeing in action is always given through the privation of being. With the principle of insufficient reason, with which Bartleby experiments, these dimensions receive an entirely different reality. If something has the potentiality of nonbeing, and if this potentiality is not actualized, then this thing *is*, because its *positive* potentiality of nonbeing includes, by definition, the *privative* potentiality of being. According to Agamben, for Bartleby all that exists does so as privation of nonbeing. The world is of the order of a fault line in the structure of nothingness, where nothingness always has more reality than being. For this reason, when Bartleby says “I prefer not to,” he is not in the process of preferring nothingness rather than being, but he is in the process of preferring nothingness [*le néant*] rather than preferring nothing [*rien*], because he recognizes the indifference between being as actualization of a positive potentiality of being and being as the nonactualization of a positive potentiality of nonbeing. He thus discovers the indiscernibility between positive being and privative being. In the sphere of the primacy of nothingness, he realizes the principle of insufficient reason.

The copyist is the pure passivity of a thought in action of another person he reproduces. From his perspective, the blank page is the potentiality of writing. This comparison of the copyist to a blank page is by its essence linked to the idea of the potentiality one comes to analyze as the possibility of doing or not-doing.<sup>18</sup>

Agamben is able to reformulate Leibniz’s principle via Bartleby’s formula: “the fact that there is no reason that something exists rather than not existing, is the existence of something rather than nothing.” Bartleby is placed outside being/nonbeing because he is in the field of “rather.” He is a “to prefer”; that is, he has something of being, but he is a “to prefer not to”; that is, he is a something of nothing. This probation (what is painful for me but through which I must pass in order to put myself to the test) is extreme. It’s the extreme site of putting oneself to the test, because to remain in the “rather not” is the experience proper to this “ungrateful guest.” It is interesting to note this relation between Bartleby and Nietzsche’s nihilism. Agamben defends the thesis that in the figure of Bartleby Melville anticipates

Nietzsche's diagnosis of nihilism. Bartleby, like the nihilist, is an ungrateful guest: he is among us, he is welcomed, but in the very act of being received, he destroys our existence because he gives us nothingness as the foundation of life. Bartleby is contracted by the office and he refuses to do everything that the notary commands and demands that he do. He is an ungrateful guest because he does not remunerate and, moreover, he is himself the experience of nihilism. He tells us that a will to nothingness [*une volonté de néant*], a will of pure potentiality before any act, is preferable to a nothingness of will [*un néant de volonté*]. "I would prefer not to" is the preference of nothingness as the preference of pure potentiality. The way to break with the metaphysics of being, as well as the metaphysics of nothingness is, as Agamben writes, "To be capable, in pure potentiality [*être capable d'une pure puissance*], to bear the 'no more than' [*supporter le 'I would prefer not to'*] beyond Being and Nothing, fully experiencing the impotent possibility that exceeds both [*l'impuissante possibilité qui les excède*]" (Agamben 1999: 259). This impotent possibility is the possibility of not-doing, the potentiality of not-acting.

In this sense Bartleby is a figure anterior to that of the creator: he does not suffer and he does not act. The question of creation is transposed into the question of the before of creation. To create, there must be the long exercise of the power [*pouvoir*] of not-creating. To be a creator is to be Bartleby in a first moment, but it's to go past that moment in the sense of actualizing the potentiality of not-creating and, in a second moment, to actually [*effectivement*] create. It's to pass through the third term that breaks with metaphysics in order to arrive at the *physics* of creation. In considering the copyist as potentiality, one can identify him, according to Agamben, with the messenger, with the angel, who only transports a message while declaring nothing affirmative or negative. It's the suspension of action, the *epoche* of affirmation and negation. It's carrying language to its extreme limit, making it unspeakable. What appears between being and nonbeing, between affirming and denying, is the new concept of power [*pouvoir*]. "To be able is *neither to posit nor to negate*" [*Pouvoir est ni nier ni affirmer*] (Agamben 1999: 257).

For Agamben, Bartleby must be seen as the extreme experience of the condition, not of the possibility, but of the impossibility of creation, which is pure possibility, that is, the possibility of not creating. The question of creation is that of breaking with pure potentiality. Bartleby is not a creator: on the contrary, he is the one who obsessively installs himself in the state anterior to creation. He wants to remain in this condition of the act of creation that is its condition of impossibility, "rather" than want to see the magnificence of creation. It is not the suspension but the expansion of nonaction. Bartleby no longer writes, not because he is unable to write [*impuissant d'écrire*], nor in order to indefinitely prolong his power of writing [*puissance d'écrire*], but to prefer the potentiality of not-writing.

Agamben's reading, by its differences from Deleuze's reading, gives us a better understanding of what defines Deleuze's approach. Unlike Agamben, for Deleuze it's not a matter of affirming the absolute autonomy of pure potentiality, of potentiality purified of all reason, or of all preference, as a stratum anterior to all will and to all distinction as pure potentiality. It's that the formula also abolishes potentiality as such. If for Agamben Bartleby is a thinker of pure potentiality, for Deleuze he is rather the experience of impossibility. Impossibility is not the point of departure. Nor is it the ultimate horizon of potentiality. It is that which happens to the possible and its logic of the preferable as soon as one eliminates both the preferable and any nonpreferred whatever. The central question becomes, precisely, that of this impossible that one engenders, of this impossible that one "posits." The metaphysical condition of this formula thus exists only as it inscribes the impossibility of every preference within the will of all subjects who enunciate the formula.

Agamben wants to place the formula solely inside a metaphysics of modality. For him, Bartleby is the angelic version of a limit case of a modality, itself a limit, of the real: it is the actualization of the potentiality of nonbeing. For Deleuze, by contrast, the metaphysics of Bartleby is not to be confused solely with the modal issues of the real. It's true that in his reading of the formula Deleuze takes up virtually the entire patrimony of his distinctions between the actual and the virtual, the possible and the actual [*effectif*], and the impossible and the necessary. But, as we shall see, these distinctions may only be thought on a cosmological foundation, that is, on the understanding of a world of divergent multiplicities, and a world of impossibilities. Agamben understands that the impossible forces us to a different reading of Leibniz's principle of sufficient reason. Once we lack a reason for the "rather" of being vis-à-vis nonbeing, we fall into a new principle: that of insufficient reason. But doesn't Deleuze invite us to take Leibniz's principle not as an insufficient reason but as a divergent reason? Isn't the fundamental concept not that of the impossible or of contradiction, but of the impossible, since, as Deleuze writes, "impossibility is an original relation, distinct from impossibility or contradiction" (TF 62)? Must we not read the entire modal lexicon of Bartleby (the concepts of possibility, impossibility, and necessity) against the background of Leibniz, that is, starting from his ontology of impossible worlds, of nonconvergent worlds? Isn't Bartleby's impossible, not the necessity of nonbeing, as Agamben argues, but the impossible?

True, the concept of impossibility is never stated in the Bartleby text. Deleuze had already delineated it in his reading of Leibniz. In *The Fold*, impossibility is defined as a process of divergence between worlds. "Another world appears *when the obtained series diverge in the neighborhood of singularities*" (TF 60). Divergent series trace bifurcating paths in a

single chaotic world. It's a "chaosmos" (TF 81). Isn't this "chaosmos" the world of Bartleby?

If one starts with the conditions fixed by Leibniz, according to which it is impossible to know either the reasons of God at the moment of his choice, or their application in each case, then one can presuppose the existence of a Bartleby completely ignorant of the reasons for his existence (the choice of God) and of their application. Faced with this scenario, Bartleby renounces all will as the mode of expression of the absence of reasons for his impossible world. He has only one solution: to live beyond all possibility, beyond every compossible world, beyond every principle of rationality, and beyond every will. Bartleby is the monad that expresses a different world from all other monads; he inhabits a divergent series that belongs to a parallel world. Bartleby does not decide, he resists the temptation of writing, because the act of writing implies a singularity that diverges with those of this world where the attorney and all the other clerks exist.<sup>19</sup> Bartleby is Adam the nonsinner, the divergent singularity that resists the logic of sufficient reason. Bartleby is bifurcation, the proximate point from which singularities diverge and follow worlds impossible with one another.

For Leibniz, each possible monad is defined by its preindividual singularities. The individual is the actualization of preindividual singularities according to a role of convergence and as a prolonging of singularities. The principle of sufficient reason only guarantees the liberty of God. The individual of the best of all possible worlds is forever condemned. In establishing a parallel world, in governing himself according to a principle of divergent reason, Bartleby finds his original liberty, and he creates the possible denied in advance in the compossible world. The theory of inverted damnation assures that Bartleby is free because his actions forever deny the principle of sufficient reason. The present act of Bartleby, his negation of preference, is pure repetition of the past damned act. "Adam could have not sinned, and the damned could free themselves: it is enough, or would be enough, for the soul to take on another amplitude, another fold, another inclination. It might seem that the soul could not do this, except in another world (impossible with ours)" (TF 71; trans. modified). This is Bartleby's world, and an impossible world.

## CREATION AND FABULATION

In contrast to Agamben's reading of the character Bartleby—whom he presents as the metaphor par excellence of the act of pure invention, as the absolute potentiality [*pouissance*] of the production of the new that comes to be the equivalent of nonproduction, of impotence [*impouissance*]<sup>20</sup>—Deleuze sees in

this clerk another means of access to the condition of creation. For Deleuze, the new is never the product of a pure potentiality that comes into reality, and that is realized as unique or inaugural. The first act, the originary condition of the labor of invention, is not the potentiality of nothingness.

The impossible that is present in the act of creation is of another nature. When Deleuze uses it to think the process of the new, he takes it not as the expression of impossible worlds, but as the limit of possibles. Such was the case in the 1975 Kafka book. “We have to see creation as tracing a path between impossibilities. . . . Kafka explained how it was impossible for a Jewish writer to speak in German, impossible for him to speak in Czech, and impossible not to speak. [. . .] Creation takes place in choked passages. Even in some particular language, even in French, for example, a new syntax is a foreign language within the language. A creator who isn’t grabbed around the throat by a set of impossibilities is no creator. A creator is someone who creates their own impossibilities, and creates the possible at the same time” (PP 133; trans. modified).

In the Kafka book, not only is creation the effect of a set of impossibilities, but it must itself produce these impossibilities. And here it’s a matter of a conception of the impossible that is much different from that which we find in *Bartleby’s* formula. In Kafka, Deleuze wants to think the conditions that produce an unheard-of literature, a minor literature, as the expression of a resistance to a major language, to juridical, economic, and bureaucratic powers/capacities [*puissances*]. As act of resistance, minor literature is always a combat, always a confrontation of limits. In quotidian resistance, this struggle produces only the possible, and produces small re-equilibrations of forces in conflict. It’s only when these limits are transformed into “bottlenecks,” when they make of life something impossible, that, through their transgression, one invents the new, one brings forth works that could never be expected.

When considering Kafka’s work, Deleuze draws up a map of all the impossibilities that have strangled him. Only such a map can build an understanding of a minor literature and of an impossible literature. However, one must ask: the impossible of *Bartleby’s* formula, although it is not pure potentiality, is it the confrontation of the limits of the possible that Deleuze discovered in Kafka? It is essential not to be mistaken here as regards the concept of the impossible. In the Kafka book, it’s an impossible without limit, as condition, as constraint. The possible is what is produced inside a given set of conditions. The conditions are always conditions of possibility. The impossible, by contrast, is what breaks with these conditions, what becomes unconditioned. It’s this idea of a beyond of conditions that orients the second sense of the impossible, as the concept that allows one to think the new. There is no creation except when the absolutely new is produced. Now, the absolutely new, as such, can only be impossible. In sum, when it appears, it must be related

to some impossibility. In the Kafka book, the concept of the impossible thus is related to a politics of conditions.

If the impossible in Kafka is a concept for thinking creation, in the *Bartleby* text, by contrast, the impossible is that which dissolves every act of creating. *Bartleby* is not the symbol of the before of creation, as Agamben proposes. But neither is he the laboratory for understanding what would be the constraints, the conditions of Melville's literary procedure. Although Deleuze establishes parallels with Kafka, Melville is never presented as the expression of a minor literature. On the contrary, he is the writer of a new nation, a nation of emigrants, of multiple languages, and of a nation of universal fraternity. The impossible in question in *Bartleby* is thus a concept of another domain. It is not the expression of limits that impede new possibilities. Thus, it is not a political concept. It belongs rather to a pragmatics of speaking. It bears on what Deleuze calls "fabulation." And fabulation belongs to another aesthetic problem: that of the relation, not to power [*pouvoir*], but to truth.

Deleuze had already introduced this concept in *Bergsonism*. However, this is not an alternative concept to "fiction," as it will become in the cinema books and thereafter. In the cinema books, Deleuze's entire reading of Kafka is forgotten. The idea of minor literature concerns only the question of fiction, not that of fabulation. We must return to *Cinema 2* in order to examine this first formulation of a critique of the concept of "fiction" and in order to accompany the movement of thought that will lead Deleuze to the theory of fabulation.

Fiction always exists within the empire of the true. Fiction is nothing but this small displacement of the verisimilar that parasitizes the possibles that surround the true. Creation thus relates back to fiction and to an impossible as limit of possibles. Fabulation, by contrast, posits a universe where impossible worlds, divergent worlds, are present in a same actual event. If fiction negatively presupposes the true, fabulation, by contrast, expresses the "power [*puissance*] of the false." The verisimilar inhabits the possible, the false can only be constructed on the impossible, or rather on the impossible. The false is only the positing of a world where there is a simultaneity of impossible presents. The power of the false of fabulation thus depends on this correlation between a metaphysics of the impossible and an aesthetics of the false.

The clearest presentation of this correlation between the *false* and the *impossible* appears in the chapter "Powers of the False" of *Cinema 2*. In this 1985 book, three years before the great treatise on Leibniz, the metaphysics of impossible worlds forms the fundamental argument for a new concept of fabulation.

Deleuze here proposes a general distinction of regimes of the image, between the organic regime that is determined by the privileging of



movement and the crystalline regime that works with time. The first is kinetic, the second chronic. Deleuze analyzes this distinction via several planes, in order to reveal the superior complexity of the crystalline regime, the regime of time-images, from both a metaphysical perspective and an aesthetic perspective. On the plane of the descriptive status of these images, Deleuze stresses the fact that the first regime is built on reference to a world, a set of things, persons, events, and landscapes, independent of images that describe that world. It's not a matter of knowing if this world really exists. In the organic regime, what counts is the fact that it presupposes the independence of the object vis-à-vis its images. The crystalline regime, by contrast, defines the image as a description that counts for its object and that replaces it. In this sense, "this is a cinema of the seer and no longer of the agent [*de voyant, non plus d'actant*]" (C2 126).

As concerns the relation between the real and the imaginary, the difference is even more marked. In an organic description, images always presuppose an opposition between, on one hand, actual linkages that determine succession, simultaneities, and causal and logical connections, and on the other hand, intermittencies and discontinuities, where each image is disconnected from others, thus causing a second pole of existence to appear, a pole that is of the imaginary. This opposition between the real and the imaginary is radically overturned in the crystalline regime. As Deleuze writes, "the actual is cut off from its motor linkages, or the real from its legal connections, and the virtual, for its part, detaches itself from its actualizations, starts to be valid for itself. The two modes of existence are now combined in a circuit where the real and the imaginary, the actual and the virtual, chase after each other, exchange their roles and become indiscernible" (C2 127). In this indiscernibility of the actual and the virtual, what Deleuze calls the "crystal image" is produced as the coalescence of an actual image and its virtual image.

In the plane of narration, the opposition between the pole of the real and the pole of the imaginary, which characterizes organic images, has as its corollary a veridical regime. Organic narration develops sensory-motor situations and image-actions, which, despite apparent anomalies such as ruptures, insertions, superimpositions, always make claim to the true. Even in fiction, organic narration seeks a correspondence between images and sequences of real situations.

Crystalline narration replaces sensory-motor schemas with pure optical and sonorous situations, that is, with images in vibration with themselves. Instead of a mimesis of the real, crystalline narration intensifies the auto-reference of its images, transforming the characters into perspectives, into gazes on the situation they inhabit on the screen. The characters, "who have become seers, cannot or will not react, so great is their need to 'see' properly what there is in the situation" (C2 128). Crystalline narration makes visible characters who

see and hear, and who thus constitute, from inside the image, the reality of the image they see and hear. As seers, the characters of crystalline narration radicalize the crisis of action in cinema. They totally emancipate abstract spaces and times. Spaces become crystallized. They are transformed into crystal spaces, where the coalescence of the actual image, in a singular space, with its virtual image, takes place. And time is presented in a direct fashion, also as the superimposition of the actual and the virtual. This time is a deactualized present in virtual sheets of the past. In crystalline narration, “we no longer have an indirect image of time which derives from movement, but a direct time-image from which movement derives” (C2 129).<sup>20</sup>

This autonomy of time, which defines the crystalline regime of images, has enormous implications for the condition of truth. Unfixed from the sensory-motor laws that regulate successions and simultaneities, pure sonic and optical images produce the ungrounding of one of the primary foundations of the concept of truth in its relation to time: the past is necessarily true, because, after it takes place, it cannot not have taken place. However, if cinematic images have no rule for their succession in montage, if they refer to no chronological time—which can be overturned through unmotivated cuts, by retroactive movements or repetition, but which do not cease to be a form of stable relation of situations and connections—they cancel the true condition of the past, and they unground the connection between irrevocability and the necessary in the immutability of the true. In this sense, this regime of emancipated images, as the direct expression of time, thus refers back to the great paradox of the metaphysics of truth, to the well-known “dominator argument,” also known as the “paradox of future contingents.”

Deleuze briefly reviews this paradox starting with the classic example of the naval battle that Aristotle used in the *Organon*. If it is true that a naval battle could take place tomorrow, this means that: either it will take place or it will not take place. In the two cases, one is led to untenable theses. If one admits that the battle, while being possible as future contingent event, becomes impossible at the moment it has not taken place—since it can no longer have taken place—one must conclude that the impossible proceeded from the possible, that is, that a thing previously possible, from the simple fact that it was not effectuated, has become impossible. On the other hand, if one admits that, although not effectuated, it can still have taken place, one is thus forced to admit that the past is not necessarily true, that the past can be changed. One must choose between two equally untenable solutions, one based on the nature of the possible, the other on the nature of the past. It imposes a decision between a concept of the possible that is transformed into the impossible at the moment of its actualization, and a concept of the past that is not irrevocable and, thus, that is not necessarily true. As Deleuze shows, Leibniz displaced the center of the paradox toward a new modal

concept. “We have to wait for Leibniz to get the most ingenious, but also the strangest and most convoluted, solution to this paradox. Leibniz says that the naval battle may or may not take place, but that this is not in the same world: it takes place in one world and does not take place in a different world, and these two worlds are possible, but are not ‘compossible’ with each other. He is thus obliged to forge the wonderful notion of impossibility (very different from contradiction) in order to resolve the paradox while saving truth: according to him, it is not the impossible, but only the impossible that proceeds from the possible, and the past may be true without being necessarily true” (C2 130). The Leibnizian concept of the impossible makes of noneffectuation a simple noncoincidence, a noncompatibility between possible worlds. It preserves the possible reality of a possible event that has not taken place and, in this manner, transforms the entire past into a series of true events, but true in their condition as possibles, that is, not necessarily true. The naval battles of Leibniz’s metaphysics of impossible worlds remain always ready to begin.

For Deleuze, this Leibnizian metaphysics is the right approach to the aesthetic program of modern fiction. Not because the concept of impossibility is the model of literary unreality. Quite the contrary. According to Deleuze, the worlds inhabited by the characters of stories and novels express, in great measure, the subversion of Leibniz’s solution. Modern fiction autonomizes different impossible worlds and makes them communicate in each past and in each present. This is the case of the fictions of Jorge Luis Borges. They affirm that all pasts are revocable and never cease repeating. But, on the other hand, they take all impossibles as possibles that may be simultaneously actualized. “This is Borges’s reply to Leibniz: the straight line as force of time, as labyrinth of time, is also the line which forks and keeps on forking, passing through *impossible presents*, returning to *not-necessarily true pasts*” (C2 131). Beyond the verisimilar and the possible, Borges inaugurates a false universe of impossible worlds. Deleuze can thus show that what the crystalline regime of narration produces is nothing but the illustration of Borges’s gesture. One produces the experience that impossibles belong to the same world and that impossible worlds belong to the same universe.

The crystalline regime here finds its fundamental opposition to the organic regime. Whereas organic images seek a veridical narration that lays claim to the true even in fiction, in the crystalline description, by contrast, one no longer lays claim to the true. In fashioning montages in which one decomposes the relations between direct time-images in order to simultaneously posit impossible presents, crystalline narration is neither true nor veridical. Nor does it have the condition of an image of fiction. It is a “falsifying narration.” Deleuze also calls it the “power of the false.” “It is a power of the false which replaces and supersedes the form of the true, because it posits the simultaneity of impossible presents, or the coexistence of not-necessarily true pasts.

Crystalline description was already reaching the indiscernibility of the real and the imaginary, but the falsifying narration which corresponds to it goes a step further and posits inexplicable differences to the present and undecidable alternatives between the true and false to the past. [. . .] The images must be produced in such a way that the past is not necessarily true, or that the impossible comes from the possible” (C2 131; trans. modified).

The concept of the impossible thus comes to be the ultimate characterization of the crystalline regime of cinematic images, the regime of time-images. Crystalline narration is a falsifying regime because it posits divergent worlds in the present, paths that fork. And to posit the impossible in the composition of images, is to affirm the power of the false, in the sense that the past is not necessarily true and something impossible can be made to issue forth from a possible.<sup>21</sup> The crystalline regime of narration escapes the domain of fiction. If the cinema of the organic regime of sensory–motor images invokes the aesthetic structure of the true and the verisimilar of fiction, by contrast, the falsifying cinema of the crystalline regime of sonic and optical images is a cinema, not of fiction, but of fabulation. *Fabulation* and *impossibilities* reciprocally explain one another. One must posit the impossible in order to affirm the power of the false and to enter into fabulation. We thus understand why Bartleby is the character of fabulation par excellence. He exists only through the formula that posits the impossible. In this act of positing, in the same present, a world where Bartleby copies and another world where he does not copy, Melville anticipates, without knowing it, the great invention of the time-images of crystalline cinema, narration that is not veridical, but falsifying. Bartleby fabulates in several senses. First, in that he is the character of a fable. Then, as character, he incarnates falsifying narrations, narrations that posit impossible worlds, in the same present. He is thus a character of the power of the false. On the other hand, he is a fabulator-character in that he becomes a pure seer, he exists only to the extent that he sees what is in his limit situation, in his nonpreference. He himself has lost his sensory–motor connections. He no longer wants to react; he no longer wants to choose. Finally, what he sees exists only in relation to situations that he inhabits in the tale. And he sees a people, a people who are missing. Melville describes him in the flagrant act of legending and in the flagrant act of seeing a people to come. But we cannot see what he sees. The object of his seeing is immanent to his becoming as a character, the becoming that is only the consequence of a formula that posits actual impossibility, the present impossibility between several divergent worlds.

Now we understand better the extent to which the positing of the impossible is essential to the formula that condenses the mode of existence of the character Bartleby. And we also understand the impossible better. It is the production of a falsifying narration, and it is the positing of a universe where impossible worlds are present. And in this universe, the character who

posits the impossible is in the flagrant act of fabulating, he is a seer, and he has visions and auditions. He sees a people. In this concept of “vision” or “visioning [*voyance*],” Deleuze truly completes his project for the autonomy of literary matter. Fabulation, the power of the false transformed into vision, is created not in the labor of writers, but inside certain of their characters. Fabulation consists of the images its characters produce in the flagrant act of becoming. They are thus visions and auditions. “What we have to do is catch someone else ‘legending,’ ‘legending *in flagrante delicto*.’ Then a minority discourse, with one or many speakers, takes shape. Here we come upon what Bergson calls ‘fabulation’. . . . To catch someone legending *in flagrante delicto* is to catch the movement of constitution of a people. A people isn’t something already there” (N 125–6; trans. modified). For Deleuze, Bartleby is the most extreme of such characters. He must posit the impossibility of two worlds, the coalescence of the world where he writes and the one where he doesn’t write, so that fabulation might appear. Agamben sees in him the experience of the act before creation. Deleuze presents him as the cancelation of all creation, so that he allows us to accede to the work of fabulation that is produced in him.

Deleuze stresses that the critique of fiction is not the critique of a form opposed to truth, but precisely the critique of the veneration of truth that all fiction presupposes. It’s a matter of freeing fiction from the model of truth that conditions it and rediscovering “the pure and simple *function of fabulation* which is opposed to this model. What is opposed to fiction is not the real; it is not the truth which is always that of the masters or colonizers, it is the fabulative function of the poor, in so far as it gives the false the power which makes it into a memory, a legend, a monster” (C2 150; trans. modified). One must thus give power/capacity [*puissance*] to the false, let it speak in visions and auditions, in order to reveal the condensation of the real and the imaginary, of the actual and the virtual, in short, the very “shape” of becoming insofar as it constitutes a literal transformation of the world. This fabulative function Deleuze first discovers in certain cinematic characters. The character and the director do not make the truth, the fictive true or the “as if.” They make literally. They truly become others. The character “becomes another, when he begins to fabulate without ever being fictional. And the film-maker for his part becomes another when he ‘intercedes’ with the real characters who wholly replace his own fictions with their proper fabulations. Both communicate in the invention of a people” (C2 150; trans. modified).

## THE FORMULA OF BECOMING

The last concept that opens the way toward an understanding of the fundamental difference between “fiction” and “fabulation” is that of “becoming.”

Bartleby's becoming is his moment of fabulation. And this moment is that in which he posits the impossible.

The formula posits the impossible only within the pragmatics of possibilities. As we have seen, the impossible does not open the force of creation, it gives birth not to a new possible as the surpassing of the impossible, but to another reality, which is no longer the condition of a creation. It is the effect of the completed impossible, of what Deleuze has long called a "becoming." We thus understand why, in the Bartleby text, it's not the question of creation but that of becoming that is central. The formula opens lines of flight. It establishes becomings, becoming-mineral, and the becoming-stone of Bartleby. And to open becoming, one must have first posited the impossibility of all creation, have posited the impossibility of all possibles. One must thus posit the impossible in order to establish a becoming.

It's not surprising that Bartleby is presented as a privileged figure of the process of becoming. He is the plunge of a singularity into a zone where it is no longer viable to distinguish its form from the entire world, animal, thing, or child.<sup>22</sup> To become is to enter into a process of asymmetrical synthesis where differences are put in vibration. To become is always a becoming-other, without becoming the other. It's to find that zone of proximity with the other, the relation between the two, but a relation not of similitude, but of indistinction, free indiscernibility. It's the state of indetermination between a subject and the entire world. Bartleby's becoming thus exists only after the annihilation [*néantisation*] of every distinction between possibles. It takes place through the exhaustion of the discernibility of preferables. Becoming is thus the only way out of the impossible.

If Bartleby is a becoming, it's because the formula exists only in order to produce becomings. The formula has no social role, and belongs to no situation and no identity. "If Bartleby had refused, he could still be seen as a rebel or insurrectionary, and as such would still have a social role. But the formula stymies all speech acts, and at the same time, it makes Bartleby a pure outside [*exclu*] to whom no social position can be attributed" (CC 73).<sup>23</sup> The formula impedes any sort of mimetic relation, either of acceptance or of refusal. Bartleby is not even a rebel or an insurrectionary, and he has no pre-formed role that he can incarnate or claim for his condition. He is only a "becoming." The first form of this becoming is played out in the relation between Bartleby and the attorney. It's not only Bartleby who is in the process of becoming. The formula itself becomes and proliferates. It expands, its force seizes all who hear it. "In Bartleby's case, might not his relation with the attorney be equally mysterious, and in turn mark the possibility of a becoming, of a new man?" (CC 74). And a bit further, "Is there a relation of identification between the attorney and Bartleby? But what is this relation? In what direction does it move?" (CC 76). According to the mimetic model, identification bears on three elements: a form (image or representation), a subject, and the

efforts of the subject to take form. This importance of form in the mimetic model Deleuze describes as being above all neurotic. The attorney thus has a paternal function vis-à-vis Bartleby. However, Bartleby's case differs from that of the neurotic. Rather, in the relation to the attorney, it's more a relation of psychotic identification.<sup>24</sup> This identification is distinguished from the neurotic relation by three characteristics: the trait, the zone, and the function. These three characteristics allow us to indicate the specificity of "becoming" that is at play in the character Bartleby.

The trait of the expression that defines the process of becoming, being informal, and undetermined, is opposed to the expressed image or form. As Deleuze says, the formula is a "*trait of expression, I PREFER NOT TO*, which will proliferate around him and contaminate the others, sending the attorney fleeing. But it will also send language itself into flight, it will open up a zone of indetermination or indiscernibility in which neither words nor characters can be distinguished—the fleeing attorney and the immobile, petrified Bartleby. The attorney starts to vagabond while Bartleby remains tranquil, but it is precisely because he remains tranquil and immobile that Bartleby is treated like a vagabond" (CC 76). The trait of expression severs the norms of the image as social representation of the attorney and Bartleby, as well as the norms of the very form of expression. On one hand, social criteria are broken and Bartleby is treated as a vagabond because of his immobility. Between characters, between what they are supposed to represent, a zone of indetermination is created that comes to completely change the relation: the attorney flees and is set in vagabondage whereas Bartleby remains tranquil and petrified. On the other hand, as concerns language itself, the words no longer distinguish simple enumerations. Because the formula annihilates the distinction between affirming and negating, between accepting and refusing, that is, the condition of the possibility of all enunciation, the words refer back only to themselves. They no longer signify, and they no longer are judgments about the states of things. They are no longer manifestations of an interiority. The formula thus deprives the figure of the father (the attorney) of his power [*pouvoir*] of commanding (to copy), and it allows the supposed son (Bartleby) not to respect the order word (to copy).

Becomings start from what Deleuze calls a zone, a zone of proximity [*une zone de voisinage*]. Relations of proximity, those of Bartleby, those of the attorney (who has more and more bizarre components), are thus opposed to mimesis. Bartleby and the attorney resemble characters in a single becoming, taken up in a single zone of proximity proper to every becoming. As Deleuze explains in "Literature and Life": "To become is not to attain a form (identification, imitation, Mimesis) but to find the zone of proximity, indiscernibility, or indifferentiation where one can no longer be distinguished from a woman, an animal, or a molecule" (CC 1). Becoming as a state of indetermination

between terms is what Deleuze calls an alliance against nature, in opposition to a natural filiation. It's a matter of a relation of proximity and of absolute contiguity, where a sort of alliance is established between terms that have become indiscernible. Instead of a supposed relation between father and son, the attorney and Bartleby become brothers. The formula thus produces what Deleuze calls the "function of universal fraternity that no longer passes through the father, but is built on the ruins of the paternal function" (CC 78). Bartleby's becoming has no form, but only the state of a *function*. His different stages are not metamorphoses and are not the transition between forms. Because he exists only in relations of proximity, in zones of indetermination, Bartleby is the function of these transversal relations, these ties among brothers. Bartleby and the attorney lose their references, their images, and their portraits, and become characters without qualities. They enter into a functional relation of proximity. In their becoming, they have become brothers in a new form of universality/society: the fraternal community or universal fraternity.<sup>25</sup>

Deleuze sees an essential parallelism between the becoming of characters in the invention of forms of fraternity and their work of fabulation. The two becomings, in their asymmetrical convergence, are almost the same process in writing.<sup>26</sup> One becomes woman, one becomes animal, or one becomes child in the act of describing characters in a becoming, characters in the process of fabulation in the invention of new possibilities of life. It is easy to understand why Deleuze transformed becoming into a key concept in his definition of literature. As he says in "Literature and Life," a text written for *Essays Critical and Clinical*, "To write is certainly not to impose a form (of expression) on the matter of lived experience. Literature rather moves in the direction of the ill-formed or the incomplete. [. . .] Writing is inseparable from becoming: in writing, one becomes-woman, becomes-animal or vegetable, becomes-molecular to the point of becoming-imperceptible" (CC 1). The writer is the one who has the capacity to produce unforeseeable and non-preexistent formulations, to break with every established form, and to become undetermined and nonformal. And this becoming continues to the limit, up to becoming-imperceptible. All becoming is a becoming-minor, a process of minorization or of impotence [*impuissance*]. As Deleuze explains, "One does not become Man, insofar as man presents himself as a dominant form of expression that claims to impose itself on all matter, whereas woman, animal, or molecule always has a component of flight that escapes its own formalization. The shame of being a man—is there any better reason to write?" (CC 1). It's the shame of being a man, that is, of being a dominant form, that moves literature and its becomings.

Bartleby's becoming is therefore exemplary. He enters into a movement toward the inhuman and toward the imperceptible. The question, then,



concerns the mode of existence of this inhuman. How should we think the singularity of these individuals in the process of becoming these individuals deprived of particularities? How can one keep this relation of proximity in a zone of indetermination from transforming into an undetermined whole, an undifferentiated ensemble? Deleuze asks: “what remains of souls once they are no longer attached to particularities, what keeps them from melting into a whole?” (CC 87).

The individual without qualities does not become any individual whatever [*un individu quelconque*]. Deleuze proposes a new lexicon to approach this limit condition of the singular in the process of becoming. And Bartleby always offers his example, he is the laboratory of this metaphysics of the nondetermined, first, as a being who, outside time, outside historical coordinates, without memory or projects, is instantaneous. “Bartleby is the man without references, without possessions, without properties, without qualities, without particularities: he is too smooth for anyone to be able to hang any particularity on him. Without past or future, he is instantaneous” (CC 74). Bartleby has no other determination than that of being, quite simply. As such, he is what Deleuze likes to call *homo tantum* (CC 86).<sup>27</sup> He is also defined as the man without family ties; he is the “bachelor” [*célibataire*]. But his fundamental determination is that of being an “original”: “There is nothing particular or general about Bartleby: he is an Original” (CC 83).

This concept of the “original” is difficult to understand. Deleuze seems to concentrate in this term determinations that are at once romantic and anarchistic. On one hand, the original is a being of a “primary Nature,” independent of the world of rules and laws, the world of the human, all too human, although he is not separable from this second Nature, once he reveals the void and the mediocrity of this nature. The original is the one who goes beyond all form, all law. And on several levels: (a) his logic responds to a thought without image; (b) he is a figure of life and knowledge because he has had access to unfathomable things; (c) he escapes knowledge and defies psychology; (d) he pronounces words that are not inserted into the logic of presuppositions but that rather resemble an original language that verges on agrammaticality; (e) instead of letting himself be influenced by his milieu, it is he who influences the milieu, by throwing a light on it that has its source in himself, because he belongs to a primary nature.

As a being of primary Nature, then, the original expresses the inhuman, the beyond of what Deleuze presents as the masquerade of laws, and hence, the masquerade of the father. On the other hand, the original is truly constituted only inside a new community, inside new rules and new familial relations. He thus presupposes a second Nature upon which to build his modes of existence. Counter to the function of the father, the original exists only in societies of brothers, where alliance replaces filiation. Hence, the original is always

in the process of becoming, but a becoming toward a new humanity. “To give birth to the new man or the man without particularities, to reunite the original and humanity by constituting a society of brothers as a new universality. In the society of brothers, alliance replaces filiation and the blood pact replaces consanguinity. Man is indeed the blood brother, and woman, his blood sister: according to Melville this is the *community of celibates* [*communauté des célibataires* could also be translated as *community of bachelors*], drawing its members into an unlimited becoming” (CC 84). The becoming of each individual, which leads them to the condition of being originals, is intensified as an infinite power/capacity [*puissance*] as community. That community of bachelors/celibates is a becoming of becomings, an “unlimited becoming.”

To invent original beings is always to create worlds composed only of singular beings, of communities of originals, and of bachelor/celibates. “What then is the biggest problem haunting Melville’s oeuvre? To recover the already-sensed identity? No doubt, it lies in reconciling two originals *but thereby also in reconciling the original with secondary humanity*, the inhuman with the human” (CC 84). This reconciliation, however, is not the work of a personal fiction. Melville’s task is that of composing original figures based on the experience—at once political, historical, and geographic—of a territory and a nation. In his case, these are American bachelors/celibates. Ahab, Claggart, Billy Budd, and Bartleby—all are the expression of a new man who was being invented in America as the incarnation of nineteenth-century messianism in its version of a pragmatism founded on the force of universal immigration, as opposed to socialism as universal proletarianization.<sup>28</sup> Melville’s books, for Deleuze, link up with the political programs inspired by Jefferson or Thoreau. In this sense the question is no longer how a community of original beings may be realized, but to what extent it has already been realized as the affair of a people who are missing. This community and this people only await the writing in order that they be enunciated. And this story, in its truth, no longer has the nature of a fiction, but that of a fabulation.<sup>29</sup>

It is thus that Deleuze sees the specificity of American literature, as being a daughter who has severed ties with English paternity. America, as community of brothers without a father, is the image of what Deleuze had been thinking since the beginning of his work: the world in process, archipelago, as a desert isle. Melville was able to put in practice a pragmatism: “It is first of all the affirmation of a world in *process*, an *archipelago*. Not even a puzzle, whose pieces when fitted together would constitute a whole, but rather a wall of loose, uncemented stones, where every element has a value in itself but also in relation to others: isolated and floating relations, islands and straits, immobile points and sinuous lines” (CC 86). The federal structure of America thus produces, from a political, historical, and geographic perspective, the

structure of the community of bachelors/celibates. They are all like a wall of free stones. To the puzzle that always presupposes a final form among the pieces, Deleuze opposes the anarchy of free stones. For the cement of walls, Deleuze substitutes new relations among elements. And these new relations are stronger than cement. To attain this new bond, Deleuze says, one must replace representation with something entirely different. And that other thing is confidence, belief in each element: “the brothers of the archipelago, who replace knowledge with belief, or rather with ‘confidence’” (CC 87).<sup>30</sup> It’s a matter of a morality of life where souls follow the very highway of life without a goal, creating relations of fraternity with other souls, with no paternal hierarchy, but a reciprocal confidence. It’s an anarchic moral archipelago. Among bachelors/celibates, all that is necessary for the foundation of a community is confidence. Such is the case of *Bartleby*, who, according to Deleuze, asks of the attorney only a little confidence.

American literature transposed this democratic and anarchistic messianism into visions and sounds of a people to come. Henry James, Whitman, and Melville were not inventors of fictions, but fabulators. Into the literary work they integrated visions that subterraneously traversed this nation-state of universal immigration. But they also were physicians of the American illness. They denounced this new cement that reestablished the wall, that is, the paternal authority of charity. Deleuze emphasizes that Melville’s books are, at the same time, the fabulation of a people who are missing, and the diagnostic of a sick people. One understands why, alongside the singular characters engaged in becoming, alongside the bachelors/celibates, are the crooks, the diabolical fathers, and orphan children.

Each world created in Melville’s literature could make of his protagonists, of his “heroes,” of his original beings, figures with a schizophrenic vocation, catatonic, and even anorexic. One must not be surprised by the case of *Bartleby the scrivener*. His becoming-stone, his becoming-mineral, and the positing of the impossible that his formula produces are truly the effect of a people who still inhabit this zone of indetermination between the law of the father and the law of filiation, but also the effect of the community of originals, the fraternity of bachelors/celibates. We thus understand why *Bartleby* is only the fabulative version of a formula. He is the critical point of a people who are missing, the moment of an immense catastrophe, the folding on itself of the nation of universal immigration. *Bartleby*’s formula bears a new health. It is the condition of a community to come. Deleuze makes it appear, from the depth of his silence and from the obscurity of his most irrevocable quietude, as a true theophany. “*Bartleby* is not the patient, but the doctor of a sick America, the *Medicine-Man*, the new Christ or the brother to us all” (CC 90).<sup>31</sup>

## KAFKA AND MELVILLE: THE SAME COMBAT IN THE INVENTION OF A PEOPLE WHO ARE MISSING?

We now touch on a final dimension of the concept of fabulation in Deleuze: the writer as a fabulator, as visionary, the one who has visions and auditions, and who writes for a community to come. Here the fabulator concerns a singular type of literature, literature as collective enunciation of a minor community, and as expression of a people who are missing. In this way Deleuze tries to establish a continuity between his reading of Kafka and his reading of Melville. “What Kafka would say about ‘small nations’ is what Melville had already said about the great American nation: it must become a patchwork of all small nations. What Kafka would say about minor literatures is what Melville had already said about the American literature of his time; because there are so few authors in America, and because its people are so indifferent, the writer is not in a position to succeed as a recognized master. Even in his failure, the writer remains all the more the bearer of a collective enunciation, which no longer forms part of literary history and preserves the rights of a people to come, or of a human becoming” (CC 89–90). In “Literature and Life,” the introductory essay written for *Essays Critical and Clinical*, Deleuze articulates the same harmony between Kafka and Melville. “Kafka (for central Europe) and Melville (for America) present literature as the collective enunciation of a minor people, or of all minor peoples, who find their expression only in and through the writer” (CC 4). But must we believe Deleuze? Do we find in Kafka and Melville the same movement of the preservation of the rights of a people, the same regime of collective enunciation of a minor people?

As we have seen, in his understanding of Kafka, this collective dimension of literary experience—what he calls the “collective assemblage of enunciation”—is the work of a minority in a major language as the construction of lines of flight and lines of deterritorialization for singular or minoritarian becomings. However, his reading of Melville’s universe seems to be a bit different. Melville is not presented as belonging to a small nation asphyxiated by a great empire. America is a large nation. Deleuze accentuates its nature as the site of a universal immigration. Furthermore, Deleuze argues, the political programs of its founders have transformed it into a wall of free stones, without cement and without a completed configuration. We no longer find the diabolical forces of the outside that knock on the door of communities of bachelors/celibates, as in Kafka.

Can one, nonetheless, see a similar understanding of the fabulative function? Although the concept of “fabulation” is not present in the Kafka book, is it possible to attribute the same prophetic role to Kafka’s celibate characters

as that assigned to Melville's characters? Are they described as equally *in flagrante delicto* of fabulating a people who are missing?

To respond to these questions, we would need a parallel reading of Kafka and Melville. We would have to contrast Kafka's characters (the function K. in the novels, the bachelors/celibates of the stories) in their lines of flight, their deterritorializations, their becomings-animal and all of Melville's originals, all the schizophrenics, all the catatonics, and all the hypochondriacs of the America of immigrants in their becoming-mineral, their becoming-stone—an impossible task. This alone would presuppose an entirely different research plan. Might we not, however, adopt another strategy? Might we simply examine a few paradigmatic cases and transform them into objects of experimentation, at once critical and clinical, of what Deleuze sees as the significance of this relation between the process of becoming of certain characters and the work of fabulation that constitutes them as literature?

Such would be the case if one just took the sole character of Kafka's who, according to Deleuze and Guattari, failed in his becoming-animal. We're thinking of Gregor Samsa of "The Metamorphosis" and his similarity to Bartleby. Can we not see in Bartleby's catatonia and anorexia the same failed becoming as that of Gregor Samsa as diagnosed by Deleuze and Guattari in the Kafka book and in *A Thousand Plateaus*? And, in this case, are we not confronted with a paradox? Gregor Samsa's metamorphosis is the outcome of a false becoming, of a re-Oedipalized becoming. Gregor dies because he does not break with the maternal figure in his incest with his sister. By contrast, Bartleby dies not through a failed becoming, but through a becoming that reaches completion, that attains its perfection: becoming-mineral, becoming-stone, and stone among stones in a wall of free stones. And Deleuze affirms this becoming not as a sick outcome, but as the creation of a new health, a health that traverses the invention of a people. Bartleby's delirium is presented as the extreme case of the creation of a health, and Melville's oeuvre, in that it invents a people of bachelors/celibates, a people of original beings, represents the achievement of the ultimate aim of literature. "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" (CC 4). In this sense, Bartleby is "the doctor of a sick America, the *Medicine-Man*" who makes of his becoming-mineral, his total exhaustion, his limit-silence, and the experience of a new health. This health, because it depends on this process of inventing a people who are missing, is the effect of literature: "Health as literature, as writing, consists in inventing a people who are missing" (CC 4). The last performative dimension of the formula is to invent a health as writing, as the invention of a people who are missing.

How then should one understand the striking similarity between Gregor Samsa's becoming and that of Bartleby? And what is the significance of the

most extreme opposition of the effects of those becomings on life, that is, this absolute contrast between Gregor's unstoppable illness, transformed into a necrotic insect, and Bartleby's invention of a new health, in his delirium of a community of men without references or preferences? And must one see here similar becomings that, nevertheless, end in opposite outcomes?

It's true that Gregor's becoming, from the beginning, is formulated as the effect of an Oedipal return and of incest with the sister, whereas Bartleby is the man of transversal relations and the community of brothers. In this sense, Bartleby no longer belongs to the battle against psychoanalysis.<sup>32</sup> However, as we saw in the chapter on Kafka, Deleuze presents "The Metamorphosis" as the practical refutation of an analytic transference. The case of Gregor is an example of re-Oedipalization. Gregor's process of becoming-animal comes to a halt through the crisis of the sister's jealousy in relation to the portrait of the woman with the fur muff, which Gregor insists on keeping. At the moment of cleaning out Gregor's room, "He sticks to the portrait, as if to a last territorialized image. In fact, that's what the sister cannot tolerate. She accepted Gregor; like him, she wanted the schizo incest, an incest of strong connections, incest with the sister in opposition to Oedipal incest, incest that gives evidence of a nonhuman sexuality as in the becoming-animal. But, jealous of the portrait, she begins to hate Gregor and condemns him. From that point on, Gregor's deterritorialization through the becoming-animal fails; he re-Oedipalizes himself through the apple that is thrown at him and has nothing to do but die, the apple buried in his back" (K 15). Deleuze and Guattari's diagnosis leaves no doubt. Gregor's becoming-animal is a failed process, the victim of an Oedipal return. But, is it only a matter of false incest with the sister? Isn't Gregor, like Bartleby, also engaged in a political becoming, isn't he also engaged in bureaucratic, territorial, and historical struggles?

Unlike Bartleby, Gregor is a family man, the man of an *ethos*. However, like Bartleby, Gregor is also a functionary. In his becoming, he begins to lose all his possessions, to become a stranger in his own house, an ungrateful guest, who must be annihilated, and who must be made to disappear. It's the trio of the *polis* as an organized system of work, *oikos* as a way of rendering oneself submissive to the *polis*, and *ethos* as a site of this submission that is destroyed in the becoming-dispossessed of Gregor. As a functionary, Gregor is part of the logic of the *polis* according to which *oikonomia* is the maintenance of *ethos*: "later on Gregor had earned so much money that he was able to meet the expenses of the whole household and did so" (Kafka 1971: 136).

Deleuze and Guattari recognize this historical and global foundation of Gregor's relation with his family: "one discovers behind the familial triangle (father–mother–child) other infinitely more active triangles from which the family itself borrows its own power, its own drive to propagate submission, to lower the head and make heads lower. Because it's *that* that the libido of

the child really invests itself in from the start: by means of the family photo, a whole map of the world” (K 11). It’s in this regard that Gregor’s becoming-animal has the sense of a radical disobedience, the condition of a line of flight. At the very moment the comic enlargement of Oedipus reveals these other oppressive triangles, a way out appears, the line of flight for escape. “To the inhumanness of the ‘diabolical powers,’ there is the answer of a becoming-animal: to become a beetle [. . .] rather than lowering one’s head and remaining a bureaucrat, inspector, judge, or judged. All children build or feel these sorts of escapes, these acts of becoming-animal” (K 12). It’s this becoming-animal that happens to Gregor. And this becoming is much greater than a battle against the father, much greater than an Oedipal delirium. This becoming is produced “not only to flee his father, but rather to find an escape where his father didn’t know to find one, in order to flee the director, the business, and the bureaucrats, to reach that region where the voice no longer does anything but buzz: “‘Did you hear him? It was an animal’s voice,” said the chief clerk’” (K 13; trans. modified).

Thus, there are two effects of the political development of Oedipus. On one hand, and by a derivation *a contrario*, hidden in the familial triangle is a submission to other triangles, which are in the familial triangle itself. On the other hand, and by a derivation *a fortiori*, one discovers a becoming-animal that traces its own exit, its lines of flight from this double submission, in a historical–global movement.<sup>33</sup>

“The Metamorphosis” thus shows us the submission of the originary triangle of the family to diabolical powers (bureaucratic, capitalist, and fascist) and, correlatively, the exit of one of its members through a becoming-animal. The historical–global dimension takes place in three moments. First, the chief clerk, “*le fondé de pouvoir en personne*” [*fondé de pouvoir*: “proxy,” “the one holding power” (as power of attorney); English translation: “the chief clerk himself”; French trans. Kafka 1988: 17] who constrains and even threatens. Then the father, who not only goes back to work in the bank but also sleeps in his uniform, “as if he were ready for service at any moment and even here only at the beck and call of his superior” (Kafka 1971: 148). Finally, the renting of a part of the house and the full service the family offers the three bureaucrats, who “had a passion for order, not only in their own room but [. . .] in all its arrangements, especially in the kitchen” (Kafka 1971: 152). On the other hand and in a parallel fashion, we have Gregor’s becoming-animal, which constitutes a way out, which is the very trace of the possibility of a line of flight in relation to the familial triangle, but above all in relation to the bureaucratic and commercial triangle (see K 14–15). Most terrifying is the effect that this deterritorialization has on the rest of the family. As we saw in relation to *Bartleby*, Gregor’s becoming also makes everything around him tremble. Thus, it’s in parallel with Gregor’s becoming, up to his death, that his family itself is deterritorialized.

As a result of his becoming-animal, Gregor must die through necrosis. And Bartleby's destiny? His death in prison, his perishing through catatonia, through anorexia, through becoming-animal, is it that different from Gregor's death?

Let's return to our question: Despite all these similarities between Gregor's becoming-animal and Bartleby's becoming-mineral, must we not see a change in Deleuze's thought? And in what domain does this change take place?

These questions bring us back to the fundamental problem that, from the beginning, has accompanied our reading of the Bartleby text—the problem of the possible existence of a Deleuzian politics. And here, once again, we must resume our discussion with Jacques Rancière. In his commentary on Deleuze's Bartleby essay, Rancière argues that no politics can emerge from the indifference of preference or the becomings of bachelor/celibate characters.

For Rancière, the great image of a new political experience found in Deleuze's Bartleby text is that of the wall of free stones [*pierres libres*: also, "loose stones"], "one of the last of the great, strong images that Deleuze has left us" (Rancière 2004b: 161). However, this image, according to Rancière, constitutes a blockage of the political and liberatory function of literature, since "the utopia and the hope Deleuze has in Bartleby as the *Confidence Man* of the American world, seems to be weakened by this image of the wall. It's an image that confronts Deleuze with the possibility of a quietism, à la Flaubert, or an indifferentism. The question thus becomes: How can Bartleby, the indifferent, constitute a fraternal community" (Rancière 2004b; not in English translation, p. 200 of French). Rancière can only denounce what he considers the displacement of the political toward a metaphysics of the multitude and dramaturgy of the festival. "Under the mask of Bartleby, Deleuze opens to us the open road of comrades, the great drunkenness of joyous multitudes freed from the law of the Father, the path of a certain 'Deleuzism' that is perhaps only the 'festival of donkeys' of Deleuze's thinking. But this road leads us to contradiction: the wall of loose stones [*pierres libres*], the wall of non-passage. We do not go on, from the multitudinous incantation of Being, toward any political justice. There is no Dionysian politics" (Rancière 2004b: 164).

The question cannot be postponed: are the concepts of "fabulation," "people to come," "becoming," and "impossible worlds that converge" elements of a Dionysian politics? Or, more radically, elements of any politics whatever? Doesn't the difference between Gregor's and Bartleby's becomings leave us suspecting a decisive displacement in Deleuze's thought on the relation between literature and life? Is this relation an event that belongs to the political sphere? Between the Kafka book of 1975 and the Bartleby text



of 1989 are there not significant differences in the very concept of life? And that life, is it always an affair of the *polis*?

Gregor and Bartleby apparently provide a fabulative configuration similar to the becoming of the writer in the act of writing—Gregor through a becoming-animal, through a line of flight from familial, economic, and bureaucratic territories, Bartleby by a becoming-mineral, by a becoming-any-singularity-whatever, nonhuman. So, why make Gregor's death a failed becoming and Bartleby's death the invention of a new health? Why is there no effect of fabulation, and no invention of a people who are missing in Gregor's becoming-animal, whereas Bartleby is the happy outcome of the invention of a new community to come?

Perhaps it's necessary to transform Deleuze's utilization of Bartleby's formula into an imperative, not a political one, but rather an ethical imperative. This would mean making Bartleby's fabulation as a whole appear as the affirmation not of new forms of power [*pouvoir*], but of new forms of possibility and even impotence [*impouvoir*], as power's folding on itself. The formula is ethical because, as a disjunctive synthesis that is at once performative and cognitive, it is simultaneously the absence of a preference on the plane of action, and the presence of an impossibility of divergent series on the plane of a presentation of the world. In his performative condition it can be read as the *mise-en-abyme* of the categorical imperative, not only in its Kantian version, but also in its Nietzschean version. It does not seek the universal in its exemplarity, and on the other hand, neither does it posit the infinity of the will in the affirmation of the eternal return. This ethics, both non-Kantian and non-Nietzschean, does not dispense with a cosmology. As visioning [*voyance*], it refuses Kantian humanity as cosmopolitan construct [*fait cosmopolitique*]. Contrary to Nietzsche, it does not see individuality as a consequence of cosmic repetition. The formula provides access to a vision of a world and to the visioning [*voyance*] of a chaosmos. However, this chaosmos, because it is traversed by a plane of consistency of divergent series, can only ground imperatives that are at once nonpolitical, noncosmopolitan, and nonpreferential. Like all imperatives, Bartleby's formula does indeed contain a vision of a people and a world. In itself it has an infinite fabulative power/capacity [*puissance*]. But the world and the people that the formula makes visible do not belong to the quotidian experience that can be mimetically transposed into literary expressions. It's a world and a people to which only the visioning of a fabulative character may grant access. Only these visions and auditions of Bartleby can make this visioning real, either on the pragmatic plane as annihilation of all preference, of all choice of the one who enunciates the formula, or on the metaphysical plane as production of resonance of impossible worlds. When Deleuze says that Bartleby's formula "posits the impossible," it's precisely to express this double reality, at once

pragmatic and metaphysical. It posits a people of the impossible and a world of the impossible.

From the Kafka book to the Bartleby text, then, can we not speak of a displacement from a politics to an ethics, from a theory of power/impotence [*pouvoir/impouvoir*] to a theory of the possible/impossible? The great question of the relation between literature and life has thus shifted. It must be considered in an ethical register. This becomes clearer in an exemplary text: “The Exhausted,” which Deleuze writes in 1992 as an introduction to Beckett’s television plays.

## NOTES

1. “The new power of literature takes hold [. . .] just where the mind [esprit] becomes disorganized, where its world splits, where thought bursts into atoms that are in unity with atoms of matter” (Rancière 2004b: 149).

2. “What is opposed to *mimesis* is, in Deleuzian terms, becomings and haecceities” (Rancière 2004b: 150).

3. In Rancière’s view, this concentration on the main character Bartleby and his formula brings back the analysis of the figure in *Francis Bacon* and justifies the fact that Deleuze granted Bartleby the role of an Original. “The text on Bartleby offers a literary equivalent of the pictorial figure, the Christ-like figure of the *eccentric* [*l’original*]” (Rancière 2004b: 155). But Rancière observes that in this way Deleuze transforms Bartleby and swells him with powers [*pouvoirs*] that exceed him. “The eccentric [*l’original*] becomes in Deleuze a figure of a new kind. He resembles the pictorial figure by dint of his solitude, which blocks the unfolding of narrative logic, and also by virtue of his ability to symbolize the very movement of the work, that of a schizophrenia confined to the actual composition of the text. But even more than the pictorial figure, he is given the power [*pouvoir*] to condense, as in a coat of arms, all the qualities of the work” (Rancière 2004b: 155–6).

4. In *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari analyze literality as being the state of becoming imperceptible. The line of flight is the line that reaches the a-formal state of absolute deterritorialization. And this deterritorialization is real; it is composed of real lines of flight. For this reason, the line of flight is where “one can finally speak ‘literally’ of anything at all, a blade of grass, a catastrophe or sensation, calmly accepting that which occurs when it is no longer possible for anything to stand for anything else” (ATP 198). “‘I am speaking literally,’ I am drawing lines, lines of writing, and life passes between the lines. [. . .] It is a political affair. [. . .] It is also a perceptual affair, for perception always goes hand in hand with semiotics, practice, politics, theory. [. . .] Not only does one speak literally, one also lives literally, in other words, following lines, whether connectable or not” (ATP 201).

5. The comic is thought by Deleuze as the procedure proper to this implosion of all established order. The difference between the comic and irony in Deleuze is effected through the relation that the statements establish with the reality they

disorganize. These are procedures that differ from critique, precisely because they are literal, like those of *Bartleby*.

6. Here we must stress that the concept of the “assemblage” [*agencement*] does not have a technical sense.

7. “Psychosis characteristically brings into play a *procedure*. [. . .] *Bartleby* [. . .] has no general Procedure, such as stuttering, with which to treat language. He makes do with a seemingly normal, brief Formula, at best a localized tick that crops up in certain circumstances. And yet the result and the effect are the same: to carve out a kind of foreign language within language, to make the whole confront silence, make it topple into silence. [. . .] After the formula there is nothing left to say: it functions as a procedure” (CC 72–3).

8. “Ahab will break through the wall, even if there is nothing behind it, and will make nothingness the object of his will. ‘To me, the white whale is that wall, shoved near to me. Sometimes I think there’s naught beyond. But ‘tis enough’” (CC 79).

9. Deleuze does not refer to the concept of the impossible in his reading of Heidegger. He stresses the equivalence between the being of *Ereignis* and a *Poss-est*, a possibility of Being, in his meditation on technology. “This is what appears in Heidegger with the notion of *Ereignis*, which is like the eventuality of an Event, a Possibility of Being, a *Possest*, a Still-to-come that goes beyond the presence of the present no less than the immemorial of memory. And in his last writings, Heidegger no longer even speaks of metaphysics or the overcoming of metaphysics, since Being in turn must be overcome in favor of a Being-Power [*Pouvoir-Être*] that is no longer linked to technology” (CC 94). However, can he ignore the role that the impossible plays in this concept of possibility?

10. In *Anti-Oedipus*, Deleuze had already rejected this equivalence of the impossible and the real. “The real is not impossible; on the contrary, within the real everything becomes possible” (AO 27). But in 1972, this nonequivalence of the impossible and the real was posited in order to redefine the real, to liberate it from the weight of the law and lack. Hence that joy in the affirmation of the real as the domain of the possible, where everything is possible. Now, in the *Bartleby* text, Deleuze wants to think the impossible as such. And this impossible is still not the real of Lacan, although it is real. In *Bartleby*’s formula, the real is the impossible—unlike in 1972, when the real was the domain where everything is possible. But this impossible does not signify the inaccessible. The impossible has become real as a consequence of the materiality of the formula. Unlike Lacan’s symbolic, unlike the Oedipal law that transforms all the real into an impossible object of desire, the formula hinders nothing, obliges nothing. If the formula poses the impossible, it’s because the formula deconstructs all law, starting from the law of all laws, the law of desire, and the law of preference.

11. “Being is obviously not a real predicate, i.e., a concept of something that could add to the concept of a thing. It is merely the positing of a thing or of certain determinations in themselves. In the logical use it is merely the copula of a judgment” (Kant 1998: 567 [A598/B627]).

12. As Paola Marrati writes, while reading the same passage of Deleuze’s, “The object of faith is not in a temporal beyond to attain; belief no longer fulfills the expectation of hope, thereby rendering it acceptable. The new faith invests the world such

as it is, not in order to justify the intolerable, but to make us believe that if the organic form of the connection that attaches us to the world is broken, the connection itself is not broken and other forms of connection remain to be invented” (Marrati 2004: 323–4).

13. “Deleuze’s logic is thus not a logic of ‘justified belief’ or ‘warranted assertability.’ It is more, as with James, a matter of pushing the question of belief beyond assurance of knowledge, or of faith, to what Deleuze calls a ‘belief in the world’” (Rajchman 2000: 75).

14. We use Giorgio Agamben’s reading of Melville in his book *Potentialities* (1999).

15. “The indifference of Being and Nothing is not, however, an equivalence between two opposite principles; rather, it is the mode of Being of potentiality [*le mode d’être d’une puissance*] that is purified of all reason” (Agamben 1999: 259).

16. “Leibniz once expressed the originary potentiality [*puissance*] of Being in the form of a principle usually defined as the ‘principle of sufficient reason.’ This principle has the following form: *ratio est cur aliquid si potius quam non sit*, ‘there is a reason for which something does rather than does not exist.’ Insofar as it cannot be reduced either to the pole of Being or to the pole of the Nothing, Bartleby’s formula (like its Skeptic archetype) calls into question the ‘strongest of all principles,’ appealing precisely to the *potius*, the ‘rather’ that articulates its scansion. Forcibly tearing it from its context, the formula emancipates potentiality (*potius*, from *potis*, which means ‘more powerful’) from both its connection to a ‘reason’ (*ratio*) and its subordination to Being” (Agamben 1999: 257–8).

17. “This is why Aristotle must define the possible-potential [*le puissant possible*] (*dynaton*) in the following terms: ‘A thing is said to be potential if, when the act of which it is said to be potential is realized, there will be nothing impotential’ [. . .] (*Metaphysics*, 1047: 124–26). The last three words of the definition (*ouden estai adynaton*) do not mean, as the usual and completely trivializing reading maintains, ‘there will be nothing impossible’ (that is, what is not impossible is possible). They specify, rather, the condition in which potentiality—which can both be and not be—can realize itself (this is also shown by the analogous definition of the contingent in the *Prior Analytics*, 32 a 18–20, where Aristotle’s text must be translated as follows: “I say that the contingent can also occur and that once it exists, given that it is not necessary, there will be no potential in it not to be”). What is potential can pass over into actuality only at the point at which it sets aside its own potential not to be (its *adynamia*), when nothing in it is potential not to be and when it can, therefore, not not-be” (Agamben 1999: 264).

18. “As a scribe who has stopped writing, Bartleby is the extreme figure of the Nothing from which all creation derives; and at the same time, he constitutes the most implacable vindication of this Nothing as pure, absolute potentiality. The scrivener has become the writing tablet; he is now nothing other than his white sheet [*sa propre feuille blanche*]” (Agamben 1999: 253–4).

19. “But then a fifth singularity appears: resistance to temptation [. . .] that is why Adam the non-sinner is supposed to be impossible with *this* world, since he implies a singularity that diverges from those of this world” (TF 61; trans. modified).

20. The form of the time of the false-continuity [*faux-raccord*] is the form of a time off its hinges (out of joint). As Deleuze explains in *Essays Critical and Clinical*, “Time is no longer related to the movement it measures, but rather movement to the time that conditions it. Moreover, movement is no longer the determination of objects, but the description of a space, a space we must set aside in order to discover time as the condition of action” (CC 27–8).

21. The power of the false is also manifest in the plane Deleuze calls the plane of the “story” [*récit*]. Here, it’s a matter of understanding the importance of free indirect discourse, that is, the relation between the point of view of the character and that of the camera (in cinema) or of the narrator (in literature). What is free indirect discourse? It’s when there’s a “contamination of the two kinds of image [. . .] so that bizarre visions of the camera [. . .] express the singular visions of the character, and the latter were expressed by the former, but by bringing the whole to the power of the false. The story no longer refers to an ideal of the true which constitutes its veracity, but becomes a ‘pseudo-story,’ a poem, a story which simulates or rather a simulation of the story” (C2 148–9).

22. “To become is not to attain a form (identification, imitation, Mimesis) but to find the zone of proximity, indiscernibility, or indifferenciation where one can no longer be distinguished from *a* woman, *an* animal, or *a* molecule—neither imprecise nor general, but unforeseen and nonpreexistent, singularized out of a population rather than determined in a form” (CC 1).

23. “Bartleby is certainly not mute. He finds himself at the limit of autism, at its edge but beyond, just near enough to form a bridge. Enough on the surface that a passage may be maintained between the world of normal human communication paved with good intentions and rules of conduct and the scandalous, inhuman singularity. On one hand, the man of the ‘too human,’ and on the other, the singular, the original, the impossible to frequent and to live. Nonetheless, it is he, *homo tantum* who makes visible man delivered from the weight of rules and obligations to comport oneself socially, as well as all that ‘structures’ one as a person” (Schérer 1998: 42).

24. “Psychosis characteristically brings into play a *procedure* that treats an ordinary language, a standard language, in a manner that makes it ‘render’ an original and unknown language, which would perhaps be a projection of God’s language, and would carry off language as a whole. [. . .] It’s as if three operations were linked together: a certain treatment of language; the result of this treatment, which tends to constitute an original language within language; and the effect, which is to sweep up language in its entirety, sending it into flight, pushing it to its very limit in order to discover its Outside, silence or music” (CC 72).

25. “The statue of the father gives way to his much more ambiguous portrait, and then to yet another portrait that could be of anybody or nobody. All referents are lost, and the formation of man gives way to a new, unknown element, to the mystery of a formless, nonhuman life. [. . .] I PREFER NOT TO is also a trait of expression that contaminates everything, escaping linguistic form and stripping the father of his exemplary speech, just as it strips the son of his ability to reproduce or copy” (CC 77).

26. As Pascal Chabot explains, “the internal resonance is the mutual differentiation of series, that is, the becoming other of each series, since this communication entails

a change in the nature of resonant elements. The relation is implicating, enveloping, and bridging, and not contradictory or a relation of resemblance” (Chabot 1998: 35).

27. René Schérer defends a politics of the soul in Deleuze, precisely starting from this conception of the man without qualities that one finds in the Bartleby text. “Yesterday, with Jacques Rancière, we spoke of the possibility of a Deleuzian politics, which he contested. But it’s in this opposition to the subject and the ego, to the person, that it is founded. It’s in the vast intuitions of Lawrence that this politics has birth, the politics that goes beyond the political to concern the soul, the individual, the collective, the cosmic. It’s not a matter of a fusion with nature, but of an impersonal [. . .] as ‘any man whatever’ [*homme quelconque*], ‘without qualities,’ outside the subject and outside the person, as one sees in the fundamental study devoted to Melville’s Bartleby” (Schérer 1998: 28).

28. “America sought to create a revolution whose strength would lie in a universal migration, émigrés of the world, just as Bolshevik Russia would seek to make a revolution whose strength would lie in a universal proletarianization, ‘Proletarians of the world’ . . . the two forms of class struggle. So the messianism of the nineteenth century has two heads and is expressed no less in American *pragmatism* than in the ultimately Russian form of socialism” (CC 86).

29. “How can this community be realized? How can the biggest problem be solved? But is it not already resolved, by itself, precisely because it is not a personal problem, but a historical, geographic, or political one? It is not an individual or particular affair, but a collective one, the affair of a people, or rather, of all peoples. It is not an Oedipal phantasm but a political program. Melville’s bachelor, Bartleby, like Kafka’s must ‘find the place where he can take his walks’ . . . America” (CC 85).

30. Deleuze also says: “It requires a new community, whose members are capable of trust or ‘confidence,’ that is, of a belief in themselves, in the world, and in becoming” (CC 88).

31. “To require of art that it conduct experimentations does not consist of declining, once and for all, the surrealist imperative, a cliché sweetened by a century of discourse on the avant-garde. Deleuze understands literature as medicine literally. Sacher-Masoch for masochism, Proust for homosexuality, Klossowski for perversion, Artaud for schizizophrenia, Kafka for bureaucracy: their writing is the sensitive seismograph of a type of force that would not cross the sensitive threshold without it” (Sauvagnargues 2005: 64).

32. The Bartleby text inaugurates a new style in Deleuze’s critique of psychoanalysis, or perhaps its movement beyond. This text constitutes the first step of a “spiritualization” of this critique. Kafka and Bene belong to the first moment of the overturning of psychoanalysis, but they remain too attached to political and representative premises. The character of Bartleby is opposed in a new way: he introduces the question of the soul and of spiritualization. The great overturning is effected through the cancellation of all will, of all preference, but also and above all by the cancellation of all reason or rationality. Bartleby is the Excluded, excluded from reason and without preference, a soul who survives only in the confidence of a community to come. The theme of going beyond the faculties, beyond reason and preference to a beyond of faculties, will be thought, with Beckett, as the theme of spiritualization. Beckett

will be the radicalization of this novelty. But already in the *Bartleby* text, Deleuze is working with the themes of the image, silence, and spirit.

33. “To become animal is to participate in movement [*faire le mouvement*], to stake out the line of flight in all its positivity, to cross a threshold, to reach a continuum of intensities that are valuable only in themselves, to find a world of pure intensities where all forms come undone, as do all the significations, signifiers, and signifieds, to the benefit of an unformed matter, of deterritorialized flows, of asignifying signs” (K 13; trans. modified).

## Chapter 10

# Beckett and the Exhaustion of the Possible

### INTRODUCTION

Since Aristotle's *Poetics*, we have known that the theater is a matter of the possible. The poet describes not what happened one time, or what most often takes place, but what was the condition of an event that could have taken place. The same is true of the actor. This is because actors, in any play whatever, only fashion combinations of situations, because they don't care about the aims or significations of what they perform, because, in a word, they only perform the possible, and they only do theater. Beckett sought a scenic coincidence between, on one hand, the essence of the work of the actor, who is only the completion of predefined possibilities, and, on the other hand, the construction of characters who live as if they performed neutral situations, with pure possibilities. Characters who exist like actors in a play that lacks an author or a director—this is one of the most singular traits of works like *Waiting for Godot*, *Happy Days*, and *Endgame*.

In the exhaustion of Beckett's characters, Deleuze sees ontology at the height of the essence of the actor's art, and the most rigorous place where the theater inhabits an ontology of the possible. The genius of Deleuze's "The Exhausted" is that it analyzes several levels of this ontology of the possible. But the ultimate objective, as we will show, is a new understanding of the role of the image in Beckett's theater.

"The Exhausted" has a very simple structure. Not only because it is a two-part text, in which the first part functions as a set of premises and the second as the laboratory of its verification in Beckett's texts. Its simplicity derives from the fact that, at each moment, Deleuze follows a strict architectonic, which functions through disjunctions that proliferate, through conceptual symmetries, and through looped series. In the first part, Deleuze proposes



a small ontology of the possible. There he delineates two relations with the possible—the relation of realization, which characterizes the fatigued, and the relation of completion, which belongs to the exhausted. The possible is realized when a set of objects (of desire) or situations is integrated into a project or absorbed by movements or gestures, according to a principle of preference. The possible is exhausted when these same objects or situations are put into aleatory action, either through a combinatory or through repetitive series.

It's apropos of the figure of the exhausted, which, Deleuze argues, expresses the fundamental aspect of Beckett's characters that the text is constructed. Deleuze analyzes the progressive development of the process of exhaustion in Beckett's plays. He shows us the four phases of exhaustion (of words, of voices, of space, and of the image). In the second part of the essay, Deleuze illustrates the functioning of this exhaustion in Beckett's television plays. The two parts are like folds of one another, the first as *explication* or the outside of the second.

The first difficulty of this text arises from the fact that the distinction between the fatigued and the exhausted refers back to a world of inactuality. Both the fatigued and the exhausted have reached a limit, and they are out of breath, on the brink of overwork. But this limit does not concern the world of the real; it does not touch on the plane of acts, the domain of actions. They are fatigued by the possible; they are exhausted by the possible.

But this same possible—and here we find a second difficulty—is very vague. Deleuze always takes it for granted. He never tries to determine its ontological condition, either in relation to the actual [*l'effectif*] or in relation to the virtual. In this text on Beckett, all we know is that the possible is either realized or exhausted. In the plane of realization, first one disposes of the possible. This disposition is a subjective possibility. When one realizes the possible (subjective) that one disposes, one also realizes a part of objective possibility. Subjective possibility is the part of the possible available for realization that belongs to each individual, the part of the possible that is at one's disposal. Objective possibility is the very reality of the possible as the set of all subjective possibles, not solely those realized, but also those that open up like new possibilities that can be realized. With the realization of the possible, more possibles are always born. Each real, which is already the realization of a possible, contains an entire world of new possibilities. "The tired person [*le fatigué*] no longer has any (subjective) possibility at his disposal; he therefore cannot realize the slightest (objective) possibility. But the latter remains, because one can never realize the whole of the possible; in fact, one even creates the possible to the extent that one realizes it. The tired person can no longer realize, but the exhausted person can no longer possibilize" (CC 152). The fatigued is the one who is the impossibility of realizing the possible, whereas the exhausted is the very operator of impossibility, he is the agent of

the impossibilization of the possible. He impossibilizes every realization and hence all the possible (objective). The fatigued is the one who can no longer create the possible and who no longer realizes it, and the exhausted is the one who makes the possible impossible because he exhausts the very possibility of the realization of the possible.

This double meaning of the concept of the possible (subjective and objective) exists only for the fatigued. The fatigued does not realize all the possible at his disposal, but only a part, because he always tries to augment the horizon of possibilities. Thus, he ends up breathless, he grows overworked, he becomes fatigued. In this distinction between an objective possible, in itself, and a subjective possible, Deleuze is very close to the conception of potentiality that he described in *Superpositions*. The fatigued's subjective possible resembles the power/capacity [*puissance*] or potentiality of realizing something. The possible does not preexist, like a whole or a totality to be realized. There is always a part of the possible that is created only in the very realization of the possible. Every realization of the possible is an additional realization [*réalisation de plus*], a realization of an additional possible [*un possible de plus*]. To realize is to produce an additional possible.

Now, the exhausted "exhausts that which, in the possible *is not realized*. He has had done with the possible, beyond all fatigue, 'for to end yet again'" (CC 152; trans. modified). For the exhausted, there is only the exhaustion of the possible, that is, for him there is no distinction between the subjective and objective sides of the possible. He is always in the global reality of the possible itself. Whereas the fatigued exhausts the *realization of*, the exhausted exhausts the *very reality of* the possible. Because he accedes to the possible only through the part that is at his disposal, the fatigued is always in a process of realization, that is, of inclusion of a subjective possible in an objective possible. And as the possible that one realizes gives birth to new possibles, this process of realization can only end in fatigue, that is, in the impossibility of continuing to realize. The fatigued possibilizes, but can no longer realize what he possibilizes, whereas the exhausted cannot possibilize at all.

This nonpossibilization that characterizes the exhausted is what Deleuze calls an "accomplishment" of the possible. The exhausted does not give in to paralysis. He is always active. But his activity is singular. It is an activity useful for nothing, without aim, without intention. The situations it takes place in are presented to him as coincidences of objects, of gestures. These actions are variables of a ready-to-wear existence. It's in this sense that the exhausted is a matter, not of realizing, but of accomplishing the possible: "one combines the set of variables of a situation, on the condition that one renounce any order of preference, any organization in relation to a goal, any signification. [. . .] One no longer realizes, even though one accomplishes something" (CC 153). To accomplish the possible is to make it appear on the stage in a neutral fashion,

without preference and without signification. Existence thus becomes a plateau, the stage of a nonrealization. Simple repetition of an empty drama. According to Deleuze, it's precisely this coincidence between the condition of the staging of the acts of characters and the very fact of representing that transforms Beckett's characters into examples of this accomplishment. "Beckett's characters play with the possible without realizing it; they are too involved in a possibility that is ever more restricted in its kind to care about what is still happening" (CC 153). For Deleuze, Beckett's actors play doubly. They play as actors, but they also play because they interpret the characters who, as exhausted, can only accomplish the possible, and can only play the possible, without realizing it.

To play the possible is a combinatory art. It concerns a program stripped of sense or intention, a pragmatics without aim or signification, where what counts is the pure play of the combinatory: to know the order according to which one does something, and the combinations according to which one does two things at the same time. "The combinatorial is the art or science of exhausting the possible through inclusive disjunctions. But only an exhausted person can exhaust the possible, because he has renounced all need, preference, goal, or signification. Only the exhausted person is sufficiently disinterested, sufficiently scrupulous" (CC 154).

Exhaustion takes place on several levels in Beckett. To exhaust the possible is a complex affair. One must pass through several levels of exhaustion. Deleuze first presents the level that concerns the language of names, the language that refers to things, and then, the level of voices, of intonations of characters. After that, the level of the stage space. Finally, the exhaustion of the image. The general question of Deleuze's Beckett text is thus: How does one exhaust things, voices, space, and the image? And Deleuze condenses Beckett's solution into a single sentence: one must "form exhaustive series of things, dry up the flow of voices, extenuate the potentialities of space, dissipate the power of the image" (CC 161; trans. modified).<sup>1</sup>

## THE FOUR FORMS OF THE EXHAUSTION OF THE POSSIBLE

### *Exhaustion of Words: Language I*

The exhaustion of language that Deleuze stresses in Beckett does not signify a postmodern reading that dictates the end of writing. This would be to confuse the end of writing with the poetics of the end. On the contrary, Deleuze aims to construct, starting from Beckett's work, a theory of language that leads the functions of designation and manifestation to their end all while

conserving their dimension of signification. The central trait of this theory of the language of the end is characterized by a special relation between the plane of the statement [*l'énoncé*] and the plane of enunciation. The exhaustion of language [*langage*] takes place on three levels. According to Deleuze, to each level corresponds a specific language [*langue*]: a language of words, a language of voices, and a language of images. To each level of language [*langue*] corresponds a type of exhaustion of the possible. And Beckett's poetic singularity passes through the scenic and literary density of the exhaustion of these almost artificial languages. But this exhaustion of languages [*langues*] that inhabit all language [*langage*] does not lead to a beyond of language [*langage*].

The limit of things, of the world, of the voices of others, of space, and of the image is a limit that is created only through language [*langage*]. "The limit is not outside language, it is the outside *of* language. It is made up of visions and auditions that are not of language, but which language alone makes possible" (CC iv). It's through language [*langage*] that one can accede to visions and auditions, and to pure images one can fashion as the ultimate effect of the exhaustion of language. In Deleuze there is an affirmation of the experience of the "ill seen ill said" proper to language, but which is extended to other means of expression, since even painters and musicians arrive at color or sound via this "ill seen ill said." As Deleuze says in *Essays Critical and Clinical*, "There is also a painting and a music characteristic of writing, like the effects of colors and sonorities that rise up above words. It is through words, between words, that one sees and hears. Beckett spoke of 'drilling holes' in language in order to see or hear 'what was lurking behind'" (CC iv). Or, again: "Creative stuttering is what makes language grow from the middle, like grass; it is what makes language a rhizome instead of a tree, what puts language in perpetual disequilibrium: *Ill Seen, Ill Said* (content and expression). Being well spoken has never been either the distinctive feature or the concern of great writers" (CC 111). For Beckett language is the perception of the world, but a non-linguistic world of colors and music, a world of pure images that are perceived only in the dissipation of images: visions and auditions. This is a world one hears and one sees, but only through and behind language. To exhaust language, but precisely to make visible the world that arises as the outside of an exhausted language.

First, one must impossibilize a linguistics of naming by exhausting the correspondence between words and their naming. In naming, which is always a return to possible worlds, things are presented to the subject as realizable series. By contrast, when the subject names them in an arbitrary, indifferent fashion, or better, when naming is abolished, there is no longer an assignable relation between names and things. Names become atoms of disjunctive series that no longer name anything. "When I speak, for example, when I say, 'it's

daytime,' the interlocutor answers, 'it's possible . . . ' because he is waiting to know what purpose I want the day to serve. [. . .] Language states the possible, but only by readying it for a realization. [. . .] But the realization of the possible always proceeds through exclusion, because it presupposes preferences and goals that vary" (CC 152–3). What exhaustion does to the language of designations is to replace this logic of preferences with an absence of logic where every action becomes devoid of cause or goal [*finalité*]. The renunciation of all designation nonetheless does not signify a fall into the indifferent. Exhaustion is not a passivity but an action. It is the action of no, activation of nothing, activity of the nothingness of all preference. "One remains active, but for nothing. One was tired of something [*fatigué de quelque chose*], but one is exhausted by nothing [*épuisé de rien*]" (CC 153). All realization is a choice of possibles, an exclusive disjunction ("I put on shoes to go out, and slippers when I stay in"). To exhaust the possible thus takes place via the exhaustion of this choice, which signifies making disjunction inclusive ("shoes, one stays in; slippers, one goes out"). The combinatory, the simple play of permutations and disjunctions, is what constitutes the action of the exhausted. It puts in action nothing, solely through the combinatory as absolute void.

The exhaustion of the possible in language thus passes through nonpreference, through the nonexistence of goals, of calculations, or significations. In question is a logic of the a-subjective, of inclusive disjunction where terms are there only as permutations. If Beckett is like Bene in the operation of subtraction and the removal of clichés, he is also like Bartleby in the logic of nonpreference and in the affirmation of the figure of the Original, of the individual without properties.<sup>2</sup>

Exhaustion is the procedure for arriving at the neutral plane of language, at the preindividual state of words, at the imperceptibility of all preference. This originary state is the state of nothing and of nothingness. What is primary is exhaustion itself. The possible comes afterward, in the moment of realization. In the originary state of the exhausted, only the exhausted exists, and there is never anything to realize. The exhausted is exhausted even before birth. The exhausted thus attains an a-theological, almost diabolical condition. "God is the originary, or the sum total of all possibility. The possible is realized only in the derivative, in tiredness [*fatigue*], whereas one is exhausted before birth, before realizing oneself, or realizing anything whatsoever" (CC 152). The exhausted is born alongside the theological dialectic of infinite realization and fatigue. He belongs to a predivine world, or a beyond of this totality of possibles that defines divinity. But insofar as "God, who is the sum total of the possible, merges with Nothing" (CC 153), the exhaustion of the possible is also the only way to wrest the world from the abyss of an indefatigable God, the only way to save the possible from the drift of its infinity that will

never reach its complete realization. In this sense, the originary state may be understood either according to the logic of preferences or according to the logic of nonpreference. In the two, God is always the set of possibles. But, according to the first, the possible thought as potency, power/capacity [*puissance*] of realization, whereas according to the second, the logic of nonpreference, this possible is, always and already, exhausted. It allows no realization. Thus, one must break with theology on all levels. For example, on the level of the perception of the world, in breaking with the supposed sensory–motor connection, in seeing things no longer in terms of personal needs, but in terms of a radical nonpreference, and a belief in the impossible and the schizophrenia of God. On the level of language [*langue*], in treating it poorly, in making it sprout weeds [“*mauvaises herbes*,” bad herbs] in its middle [*par son milieu*], in making it minor and depriving it of its dominant role in the world.<sup>3</sup> The possible-to-be-realized is the world of preferences, of calculations, of Christian faith, and of good manners and speaking well. The exhausted possible, is the world without will, without intention of any sort, a world reduced to the belief in the unbearable, to poor speaking [*mauvais parler*]: “ill seen ill said.”

Beckett invents an artificial language [*langue*] for the stage, where names have no relation with things and where phrases represent nothing, in such a way as to make God useless. In this Language I, the language of things, there are two modes of exhaustion. First, enumeration replaces the proposition. On the stage, Beckett’s characters either use indifferent objects with no relation to their actions, or they designate objects that do not correspond to that which they enunciate. The series of objects becomes independent of the series that designates them. The series of attributes is also autonomous. Names and attributes become aleatory sets of floating singularities. This permits the construction of combinatory sequences of objects, names, and attributes, which the characters accomplish.

In a second form, as Deleuze stresses, Beckett brings this language of things to its asyntactic limit, a language where names and attributes play with these possibilities according to a-grammatical rules. Combinatory relations replace syntactic relations. The exhaustion of language thus takes place through an empty combinatory, that is, a combinatory that institutes a new form of connection, inclusive disjunction, whose terms, stripped of signification or value, function only as permutations. Deleuze emphasizes that Beckett’s combinatory does not play the role of the unity of contradictions and is not undifferentiated. As inclusive disjunction, it is a set of Nothing [*un ensemble de Rien*]. It is empty, since it is a nothingness of the possible [*un néant de possible*]. It is exhausted in itself and subsists only as the void or the play of exhaustion. It is a syntactic activity of nothing [*une activité syntactique de rien*]. “One combines the set of variables of a situation, on the condition that

one renounce any order of preference, any organization in relation to a goal, any signification. [. . .] Yet one does not fall into the undifferentiated, or into the famous unity of contradictories. [. . .] The disjunctions subsist, and the distinction between terms may become ever more crude, but the disjointed terms are affirmed in their nondecomposable distance, since they are used for nothing except to create further permutations” (CC 153). What matters is the permutability of terms, the simple play of the combinatory. Hence exhaustion, since what must be done is to exhaust the combinatory elements, exhaust all the possible of nothing, total permutability, “for to end yet again,” in a movement of infinite variation where one must always end again. The fatigued exhausts possibility since he plays with a combinatory as realizable. But the combinatory of the exhausted is a nothing, a nothing of the possible.

According to Deleuze, Beckett must thus invent a meta-language [*métalangage*] that establishes the lexical and combinatory structures of this language [*langue*] of names that is made autonomous from things. And this meta-language has a double effect: scenic and literary. It assures the procedure of the exhaustion of possibles in the statement, transforming each character into an infinite repetition of a closed world, and invents a drifting poetics of names, of names without anchor, pure sonic flows.<sup>4</sup> “How could one combine what has no name, the object =  $x$ ? [. . .] How could it enter into a combinatorial if one does not have its name. [. . .] Nonetheless, if the ambition of the combinatorial is to exhaust the possible with words, it must constitute a metalanguage, a very special language in which the relations between objects are identical to the relations between words; and consequently, words must no longer give a realization to the possible, but must themselves give the possible a reality that is proper to it, a reality that is, precisely, exhaustible” (CC 156).

This first metalanguage, or language I, is a language that is “atomic, disjunctive, cut and chopped [. . .] in which enumeration replaces propositions and combinatorial relations replace syntactic relations” (CC 156). The relation between things and words is cut. Things and names become atoms, distinct from one another and indecomposable in themselves. In language I, the combinatory consists of a play between names and things, combinable, but as atomic terms, with no relation of connection among them. Language I is the first attempt at the exhaustion of the possible through words. It’s a matter of exhausting the possibility of the relation between things and words, that is, the possibility of the enunciation of the type “subject-predicate.” In exhausting this relation, one exhausts signification itself, the linguistic classification of things. Words and things become two parallel worlds, combinable but independent in their atomic nature. “Words must no more give a realization to the possible, but must themselves give the possible a reality that is proper to it, a reality that is, precisely, exhaustible” (CC 156).

But how does one realize this exhaustion of words? As Deleuze explains in *Essays Critical and Clinical*, “Beckett’s procedure [. . .] is as follows: he

places himself in the middle of the sentence and makes the sentence grow out from the middle, adding particle upon particle (*que de ce, ce, ce ceci-ci, loin là là-bas à peine quoi . . .*) so as to pilot the block of a single expiring breath (*voulais croire entrevoir quoi . . .*). Creative stuttering is what makes language a rhizome instead of a tree, what puts language in perpetual disequilibrium: Ill Seen, Ill Said (content and expression)” (CC 111). In “The Exhausted,” Deleuze gives several examples of this treatment of language by Beckett: “short segments [. . .] ceaselessly added to the interior of the phrase” (CC 174), “disconnection,” and “punctuation of dehiscence” (CC 173). It’s a matter of pushing language to the limits of the unarticulated, of incomprehensibility and nonsense. Deleuze stresses the almost obsessive repetitions of Beckett, as well as the accretions of permutations of terms. To bore holes in language, to efface words, to create “dots or dashes [*traits*] in order to ceaselessly reduce the surface of words” (CC 174). Or again, as Deleuze remarks in “Schizophrenia and Society”: “For instance, the sequence of Beckett’s characters: pebble-pocket-mouth; a shoe-a pipe stem-a small indeterminate pouch-a bicycle bell lid-a half crutch” (2R 19).

### “Dry Up the Flows of Voices”: Language II

The second level of the exhaustion of language concerns the dependence between the statement [*l’annoncé*] and the one who states it [*celui qui l’annonce*]. Between the voice one hears and the action that it enunciates, a gap is created, an incompatibility. According to Deleuze, Beckett invents a second artificial language, language II, the language of voices, “that no longer operates with combinable atoms but with blendable flows. Voices are waves or flows that direct or distribute the linguistic corpuscles” (CC 156). One must liberate voices from the subjects who speak, let the sounds become objects without owners. Voices lose the personal character of the enunciation of names and become a flow with no relation to what happens and to the person who enunciates what happens.

To depersonalize voices is, at the same time, to put in free vibration a new domain of the possible. Each voice expresses another. And, as Deleuze likes to say: “the Others are *possible worlds*, on which the voices confer a reality that is always variable” (CC 157). Others are possible worlds. But the possible worlds that they express in the voice have a nonobjective condition. They are no longer objects to name or gestures to perform. Above all they are memories, memories of affects, of issues, of encounters, of lifelines, botched or simply poorly lived. In short, others are “stories [*histoires*].” Voices thus introduce the possibility of narrative, the possible as block of life, the possible as “world.” To exhaust these worlds, they must first be isolated, uprooted from the singularities that give them a face and a breath. From the dramatic point of view, this means severing the relation between the voice and the



character, to make sonorities vary, to render anonymous each vocalic timbre, and to introduce registrations, play-backs.

But the language of voices exhausts these possible worlds, through exhaustive series. It's enough to make the voices vary through the characters, to make possible worlds circulate through each singularity. Each possible world is made an element of a series and all the voices are made to circulate. In the end, personal stories become frozen blocks to play with, to accomplish through any voice whatever. Each character is transformed into the actor of another memory, of another possible world. To play the impossible means to give one's voice to speak another memory, another possible world. Beckett thus cannot escape the fundamental aporia of the actor. How does one speak other possible worlds without projecting oneself, with one's private possible world, into the memories of the other person that one wants to depersonalize, that one wants to render anonymous? "One would have to succeed in speaking of them—but how can one speak of them without introducing oneself into the series, without 'prolonging' their voices, without passing through each of them, without being in turn Murphy, Molloy, Malone, Watt, and so on, and coming back once again to the inexhaustible Mahood?" (CC 157). According to Deleuze, Beckett is thus confronted with a new form of the aporia of exhaustive series: How does one exhaust others without falling into the same series as they are in, without prolonging their voices, without being these same others? How does one speak of the other without introducing oneself into the series (exhaustive)? The solution is to become unnamable oneself, to arrive at oneself as a term of the series, a term as an interminable flow or an already-exhausted milieu. "The Other and myself, are the same character, the same dead foreign language" (CC 158).<sup>5</sup>

Language II is constructed on the basis of the language of names and attempts to go further. It has as its goal the exhaustion of words themselves. If language I forms atoms, nonetheless it still allows for possible combinations. But language II, in exhausting words themselves—atoms, "linguistic corpuscles"—thus renders impossible the flows of these possible combinations. It's a language that cuts the flow of atoms, allowing only silence to subsist. Language II truly wants to have done with voices in order to attain silence. The question at work in this language is: "What will be the last word, and how can it be recognized?" (CC 156).

### *Language III: Pure Image*

Finally, the third level is that of the language of images. Of course, languages I and II, the language of things and the language of private worlds, have their own domain of images. They are even overcoded by images. Visual and sonic images intrinsically inhabit the series of objects and the series of voices. To

name is always to prefigure the possibility of a corresponding object. The same is true with memories evoked in the voice of each character. They have a melancholic depth, and they bear private reminiscences. The language of names and the language of voices are connected to a certain form of images. Deleuze considers this presence (of objects or memories) in language as the work of an imagination. There is a combinatorial imagination, a serial imagination in language I, and a narrative imagination, an imagination of private stories in language II. The first is, as he says, "sullied by reason," and the second "sullied by memory" (CC 158). To accede to pure images, to images that refer neither to objects nor to private possible worlds, is thus to free language from imagination, to disconnect words and voices from preexisting series of objects and reminiscences. Words become exhaustive series that one randomly combines, and voices no longer refer to any subjectivity but acquire an ontologically autonomous state, like memories without a subject or stories without content. "This something seen or heard is called Image, a visual or aural Image, provided it is freed from the chains in which it was bound by the other two languages. It is no longer a question of imagining a 'whole' of the series with language I (a combinatorial imagination 'sullied by reason'), or of inventing stories or making inventories of memories with language II (imagination sullied by memory)" (CC 158). The combinatory imagination and the mnemonic imagination asphyxiate the Image. They flatten it on objects and histories. "It is extremely difficult to tear all these adhesions away from the image so as to reach the point of 'Imagination Dead Image'" (CC 158). Deleuze is quite explicit about the status of the faculties in the question of the pure image: there is no place for the imagination, for the imagination as related to reason, or for the role fulfilled by memory. The first, which characterizes Beckett's language I, is a combinatory imagination that must imagine the whole of the series in order to make it correspond to words and thus exhaust the series of combinations. The second, which inhabits language II, that is, the language of Others as possible worlds that are expressed in statements, is manifest as a power of creating fictions of intrigues among characters, of inventorying situations. It's a matter of an imagination that is thus not a faculty of reason but a faculty of reminiscences, and of memory. But it's on the death of these two regimes of the imagination that inhabit languages I and II that the image must be built. Thus, the image is never the product of an imagination. It arises only through the exhaustion of every form of imagination.

We now have a better understanding of why you have to exhaust things through combinatorics, and then, exhaust voices through a voice without interiority. You must go all the way to the exhaustion of possible worlds that are inscribed in names through an a-syntactical language, and exhaust the possible worlds that each other expresses, drying up the voices, emptying them

of all expression, and of all subjectivity. You can only make the image after having annihilated the forms of the imagination that are coupled to names and to voices. The combinatory of things, like the drying up of voices, prepares for only one process: to kill the imagination, and to free the image.

It's only at the moment of making the pure image that the need to exhaust words and voices is truly justified. It was the only way to free language from imagination, to unchain it from false images, from images still anchored in things and in subjective worlds. To purify language of its function of designation by exhausting the relation between words and things, to purify language of its function of manifestation in exhausting the relation between the voice and reminiscences—all of this in order to purify language of the imagination and, thus, to free the pure Image. Beyond languages I and II, which freed language from the weight of the imagination, language III opens, the language of the Image.<sup>6</sup>

The pure image is neither rational nor personal. It makes visible neither things organized by lexicons, nor voices stained by stories. The pure image is indefinite, it is “in a celestial state” (CC 158). As we shall see later, the image that Deleuze wants to bring forth in Beckett is a spiritual image.

Deleuze presents the pure image from a paradoxically Kantian point of view: the image is defined by its form (internal tension). “The image is not defined by the sublimity of its contents but by its form, that is, its ‘internal tension,’ [. . .] to free itself from memory and reason: a small, alogical, amnesiac, and almost aphasic image, sometimes standing in the void, sometimes shivering in the open. The image is not an object but a ‘process’” (CC 159). Of Kant's formalism Deleuze has retained only the dimension of form. But above all it's the aesthetic condition of form he has retained, that is, on one hand, the condition as the result of the bankruptcy of the faculties of the image, as reality without content, as presentation of the existence of the unrepresentable, and on the other hand, the condition as the internal violence of a transcendental field, as the tension among faculties in the process of representing what cannot gain access to representation. According to Deleuze, the image Beckett wants to create on the stage is obtained through a sublime becoming of the interplay of faculties. Once delivered from its grounding in things, the language of reason, the language of names and statements, starts to drift. This same debacle is produced with the faculty of memory. Cut off from voices, uprooted from the possible worlds of Others, memory collapses. On the ruins of reason and memory, and also on the ruins of imagination (either that which doubles reason and thereby brings forth objects, or that which is attached to memory), the image arises. It is given in a pure condition, without logic, without memory, and almost without words—“alogical, amnesic, almost aphasic.” Without content, sustained only by its internal forces, by its status as point of tension among the faculties in catastrophe, the image exists

only in an empty space, in a space that is defined by its relation to nothing, by its opening to the open. Thus, it's in this sense that Deleuze presents the image as a "process." It exists only to the extent that it flees, that it evades the faculties that asphyxiate it, that make it docile to things, to possible worlds, to stories, in short, to the imagination. It is a sublime image, or better, the sublime of the process of making the image. Internal tension, that is, the sublime of the form of the image, expresses the vectors of the conflicts of the faculties with one another. Deleuze thus returns to the theme of the sublime in order to stress its condition as image without content. It's a sublime of form, as configuration of forces that are in tension on the inside of faculties. And, because it is a dynamism, because it is an internal conflict, form is the very force that allows the image to free itself from the faculties. Deleuze posits the image (in place of the imagination stained by memory or reason) as being indefinite in itself, "while remaining completely determined" (CC 160).

Deleuze again takes up the nonrepresentative dimension of the theory of the sublime. As the appearance of the fact of the impossibility of appearance that characterizes the experience of the sublime in Kant, the pure image is only an empty appearance. But Deleuze sees further. The violence he detects in the play of the faculties, and which forces thought to think that which, however, it cannot think, is now put in service of the production of the sublime image. This violence Deleuze sees as the process that leads to the internal tension that constitutes the form of the image. He can now say that the pure image is only this internal tension, is only that which it presents as "potential energy," an energy that exists only as ready to explode. "An image, inasmuch as it stands in the void outside space, and also apart from words, stories, and memories, accumulates a fantastic potential energy, which it detonates by dissipating itself. What counts in the image is not its meager content, but the energy—mad and ready to explode" (CC 160).<sup>7</sup> The entire process of exhaustion is revealed as the mechanism necessary to produce this potential energy that is condensed in the pure image. And yet, this pure image is nothing itself, it is without content, and it manifests nothing. It is only energy, and it is only this capture of energy that it extracts from words, from voices, from space. It's a mechanism of the vampirism of things, of memories, of places of encounter put in service of a reality itself purely immaterial, in service of a pure image, of a potential energy whose only goal is to make itself burst in order to dissipate, all while detonating this stored energy. It's not excessive to say that the pure image Deleuze discovers in Beckett's plays is the last and ultimate formulation of the Kantian sublime. Because it is defined, from the point of view of its content, by its nonrepresentation, and, from the point of view of its force, by its potential energy, by its internal tension ready to be dissipated, the pure image is the focal point of all the faculties, of all possibilities, of all potentialities, and of all powers. It is the site where the entire world

conspires to become spirit, the place where all things named, all memories recounted, all spaces traversed, give birth to their proper dissipation in service of a pure energy.

### *“Extenuate the Potentialities of Space”*

The pure image, produced on the ruins of the imagination, of reason, and of memory, nonetheless lacks a plane of existence. Immaterial, without grounding in the faculties, and without relation to words and to Others, it is dissipated at the very moment of its appearance. According to Deleuze, in Beckett one finds scenic procedures for making it present, for giving it places of existence. Paradoxically, one must inscribe the pure image in the layers of language from which it had been wrested through exhaustion. Deleuze detects in certain experiences of silence or bizarre modulations of the voice that pronounce impersonal stories, without intimacy and without private possible world, the procedure for bringing the pure image back inside language. “Nevertheless, the pure image must be inserted into language, into the names and voices. Sometimes this will occur in silence. [. . .] Sometimes this is a very distinctive flat-toned voice [. . . that] describes all the elements of the image to come, but which still lacks form” (CC 159). Beckett’s characters speak with melancholy of memories that don’t belong to them, or retain silence before visions that strike them but whose contents they don’t know. The pure image thus descends on the stage, inserts itself into phrases, and lets itself emerge as a surprise in the depth of falsely private stories. And yet, the image always escapes language. At the edge of its dissipation, it lets itself be spoken in the names and in the voices, but in order to guarantee its exteriority vis-à-vis language.

That the pure image does not belong to language, in which, nonetheless, it is inscribed, depends on its paradoxical relation with space. In Beckett’s plays, space, like the pure image, is outside language. Deleuze stresses this point: “This outside of language is not only the image, but also the ‘vastitude’ of space” (CC 160). To work systematically on this double outside of language, Beckett created a third and final scenic language, beyond language I, that of words, and language II, that of voices and stories, a third language of the image, which also includes space. For Deleuze, it is here that the fundamental aspect of every process of exhaustion takes place. It’s a matter of leading the image to its purely spiritual condition across a double spatial movement: first its inscription in an any-space-whatever [*un espace quelconque*], in order to reach its absolute mental existence through exhaustion. Language III is hence that of the image that still lacks form, and of space as vastitude or any-space-whatever. We must note that “just as the image must remain the indefinite, while remaining completely determined, so space must

always be an any-space-whatever, disused, unmodified, even though it is entirely determined geometrically” (CC 160).

In the same way that the Image must be freed from words and voices, that the pure image must not be confused with either the imagination as combinatory of things, or the mnemonic imagination of possible worlds of reminiscences that is grounded in voices, so the Image must now be freed from space. Deleuze sees Beckett’s procedure as being always the same: exhaustion. Space must be exhausted to free the Image. A new problem thus arises: How does one exhaust space?

In Beckett Deleuze distinguishes three ways of exhausting space as procedures that are intrinsic to space itself. The first is through the fragmentation of space (which is found, for example, in *Trio*). The second is through incomplete or fragmentary movements, like the dark and obscure passage that arises only in the void between elements (as in *Quad*). The third, through the neutralization of space, which, with the background of a murmuring voice, itself become neutral, blank, without intention or resonance, becomes an any-space-whatever, without dimensions. As Deleuze says, “This is the final step of depotentialization—a double step, since the voice dries up the possible at the same time as the space extenuates its potentialities” (CC 167).

But these three intrinsic procedures for exhausting space still determine the any-space-whatever as site of the realization of events ready for exhaustion. One must also exhaust space as the milieu of encounters, and one must transform space so that every encounter or event becomes impossible and is not realized.

This second dimension of the exhaustion of space thus concerns the movements of characters. Deleuze underscores the exhaustive walking of Beckett’s characters as the exhaustion of all the cardinal points of space: “It is a matter of covering every possible direction, while nonetheless moving in a straight line. There is an equality between the straight line and the plane, and between the plane and the volume” (CC 160). Lines, planes, paths: an entire movement that is precise and without content, realized precisely in order to exhaust space itself. And being crossed in all directions, in all the diagonals and straight lines, in a precise fashion, being occupied in an inexorable movement that allows no connection because it is in itself without object, space itself becomes an empty object, and the encounters have no place in which to occur. “The order, the course, and the set render the movement all the more inexorable, inasmuch as it has no object” (CC 163).

The same empty movement determines the characters. The characters “are only determined spatially; in themselves, they are modified by nothing other than their order and position” (CC 162). If the characters are solely bodies that people a square according to a series that resembles more a conveyor belt or a modern ballet, if the characters move only in a diagonal or on the sides,

then, the only possibility of encounter among them is the center of the square: an encounter as dangerous collision. It's the geometric potentiality of empty lines in an any-space-whatever that makes every event possible, and this in the double sense of making possible in itself, and of making possible in a determined space. It's at the center that the characters, completely oriented in their movement, can encounter one another. Because the bodies avoid each other and avoid the center, that is, the place of encounter, they thus avoid space in itself. "The bodies avoid each other respectively, but they avoid the center absolutely. They sidestep each other at the center in order to avoid each other, but each of them also sidesteps in solo in order to avoid the center" (CC 163). Their encounter is "the only possibility of an event—that is, the potentiality of the corresponding space. To exhaust space is to extenuate its potentiality by making any encounter impossible" (CC 163).

The exhaustion of space brings a new meaning to the concept of exhaustion. The exhaustion of space also signifies the exhaustion of the potentialities of space. The concept of space as one of the four dimensions of exhaustion allows Deleuze to introduce a new concept of nonactuality: that of potentiality. "Potentiality is a double possible. It is the possibility that an event, in itself possible, might be realized in the space under consideration: the possibility that something is realizing *itself*, and the possibility that some place is realizing *it*. The potentiality of the square is the possibility that the four moving bodies that inhabit it will collide [. . .] and their encounter [is] the only possibility of an event" (CC 163). Because an event exists only as possible, and because its realization takes place only in an any-space-whatever (which is only another dimension of the possible, as possibility of realization), space itself has a potentiality, that is, it contains a double possible. Space is the possibility of an event that realizes *itself*, and it is this somewhere that realizes *it*. It's in this sense that space "therefore precedes realization, and potentiality itself belongs to the possible" (CC 160). Only space has a potentiality. It alone belongs doubly to the possible. We can't speak of a potentiality of things or of a potentiality of worlds of reminiscences that belong to Others. There, we have only a single level of possibilities, that of series, or that of ready-made memories. Languages I and II thus operate through the exhaustion of possibles. They enact the exhaustion of things and words through combinatories, they dissipate the possible worlds of Others by emptying their voices. As for space, an exhaustion is not sufficient. To match its double possibility, that is, its potentiality, a double exhaustion is necessary. One does not simply exhaust space, one depotentializes it.

To define space as "potentiality" and to define potentiality as a double possible are the ways to distinguish the concept of "potentiality" from that of "power/capacity" [*puissance*]. Deleuze wants to retain the latter concept for thinking the mode of existence of the Image. The pure Image, as we will

see, once freed from every form of corporeality, from every physical dimension, and from every real condition, becomes a pure mental existence, and pure spiritual reality, in short, becomes pure power/capacity. This distinction between “potentiality,” which defines space, and “power/capacity,” which expresses the mode of existence of the Image, is a revolution in Deleuze’s modal lexicon. In the Kafka book, we find the concept of “power/capacity” everywhere. It designates diabolical forces. Capitalism, Stalinism, and fascism are “the diabolical powers of the future” (K 83).<sup>8</sup>

Deleuze discovers this spatial concept of potentiality especially in Beckett’s work on the square form of the space of the plateau he choreographs in *Quad*. There, we find the apt illustration of the difference between the spatial dimension of fatigue and the spatial dimension of exhaustion. “The characters realize and tire [*fatiguent*] at the four corners of the square, and along the sides of the diagonals. But they accomplish and exhaust at the center of the square, where the diagonals cross. This is where the potentiality of the square seems to lie” (CC 163). The spatial fatigue of the characters takes place in their solitary movement, when they are displaced to the four corners of the square, along their sides; they inhabit only the interior limit of space, the periphery. Their encounters are aleatory, and they express no constraint of space itself, no topology of possibles. They realize, they tire, grow fatigued, such that they always produce other possibles, other lines of encounter, which are themselves aleatory.

Exhaustion presupposes another relation with space. The space of exhaustion is a space where a potentiality is already established, that is, where the possibility is given that an event, itself possible, may be realized in a considered space. In *Quad*, Beckett stages this figure of the potentiality of space, investing the center of the square with singular metaphysical properties. Only the center, where the diagonals cross, has this property of double possibility, that possibility that something realizes *itself*, and the possibility that, precisely here, the space of the square’s center, realizes *it*. In this sense Deleuze may say that it’s only in the center, when the characters encounter one another in obeying a constraining geometry, a topological dynamism, and a true attraction by the vortex, through the crossing point of all the diagonals, that an event is ready to be realized. There, exclusively, something can realize *itself*—the event of the encounter. There, the characters accomplish and exhaust. Because there alone, at the center of the square, space has a potentiality, it has the possibility that the encounter, itself possible, may be realized, and, as condition—spatial—of realization, the possibility of realizing it.

In *Quad*, Deleuze argues, the square becomes a refrain [*ritournelle*]. “The form of the ritornello is the series, which in this case is no longer concerned with objects to be combined, but only with journeys having no object” (CC 162). This refrain is motor, spatial, and sonorous, and the sound of the



shuffling of slippers constitutes the space. It's the shuffling of slippers or the resonance of clothing in movement that gives a reality to the space and thereby determines it. The form of the refrain, the series, but the series as pure form of space, exists according to the appearance and disappearance of the characters, a continuous course according to the succession of traversed segments. This ensemble of characters/forms Beckett characterizes as "Four possible solos all exhausted ['all given' in Beckett's English version]. Six possible duos all exhausted (two twice). Four possible trios all exhausted twice." And exhaustion extends to all the elements on the stage—for example, to the lighting, percussion, and costumes. (See the script of *Quad*.) The series is inexhaustible, since its limit is not one of its terms but one of its milieus, it is anywhere. The limit of the series is in variation; it is in the flow, already attained before you know it. The series has been long exhausted, as have been the characters, without knowing it. This is why in *Trio* the man, after having made the arrival of the woman impossible, continues and begins again.<sup>9</sup>

*Ghost Trio* exhausts space in a different manner. If in *Quad* depotentialization passes through the dance of lame movements, through a casual unfastening and through a punctuation that reveals hiatuses and tears, in *Trio* this depotentialization occurs through the defunctionalization of elements that occupy the space (the floor, the walls, and the door) and through the relation of these elements to a voice that names while the camera shows them, distinguished only by nuances of gray. In this text, the exhaustion of space takes place through fragmentation and defunctionalization of elements that occupy it. In fragmenting space, the parts that occupy it are isolated, and in their milieu, they only serve "to connect or link together unfathomable voids" (CC 166).

## THE SUBLIME IMAGE

Deleuze sees in Beckett a unique laboratory for thinking the aesthetic status of the image in the dramatic arts. It's true that the theater exists only to the extent that something appears, that something is made to be seen, heard, and sensed. But almost from its birth, the theater seeks the manifestation of something that does not appear to the senses. This something else is tied to other forms of experience or other visions. Thus, there is always an image (mental, ideal) that flies over the stage [*qui survole la scène*]. And the aesthetic condition of the spectacle is precisely this relation between the visible image and the invisible image.

Beckett upends this separation of the visible and the invisible on the stage. Through different layers of visibility on the stage and through different languages that he invents in order to exhaust them one by one, he seeks images.

There are the physical images of actors, of objects on the stage, of light, and of music. But these images are there to let us see *in flagrante delicto* the characters who prepare themselves to make other images. And these images no longer belong to the domain of the visible. They are images that concentrate on, not things or stories, but energy. These last images that Beckett wants to make visible are not of the order of representation, nor of the order of the invisible. Because these images exist only at the moment of their dissipation, they are pure images, without content and without signification. They are not to be seen, imagined, or contemplated in an exercise of symbolism. They become purely formal existences, as the internal tension of forces.

In this method of exhausting all visibilities in order to absorb them and to stockpile them in the pure image, Beckett adopts what Deleuze calls a return to post-Cartesian theories, according to which “there are now two worlds, the physical and the mental, the corporeal and the spiritual, the real and the possible” (CC 169). The pure image is situated in the mental world, not because it is the subjective double of the physical world, its representation by a consciousness. It has always belonged to the mental world in that it is an event that is produced not in the world of the real, but in the world of the possible. It has no relation with representation or the evocation of memories. It is presence to itself of itself, in the mental world. To underscore this autonomy of the pure image vis-à-vis the physical world, vis-à-vis the world of bodies, Deleuze presents the image as a reality of the domain of the spirit. As he says, “The image is precisely this: not a representation of an object but a movement in the world of the mind. The image is the spiritual life” (CC 169).

According to Deleuze, in Beckett’s television plays, what is in play is precisely a dissipation of the mimetic power [*pouvoir*] of the image. Beckett supports television, this medium most dependent on the image, it might seem, but in order to construct a new theater there, a theater of the spirit. “This is what has been called a ‘visual poem,’ a theater of the mind that does not set out to recount a story but to erect an image. [. . .] According to Beckett, only television is able to satisfy these demands” (CC 171). Thus, the question is: How does one make a theater of the spirit? How does one make with images on a screen a pure image, an image without content, pure energy? In Deleuze’s view, Beckett here takes up the entire question of the aesthetics of the sublime. How does one constitute as object of experience that which has no content, visual, sonic, tactile, or other, that which is given only as impossibility of appearing? Deleuze transforms the theme of the unrepresentable into the theme of the autodissipation of the sublime image. The movement toward the sublime, toward the elevated, and toward the path, almost, of asceticism, this movement that “elevates” the character to an indefinite state, is similar to the movement that in Kant leads the faculties to catastrophe in facing their pretention to erecting an image of the infinity of Ideas of reason.

As in the tradition of the sublime, Deleuze presents the process of making a pure image as a discipline of the spirit. We thus understand why Deleuze says that, at the final moment of the movement of the spirit, an image is erected, a “sublime image.” And he even says that when this sublime image appears, as ultimate spiritual tension, it is so that it may disappear immediately. Here a long citation is necessary. “Of course, it’s not easy to make an image. It is not enough simply to think of something or someone. [. . .] What is required is an obscure spiritual tension, a second or third *intension*, as the authors of the Middle Ages put it, a silent evocation that is also an invocation and even a convocation, and a revocation, since it raises the thing or the person to the state of an indefinite: *a woman*. [. . .] Nine hundred and ninety-eight times out of a thousand, one fails and nothing appears. And when one succeeds, the sublime image invades the screen, a female face with no outline; sometimes it disappears immediately, ‘in the same breath,’ sometimes it lingers before disappearing. [. . .] And as a spiritual movement, it cannot be separated from the process of its own disappearance, its dissipation, whether premature or not. The image is a pant, a breath, but it is an expiring breath, on its way to extinction. The image is that which extinguishes itself, consumes itself: a fall. It is a pure intensity, which is defined as such by its height, that is, by its level above zero, which it describes only by falling” (CC 170).

Deleuze shows no hesitation in taking up not only the entire Kantian grammar of the sublime but also the entire lexicon of negative theology, in order to speak of the apparition of this something “in the state of an indefinite” that is the image. To make the image, one must pass through an immense discipline of not-saying, which goes from silent evocation to convocation and revocation.<sup>10</sup> It’s through these obscure spiritual tensions that the sublime is treated. And yet, the apparition of the pure image is not guaranteed. Its appearance is rare. Only when one succeeds—and Deleuze never explains what such success might consist of. He says, “the sublime image invades the screen” (CC 170). And this image is sublime because it is without form, it’s an event like that of the smile without a mouth, or as in *Happy Days*, that of “a female face with no outline” (CC 170). It’s a spiritual movement that ends in the sublime image, but in order to bring about its dissipation, because this image is only the process that leads from its appearance to its own disappearance, from the possible that it exhausts to the beyond of the possible.

The image dissipates at the very moment of its apparition because it is the limit of every possible. “When one says, ‘I’ve done the image,’ it is because this time it is finished, *there is no more possibility [il n’y a plus de possible]*” (CC 162). The image is the ultimate point of the exhaustion of the possible. This escalating movement, according to Deleuze, is a movement of refinement, a purification of the personal sphere and of the world of the real up to the world of the possible, that is, to a world of the spirit where the pure

image must break its attachments to its dogmatic “image” in order to reach a higher level: spirit. And there, one is in a beyond of the possible. “The image concentrates within itself a potential energy, which it carries along in its process of self-dissipation. It announces that the end of the possible is at hand” (CC 170).<sup>11</sup> This end is always already there, without the person knowing it, and yet it has not yet taken place. Every possible is already exhausted before being born.<sup>12</sup>

Deleuze sees the activity of the spirit, which characterizes the making of the image of the exhausted, above all in the dream of the insomniac. Insomnia is the permanent state of exhaustion, where spiritual life is manifest in its highest power/capacity, on the edge of the possible. The exhausted insomniac is the extreme case of someone who inhabits a world beyond fatigue. He is always awake, not through the impossibility of sleeping, but because he has exhausted even this possibility. And in this state of permanent waking, however, he dreams. His dreams do not belong to the realm of sleep but to the realm of insomnia, or, rather, alongside insomnia. “We dream *in* sleep, but we dream *alongside* insomnia. The two exhaustions, the logical and the psychological” (CC 171). In *Nacht und Träume*, it’s precisely an insomniac who makes the image as extreme creation of the spirit. Deleuze calls attention to the posture of the insomniac in Beckett’s play. He is seated, hands resting on the table, the head resting on the hands. Unlike the body of the fatigued, who seeks a sleeping posture, the insomniac’s body is seated. But the image he wants to fashion will not come from the depths of this body. Because he is not fatigued, but exhausted, he does not sleep. He remains awake in his exhaustion. And yet he gets ready to dream. But what kind of dream can descend on the insomniac? The dream of the sleeper, the dream of sleep, is produced not by exhaustion but by fatigue; it transfigures the states of the sleeping body into images. The fatigued body sleeps in order to continue, in the dream, the process of realization. This is why the dream of the fatigued, the dream of sleep, is a dream that erects representations—objects or situations—to be realized. And, because it expresses the depths of the sleeping body and the desire of realization proper to fatigue, the dream of sleep is composed, according to Deleuze, of images of the impossible, images of what desire believes it can never accomplish. By contrast, the dream of the insomniac is only made visible through the exhausted possible. “In the dream of insomnia, it is a question not of realizing the impossible but of exhausting the possible, either by giving it a maximal extension that allows it to be treated like a real waking day, in the manner of Kafka, or else by reducing it to a minimum that subjects it to the nothingness of a night without sleep, as in Beckett” (CC 171).<sup>13</sup> In insomnia, the exhausted is seized in his work of exhausting the possible. And modern literature, according to Deleuze, has granted us two paradigmatic figures of insomnia. With Kafka, the possible

that must be exhausted is hypertrophied until it is colossal, even monstrous. Kafka's insomniac lives the possible of the waking dream in its maximum extension; it is introduced as real. In this way, he can describe the real through its asphyxiating coincidence with the possible. Beckett follows the inverse path. He invents characters whose waking dream produces an abduction of the real. Its equivalence with the awakened possible leads it to the abyss of the self-dissipation of the dream image and to the abyss of nothingness.

What kind of dream can the insomniac produce? If he does not express the states of fatigue and the desire of the sleeping body, where do the images he creates come from? "The dream of the exhausted, insomniac, or abulic person is not like the dream of sleep, which is fashioned all alone in the depths of the body and of desire; it is a dream of the mind that has to be made, fabricated" (CC 172). Through the figure of the insomniac, Deleuze radically breaks the Romantic connection between fiction and the dream of the sleeper and between fabulation and desire. Unlike the dream of sleep (which, as Deleuze says, is made all alone, in that it is only the transfiguration, the direct translation of the depths of the body and of his desires in the domain of impossible worlds, worlds never to be realized), the dream of the insomniac must be fabricated. Only this dream of the awakened is truly a fabulation, a creation, because it is the only dream that does not work with materials (bodies, desires) that are already given. There is no elaboration of diurnal remains, and there is no dream work, but a fabrication starting from nothing. It is the activity of the spirit. It must be made starting from images, and it must fabricate dreams.

For Deleuze, the insomniac is immediately placed in the mental world, the world of the possible, in short, the world of the spirit. And the spirit has nothing to do with expression. It is neither the depths, nor desires. It is only the movement of the spirit itself, in its infinite speeds, and in its potential energy. In *Nacht und Träume*, according to Deleuze, it is precisely this process that leads to the dream of the exhausted, that leads the person who is beyond fatigue and sleep to images, that, paradoxically, Beckett wants to put on the stage. The seated character, head in hands, is prepared for what he is to do. He must make a dream, but a dream of insomnia, a dream of someone awake, who is beyond the possible. We hear Schubert's *Nacht und Träume* at the beginning and the end of the play. The play only lasts twelve minutes. Between these two apparitions of the song that expresses the anxiety of an insomniac who awaits the night and dreams "that soothe men and their breath" [*qui apaisent les hommes et leur souffle*], as the poem of the *Lied* says, the character makes his dream. He needs the help of another character, a woman, whose hands also support his head. The image on the screen plays with the movements of four hands around the head of the dreamer. "The image seems to attain a heartrending intensity until the head again sinks down

onto three hands, the fourth resting gently on top of the head. And when the image is dissipated, we might imagine we heard a voice: the possible is accomplished, ‘it is done I’ve made the image’” (CC 172). The image of the insomniac’s dream appears only at the moment of the highest concentration of exhaustion and its energy that has become purely potential. And it appears in order to accomplish the possible, to lead the possible to its exhaustion. The dream represents nothing. The image of the dream only serves to condense and dispense the energy of its process of appearing. With the disappearance of the image, nothing remains or subsists. Because the image concentrates a potential energy in itself, which it bears throughout its process of self-dissipation, the disappearance of the image implies the end of all possibilities: “There is no longer an image, any more than there is a space: beyond the possible there is only darkness” (CC 170). After having made the image, the character remains immobile, his head enveloped in the four hands, as if after a purely spiritual birth [*accouchement*]. The lights go out. The darkness falls on the stage. Once more we hear Schubert’s song. Afterward, silence. What has he dreamed? Pure energy. Simply the moment of condensing the entire world in an image that appears only in order to annihilate itself and all representations. A maximum of energy in a minimum of world. Nothingness in the dissipation of the possible through exhaustion.

The dream of the insomniac is the terminal moment of the analysis of figures of the exhausted in Beckett. Through a progressive order, Deleuze thus led us from the exhaustion of the language of things to the exhaustion of voices, then from the exhaustion of space to the exhaustion of the image. Deleuze can thus say, as a synopsis of Beckett’s process: “The exhausted is the exhaustive, the dried up, the extenuated, and the dissipated” (CC 162). Exhaustion consists of all these procedures: precision (exhaustion of names), dryness or atomization (drying up voices), absolute fatigue, going up to the limit (extenuating space), and consummation and disappearance (dissipating the image). Exhaustion thus is a process of atomization through precision, in such a way as to lead its object to the limit of its forces, to its dissipation in the pure image. And Beckett’s four plays for television are themselves, in their combinatories of different planes of these four dimensions, the scenic exhaustion of this process of exhaustion on the stage. As Deleuze says, “*Quad* will be Space with silence and eventually music. *Ghost Trio* will be Space with a presenting voice and music. . . . *But the clouds* . . . will be Image with voice and poetry. *Nacht und Träume* will be Image with silence, song, and music” (CC 162).

In these four ways of exhausting the possible, there is a constant procedure: dissipation through infinite contraction. Language contracts words like atoms, cutting their relation with things, and contracts the flows of voice by making them pure exhaustive series without any connection among themselves.

Space is contracted into a “pinhole,” such that the diagonals or straight lines produce no encounters. And the image is contracted into a microtime, and into potential energy. It contracts all of the possible into itself in order to make it dissipate afterwards. In all these forms of the exhaustion of the possible there is this contraction, this contraction of the possible in order to make it explode. If the possibility of words is to produce resonances with things, then one must cut this connection by making words an atomic concentration ready to explode, in which enumeration has replaced the proposition. Logical chains are always flows of connection, unconcentrated liaisons. To exhaust these chains is to cut them, to dry them out, to transform them into autonomous fragments and concentrations of themselves.<sup>14</sup>

### BENE AND BECKETT: FROM A THEATER OF LESS TO A THEATER OF EXHAUSTION?

Deleuze’s text on Beckett closes his work on the theater that he inaugurated with *Superpositions*. Both texts are dedicated to the analysis of singular processes of dramaturgic construction, of work on language and voices, of the choreography of movements, of the organization of light and music, and of the definition of the scenic space. One could say that they are the expression of Deleuze’s thought on theater, but applied to two radically distinct authors.

However, a question arises: Can one read the concept of “exhaustion,” which organizes Deleuze’s entire reading of Beckett, as the radicalization of his approach to Bene’s theater? It seems that in Beckett what Deleuze discovers is the extreme figure of this procedure of minorization that he had identified in 1978 in “One Less Manifesto.” As if the absorption of the whole of the stage in this process of its proper disappearance were the limit-consequence of Bene’s aesthetics of subtraction.

And yet, in none of the analytical levels Deleuze develops in “The Exhausted” does one find the idea of minorization or the minor. It is not a matter of minorizing the relation of words to things and words in themselves, but of breaking this relation. It is not a matter of subtracting the relation of the voice with the speaker or of minorizing flows of voices themselves. In Beckett the voices are cut off from the possible worlds that their memory seems to express up to the complete ruin of their content. Unlike the scenic space of Bene, which is erected in order to atrophy relations of power, the space Beckett’s characters cross is reduced to a motor refrain, and it ends up collapsed as if bewitched by its center, by its vortex. Finally, although certain scenes of Beckett, for example, in *Happy Days*, render fragile sensory–motor connections of the image in such a way as to concentrate them in themselves as micro-time, still there is always the disappearance of images, the darkness

of exhaustion, the dissipation of the visible in a purely spiritual movement of internal tension beyond imagination, reason, and memory. In short, it is only with difficulty that one can say that the exhaustion of Beckett's theater is the radicalization of figures of minorization that Deleuze discerned in the world of Bene.

But now we are forced to another question: What specifically in the theoretical universe of "The Exhausted" keeps us from reading it on the horizon of "One Less Manifesto" (1978)? We may put it briefly as follows. Minorization belongs to a theory of power, whereas exhaustion is a small treatise on the possible. Bene's theater, as Deleuze views it in 1978, is a political theater. There Deleuze seeks ways of breaking up our representations of conflicts. Bene's method of subtraction appears to him to be the staging of strategies of resistance to the institutionalization of mechanisms of domination. By contrast, Beckett's theater, according to Deleuze in 1992, is an ethical exercise in the possible and its forms of exhaustion.

On the other hand, the central subject of the theater of minorization is the body. Language, space, movements of characters, and their voices are always related to the originary figure of all relations of forces: the *melee* [*le corps à corps*, the "body-to-body"]. Be it the warrior body, the erotic body, the biological body, it is the body that establishes the measure of weakening, the criterion of the privation of words, voices, and spaces. The ultimate goal of minorization is the liberation of the potentialities of the body. The spirit, by contrast, is the center of the theater of exhaustion. Deleuze even presents Beckett's work as a "theater of the spirit."

The enormous difference between "One Less Manifesto" and "The Exhausted" goes beyond the programmatic differences between the worlds of Bene and Beckett. Between 1978 and 1992 much has changed in Deleuze's thought. To understand the discontinuities between the Bene text and the Beckett text necessarily entails a passage from a theory of power to a theory of the possible, as well as a passage from a theater of the body to a theater of the spirit. And as we will see, the question of the image—of its ontological condition, of its aesthetic status, and of its role on the stage—will become central.

### THE SPIRIT WITHOUT IMAGE AND THE IMAGES OF THE SPIRIT: THOUGHT BETWEEN CINEMA AND THEATER

"The Exhausted" establishes a new relation between the spirit and the image. The spirit is manifest as the creation of images, but these images exist only without content, and they are pure forms in the process of self-dissipation. In



the idea of the pure image, we discover the ancient struggle against the reduction of thought to the image. As in *Difference and Repetition*, Deleuze wants to free the spirit from its relation with representation; he seeks an understanding of thought that presents it without an image. And yet, there is a radical difference between the thought without image of *Difference and Repetition* and the thought that creates pure images in "The Exhausted." Although the exhaustion of names and the process of drying up voices frees language and thought from the weight of things and memories, freeing the stage of all the faculties of representation, and, thus, freeing the stage of the image, the image is nonetheless the ultimate moment, and the extreme object of scenic labor. As we have seen, the exhaustion of things, of interior possible worlds, as well as the exhaustion of space, are mechanisms required to make, not an image of things, situations, and gestures, but, nevertheless, an image. This image, totally deprived of any anchor in things, is still an image. Deleuze could have chosen another name to indicate this reality. He defines this object that is made on the stage, although very rarely, as purely spiritual. It is created at zero, absolute fiction. This product of the spirit is potential energy. Why still call it "image"? Why present the spirit as the faculty of making images, as the activity of creating pure images? Is this a repudiation of the program of *Difference and Repetition*, or is it a new formulation of the program of a thought without image?

We know that this program, in itself, contained a paradoxical formulation. Deleuze offered a new image of thought that would have no image other than a thought without image. In *Difference and Repetition*, this formula seemed contradictory in its own terms. One must abolish the classical image of thought, and one must refute the presupposition according to which to think is always a matter of images, is always the activity of acceding to an image, some kind of representation. However, this new understanding of thought must be constructed on the basis, not of a new concept, but of a new image, a new image of thought. In short, what's needed is a new image of thought that can show itself as a thought without image. But, what image can one have of a thought without image? Would it still be an image? Are we condemned to the understanding of what a thought without image might be by starting, always and again, with an image? *Difference and Repetition* provides no response to this apparent paradox. The descriptions of what a thought without images would be are dedicated not to sketching images of thought, but to the presentation of concepts of "Idea," of "problem," of "syntheses of time," and of "disjunctive series." The entire book is a monumental journey across aspects that, since Plato and Aristotle, have been recognized as fundamental attributes of the act of thinking, of making difference, posing problems, actualizing syntheses of time, erecting pure space. But no image comes out of this journey. We see nothing of this new figure of thought. Certainly, this

blindness was understood in the very program of *Difference and Repetition*. The entire struggle against the “philosophy of representation” forced us to think thought without representing anything, to seek an image of thought that, as thought without image, would not have an image of itself.

This blindness is found across all of Deleuze’s work in the 1970s. In *Anti-Oedipus*, *Kafka*, or *A Thousand Plateaus*, we find no theory of the image, no attempt to erect any image whatsoever of a thought without image. We can say that what fascinated Deleuze in the experience of cinema, at the beginning of the 1980s, was precisely the possibility of producing images of thought, and images of a thought without images. In an interview on the two volumes of *Cinema*, Deleuze says: “There was something strange about cinema. What struck me, and I hadn’t expected this, was how well it manifested not behavior, but spiritual life (including aberrant behaviors). Spiritual life is not dream or fantasy (these have always been dead-ends in cinema), but the realm of clear-headed decision making, a kind of absolute stubbornness, the choice of existence. [. . .] Cinema puts movement not just in the image; it puts it in the mind. Spiritual life is the movement of the mind” (2RM 288).

In cinema Deleuze discovers images that make visible the activity of thought, but precisely a thought that has no relation with images. As he says in this interview, this life of thought, spiritual life, is not a life composed of dreams or fantasies, but a life that decides, that is stubborn, that makes choices of existence. Deleuze’s enthusiasm for images, whether movement-images or time-images, is perhaps the expression of this discovery that there is a form of art where it is possible to make not only images of thought, but above all images of a thought without images. And one may even say that this enthusiasm also expresses above all the enthusiasm of someone who has overcome his own impasses: the impasses of the theory of the dream and the fantasy that haunted the concept of thought since *Masochism*, *Difference and Repetition*, and *The Logic of Sense*. If Deleuze had considered the dream and the fantasy as impasses of cinema, which only an ontology of images and a taxonomy of optical signs could resolve, is this not because these impasses have traversed Deleuze’s thought on the image? Aren’t the cinema books the moment of Deleuze’s reconciliation with the world of images, after having abandoned the theory of the images and the imaginary that organized his concept of the “phantasm” in *Masochism* and even in *Difference and Repetition* and *The Logic of Sense*?

We’ve made some progress. To what extent is the theory of the image that Deleuze constructs in relation to Beckett’s theater also the overcoming of new impasses that exist within his approach to the cinematographic image? It’s only with “The Exhausted,” as we have seen, and afterwards, with *What Is Philosophy?*, that the activity of the spirit is presented as the creation of images. The movement of the spirit culminates in the creation of pure images

of self-dissipation. In the cinema books, there are indeed many images of thought, but thought is not an activity of the production of images. On the contrary, images are autonomous realities that, either as movement-image or as time-image, introduce movement and time into thought. The image is captured by thought; it is introduced into it and forced to think it. And the activity of the spirit that cinema captures in its images has nothing to do with the creation of images. The spirit that is expressed by images that one sees on the screen is a spirit whose activity is decision, stubbornness, and choice.

Beckett's theater stages the movement of the spirit in the flagrant act of making images. The *mise en scène* is already a *mise en image* in its representative sense. As in the cinema, so in the theater, one is faced with images. Cinematic images are first captured by cameras, cut, spliced, and then projected on the screen. The images of the theater are given directly, founded on the simultaneity of their appearance and their capture by the spectator's eye. In the plays of Beckett that Deleuze analyzes, there is a surplus in the images. More than theatrical, the images Beckett stages are cinematographic images, first captured by a plural eye behind fixed cameras.

It is precisely these plays for television that Deleuze analyzes in order to show that the central subject is to make visible, through images, spirits that are prepared only to create images. In "The Exhausted," Deleuze traces several levels of this act of making the image. On one hand, we have images of the stage that the spirit of the spectator captures as his own spiritual movement, and, on the other hand, images of exhausted characters whose spirit seeks to make images. As in his analyses of cinema, in "The Exhausted" Deleuze fashions the complete economy of the spectator. For Deleuze, the spectator's eye exists only in the images on the screen of a television that fixes the movements on the stage. The images on the screen are thus the very movement of spirit, the Thought-brain is the screen, and, at the same time, what these images let us see are spirits in the process of making images. With "The Exhausted," instead of an image of thought without images, we touch on images of thought, a thought that exists only to the extent that it makes images. We are not dealing with the same concept of the image that we find in *Difference and Repetition*. But is it the same concept of the image that forms the center of the cinema books?

Whereas in the cinema books the spirit is on the screen, that is, the spirit is the movement and the time of images, in the analysis of Beckett's television plays, the spirit is instead something that is accomplished in the heads of the exhausted characters. And this spirit of the characters is manifest as the activity of making images. But these images, contrary to what happens in cinema, have no material correspondence. They exist only in the process of their self-dissipation as potential energy.

## NOTES

1. “This sense of the exhaustion of possibility is drawn from mathematics and cryptography, and refers to the systematic, almost mechanical process of determining a solution for every possible value of a variable within an equation or coded message. The method of exhaustion is not limited to Beckett’s works; Deleuze and Guattari claim that both Antonin Artaud and Louis-Ferdinand Céline, in different ways, also exhaust the possible to produce writings of pure intensities. [. . .] What is specific to Beckett’s style is the fact that it exhausts the whole of the possible in four systematic ways” (Murphy 2000: 233).

2. “*Watt* is the great serial novel, in which Mr. Knott, whose only need is to be without need, does not earmark any combination for a particular use that would exclude the others, and whose circumstances would still be yet to come” (CC 154).

3. As Ronald Bogue explains, “In Deleuze’s and Guattari’s understanding of language, a reconfiguration of the representations of the social world is itself an experimentation of language, since the semantic dimension of language is as much a part of the immanent field of lines of continuous variation as the phonemic, grammatical, morphemic and syntactic elements” (Bogue 2003: 114).

4. “Deleuze puts the two (the fatigued and the exhausted) in a theoretical fabulation, and with the characters of Beckett’s fiction constructs what is at once a theory of language and a theory of the artistic process, of linguistic invention” (Joubert 2001: 37).

5. In *Proust and Signs* Deleuze analyzed amorous and worldly signs in terms of the Other as possible world, or rather, impossible, impenetrable (hence jealousy). What’s interesting is that in “The Exhausted,” Deleuze still analyzes the Other as impossible world, but this time, as the subject of the statement that must be cancelled and overturned in its importance. In place of Others, the language III of silence and pure images must be placed. It is a matter then of an interesting reversal: from the jealous capture of an impenetrability of the Other as possible world, Deleuze passes to Others as what must be made to disappear in favor of a pure functioning of silence.

6. “Language of limits among language, of what is maintained in the interstice between the voice, making the one pass into the other, and creating a sort of zone of indiscernibility between the one and the other. Language of immanence where the presence of the voice is torn apart. But it’s a matter of an immanence that is limit rather than plane. [. . .] Hence a space appears where things have lost their coordinates and their membership. No longer possibilities of things, as in language I, nor Others, voices and possible worlds as in language II, but an image without subject, which is ‘a life and nothing other,’ ‘inter-moment,’ a-subjective, to cite the expressions of Deleuze’s last text on immanence. Disconnected images, that attain to the impersonal” (Vinciguerra 1998: 118).

7. As Tom Conley shows, Deleuze seems to define the image solely through space: “Deleuze gives the name image to the movement of these immanent limits. [. . .] No sooner than Deleuze describes what an image is [. . .] he distinguishes its extensive qualities.” But this spatial definition of the image is there only to be

exploded: “the transformation of ‘subjectivity’ is at issue less as movement in space than in an invention of an erasure of space” (Conley 2000: 308).

8. See also: “To the inhumanity of the ‘diabolical powers,’ there is the answer of a becoming-animal” (K 12).

9. “It is because the end *will have been*, long before he could know it. [. . .] And when the little mute messenger suddenly appears, it is not to announce that the woman will not be coming, as if this were a piece of bad news, but to bring the long-awaited order to stop everything, everything being well and truly finished” (CC 167–8).

10. “Silence is language unextended, intensive, virtual form. In seeking to speak that silence that comes in the wake of words, Beckett’s narrators embody the open, generative paradox of a language in which the difference between speaking and silence becomes imperceptible” (Murphy 2000: 245).

11. “It’s the intensity, in an image itself intensive, that recedes when extinguished; for the intensity dissipates in becoming an image. Birth and death coincide in this image that one can only repeat. One thus does not experience the possible as such, or the possible as power [*puissance*], except in its fall or its exhaustion; also, it’s a matter of ‘exhausting the possible’” (Zourabivili 1998: 344).

12. When Deleuze speaks of the mad energy of the image’s self-dissipation, is he beginning to think the chaos of *What Is Philosophy?* To make the image, is that the same thing as to make a concept? Or, is it just the opposite: to make the image is to introduce chaos into the real, to bore holes, hiatuses in order to see visions? “The image, with even greater reason, remains inseparable from the movement through which it dissipates itself. [. . .] The visual image is carried along by the music, the sonorous image that rushes toward its own abolition. Both of them rush toward the end, all possibility exhausted [*tout possible épuisé*]” (CC 168–9). Witness the parallelism of this affirmation in “The Exhausted” with that of “The Brain Is the Screen”: “the philosophical authors I preferred were those who demanded that movement be introduced into thought. [. . .] How could I not encounter the sort of cinema which introduced ‘real’ movement into the image? [. . .] I just went straight from philosophy to cinema” (2RM 287–8). The same movement that breaks thought, the movement of chaos, returns in the image and makes the sensory-motor chains jump.

13. In this distinction between Kafka and Beckett, we see once again the difference between the procedure of minorization and the procedure of exhaustion. Kafka proceeds through amplification, through a maximum of extension of the possible in order to carry it to the state of the colossal, to the condition of the intolerable, whereas Beckett proceeds through annihilation, through exhaustion, through the reduction of the possible to a minimum. “Deleuze and Guattari identify two ways of creating minor literature within a major language. The first is a method of linguistic inflation ‘through all the resources of symbolism, of oneirism, of esoteric sense, of the hidden signifier.’ This would be a kind of deterritorialization through excessive allusion of reference, which they call reterritorialization. [. . .] The second method, which Deleuze and Guattari see at work in Kafka’s writings, is to ‘go always further in the direction of deterritorialization, to the point of sobriety. [. . .] Beckett [. . .] proceeds by dryness and sobriety’” (Murphy 2000: 232).

14. “It is not a matter of following a chain of images, even across voids, but of getting out of the chain of association. [. . .] It is the method of BETWEEN, ‘between two images’. [. . .] It is the method of AND, ‘this and then that’. [. . .] Between two actions, between two affections, between two perceptions, between two visual images, between two sound images, between the sound and the visual: make the indiscernible, that is the frontier, visible” (C2 180).



# Conclusion

## *The Deleuzian Vitalist Chaosmos*

We have examined each text that Deleuze (sometimes with Guattari) dedicated to literary works (novels, tales, stories, letters, and dramatic works). From the three editions on Proust to Beckett's *Quad*, from *Masochism* to the analysis of Bartleby's formula, with examinations along the way of Bene's manifesto on the theater, and the brief considerations of Anglo-American literature in *Dialogues*, we have stopped to consider almost all the moments where Deleuze deals with a literary author, a character, or a fictional atmosphere. We are now ready to return to the question that launched our inquiry: Is there a Deleuzian literary aesthetics? In Deleuze's writings on these works of fiction that he undertook for almost forty years, can we find a singular perspective on literature?

At first glance, the set of Deleuze's writings on literature is only a modified version of the complete map of the great subjects that, since Mallarmé, constitute what is called "the spontaneous metaphysics of literature." In Proust, Deleuze works with the classic paradoxes of the narrator, the status of lived experience, as well as the virtual condition of those narrative worlds that, like strokes of pure time, subsist in the involuntary memory that is implanted in every reader at the moment of reading. Sacher-Masoch gives him a privileged access to the role of imagination and denegation in the genesis of fiction. Kafka opens up the understanding of collective domains of literary labor in minor communities, the way of seizing, *in flagrante delicto*, the fabulation of characters who construct themselves through their visions and their auditions. The Kafka book was also the pure description of different regimes of enunciation that are expressed in the letters, stories, and novels in their relation to madness. Nomadic becomings offer an account of the *nouveau roman* and Anglo-American literature. The dramaturgy of Bene and Beckett gave access to techniques of the minorization and exhaustion of the scenic



affairs of the characters, the voices, the images in dissolution, and techniques so fundamental in the aesthetics of disappearance that defined the theater of the 1970s and 1980s. The reconstitution of the character Bartleby was the limit case of a pragmatics of the literal, the analysis of procedures of fabulative self-demolition, where the text exists only in order to produce refrains of nonsense in the reader. In short, Deleuze's texts on literature seem to be the living archive of concepts, categories, themes, and approaches to literature that have profoundly marked our modernity. Accompanying each approach he invented for dealing with the great writers of the twentieth century has allowed us to read Deleuze as a systematic encyclopedia of canonical literary subjects related to a thought oriented around questions of desire, collective enunciation, and the politics of writing.

However, throughout this book, we have found that this fabulous philosophical encyclopedia of literature, this map of Deleuze's approaches to the major sites of the literary art, is absolutely impossible to establish. Why? Because Deleuze examines literary texts in order to access, not the understanding of literature and its narrative or fictional mechanisms, but many other things that go beyond questions of literary theory. They range from the question of the faculties to the idea of a nonorganic life, from the theory of sense to the ontology of incorporeals, from the critique of the concept of fiction to a politics of fabulations, and from an anthropology of masochism to a metaphysics of the virtual and the possible. A question now arises: Can we consider all these subjects as chapters of what would be Deleuze's literary theory? Or, on the contrary, must the texts on literature be taken as simple laboratory experiments in Deleuze's metaphysics?

Our study has, at first, reflected this hesitation. This was the case in our analysis of the concept of "fabulation," starting from the Kafka book, a concept that Deleuze opposes more and more to that of "fiction." Deleuze invents a nonpsychological realism of fabulation, which is at the same time a politics of becoming, of movements, of lines of production of a people. Instead of taking up the classic question of the unreality of worlds inhabited by fictional characters, he sketches a theory of writing as experimental activity of the health of a writer who inhabits language like a foreigner, like an exile, a member of a minor community, in order to think the relation between the fabulative becoming of the writer and the process of actively dismantling economic and juridical machines of political combat. In the idea of a minor literature, what is important is not so much literature, as it is the minor becoming of the one who writes in a major language while using the war machines of nomads. The interiority and the depth of a work are thus brought to the surface of assemblages that a minority realizes as the line of flight of mechanisms of codification and territorialization of desires. Deleuze understands the relation of every statement to its social conditions, to speech acts as

markers of power. The classic opposition between the pure act of writing and passion or the contrast between the gravity of expression and the indifference of the theme—at the center of analyses of Flaubert’s “frivolity” or Artaud’s schizophrenia—are brought back, in the Kafka book, to the necessarily social character of enunciation, that is, to assemblages of language that are always collective, in such a way as to delineate anew the revolutionary becoming of literary creation. We can thus ask: Does this concept of “collective assemblage of enunciation” belong to the domain of a theory of literature?

But the case of this concept, invented by Deleuze and Guattari in order to think fabulation in minor literatures, is not unique. In the Proust book, for example, if in the first edition there is no political treatment of the syntheses of the time of involuntary memory or of the process of the apprenticeship of jealousy through worldly and amorous signs, this does not mean that Deleuze only addresses mechanisms of auto-genesis in one of the literary monuments of the twentieth century. What Deleuze seeks in the *Recherche* is a theory of signs in their relation to the Kantian table of faculties, and in this fashion, he proposes a new transcendental plane of thought. On the horizon of a phenomenology of involuntary memory, what is disengaged from the Deleuzian reading of Proust is a version of the schematism of categories in their temporal grounding, where Deleuze seeks a mutual correspondence between forms of time, kinds of faculties, and types of signs. The Proust book seems more a treatise of semiology, or, rather, a laboratory for the Kantian theory of faculties, than a reflection on the art of Marcel Proust.

Likewise, in the book on Sacher-Masoch, the very first sentence is “What is literature for?” But this book is above all a Kantian definition of the fetish as transcendent use of the imagination and a theory of suspense as the condition of the fictional mode of the imagination. Through his analysis of cruelty and coldness in Sacher-Masoch’s novels, Deleuze is able to disengage the act through which language goes beyond itself in reflecting a body of desire in order to form, with words, another body, full of new pleasures for pure spirits. If Deleuze returns to the theme of the nature of fiction and its erotic effect, his fundamental concern is always with the search for a genetic description of the faculties of desire in their relation to the law. There is always something else, another problem, that Deleuze wants to think via his views of literature.

Our study thus could only resolve to conduct a parallel cohabitation of the canonical questions of literary theory that are found throughout Deleuze’s texts and this immense chaos of concepts and programs that delineate the margins of literature.

In its margins, we have privileged three domains: that of the program of a transcendental empiricism as description of the genesis of thought starting from the experience of art; that of a philosophy of Nature where art has its primordial appearance in the construction of territories and houses; and that

of a philosophy of Spirit, which approaches art as an incorporation of blocks of sensations, as compositions of autonomous affects and percepts that hold together all alone in resonance with micro-brains.

Our choice was not freely determined. Deleuze's corpus itself, in its internal development, imposed this approach on us. In following the chronological order of Deleuze's writings on literature, we have recognized that they begin with a dialogue about Kant's transcendental program in its relation to the experience of art, that after *Anti-Oedipus* they are transformed into a philosophy of Nature, to lead, starting in the 1980s, to a philosophy of Spirit. Constantly, in the background, we have found the most general relation between thought and art that Deleuze inherited from the tradition of transcendental idealism.

However, we have discovered a new problem. Not only did Deleuze in each text investigate something other than the classic questions of literary theory, but this other thing was always itself another thing; it existed only in a state of permanent becoming. If there is a chaos of Deleuze's concepts in their multiplicity, there is also a chaos of concepts in their permanent metamorphosis.

Deleuze himself recognized the nonhomogeneous nature of the movement of his thought. In response to a question of whether he considered his oeuvre as a unified whole or as fragmented, he said: "Three periods, not bad going. Yes, I did begin with books on the history of philosophy. [. . .] A philosophy is what Félix Guattari and I tried to produce in *Anti-Oedipus* and *A Thousand Plateaus*, especially in *A Thousand Plateaus* [. . .] A philosophy amounted for me, then, to a sort of second period that would never have begun or got anywhere without Félix. Then let's suppose there's a third period when I worked on painting and cinematic images, on the face of it" (N 135–7). At the time of the interview, many readers already considered Deleuze's oeuvre to be divided into two periods: before and after *Anti-Oedipus*. But here Deleuze himself adds a third period to the two great periods he had already established—a period of images. And he remarks: "Ultimately all these periods lead into one another and get mixed up, as I now see better with this book on Leibniz or the Fold" (N 137). Deleuze certainly recognizes discontinuities. He relates them above all to encounters: with Félix Guattari, with cinema, or with Bacon's painting. His fundamental Spinozism, that is, his ethics of immanence and happy encounters, prevents him from explaining his internal ruptures as theoretical changes, as paradigmatic fractures. And yet, our reading of Deleuze's thought on literature not only presupposes but also makes visible many other differences inside his texts.

Numerous are the fractures in Deleuze's thought that we have tried to make visible. Although they are transversals, although they are like folds, implicated and explicated with one another, the fractures may be divided into

three parts. Each part corresponds to a group of books or texts on literary authors. The first part is on Proust and Sacher-Masoch; the second, on Kafka and Bene; and the third, on Melville's "Bartleby" and Beckett.

However, there are many lines of discontinuity that further divide each of these parts. While respecting each part, we have decided to follow in a transverse fashion the metamorphoses of the most important domains of Deleuze's approaches to the question of the relation between the literary art and thought. Within these transverse cuts, we have examined three domains: (1) that of the program of transcendental empiricism; (2) that of the concept of masochism in its relation with the Kantian theory of the sublime; and (3) that of Deleuze's modal concepts such as "virtual," "actual," "possible," and "potentiality."

Let's briefly review the most paradigmatic example: the program of transcendental empiricism. Even this program, which Deleuze presented in his doctoral dissertation [*Difference and Repetition*] as the theoretical kernel of his approach to the concepts of difference and repetition, is in continuous metamorphosis. Because it concerns the center of what would be Deleuze's aesthetics, this metamorphosis, from the beginning, has thrown our work into confusion.

We know that the program of a new transcendental empiricism is inscribed in the heart of the heritage of the Kantian theory of art. It addresses this fundamental equivocation in the very concept of the aesthetic in Kant, that is, this divide between a transcendental aesthetic as theory of sensibility and an aesthetics, equally transcendental, as theory of the judgment of taste (beautiful or sublime). What Deleuze condemns in Kant's definition of transcendental aesthetics is the point of view of a deduction of the formal (and not material) conditions of knowledge. By contrast, what Deleuze claims to provide is, first, not a deduction but a genesis; then, a genesis not of formal conditions, but of material conditions; and finally, he wants to think these conditions not as conditions of possible experience but as conditions of actual experience [*expérience effective*]. Kant's aesthetics, in its first sense, that is, as theory of sensibility, defines the general conditions of experience, but an experience uniquely possible because, precisely, it is determined solely by its adequation to the formal dimension of sensibility. As Deleuze says in *Difference and Repetition*: "No wonder, then, that aesthetics should be divided into two irreducible domains: that of the theory of the sensible which captures only the real's conformity with possible experience; and that of the theory of the beautiful, which deals with the reality of the real in so far as it is thought" (DR 68).

It's as a response to this cleavage that divides the thought about sensibility that one must understand Deleuze's new concept of the aesthetic. For him, the work of art establishes at the same time, in its actuality [*effectivité*], the

plane of the sensible and the plane of taste. Deleuze thinks the work of art as the materialization of conditions of experience, not possible experience, but real experience, of experience whose conditions are no larger than what they condition. Deleuze can thus say, on the same page, that “Everything changes once we determine the conditions of real experience, which are not larger than the conditioned and which differ in kind from the categories: the two senses of the aesthetic become one, to the point where the being of the sensible reveals itself in the work of art, while at the same time the work of art appears as experimentation” (DR 68). Deleuze attempts to blend the forms of the beautiful with the forms of sensibility in such a way as to make visible, not the judgment about the work of art, as conformity between the sensible and its conditions, but the work of art itself. On the other hand, Deleuze presents the beautiful (or the sublime) as that which conforms to experience in its reality and its actuality [*effectivité*].

To go beyond the cleavage between the aesthetic of the sensible, as part of a general theory of the conditions of possibility of experience, and the aesthetic of judgment, as theory of forms of the reflexivity of the real in the judgment of the beautiful and sublime, Deleuze must fundamentally reconfigure the transcendental program. Instead of defining the transcendental field on the basis of possible experience, he makes real experience the starting point of an a priori deduction. On the other hand, this real experience must be recognized as having its privileged domain in art. The condition of experience in art is no larger than the conditioned. According to Deleuze, the work of art arises as experimentation, that is, as the site of the genesis of the object and the conditions of its sensible becoming, and as site of a genesis that does violence to thought and forces it to “enlarge itself”—in a word: forces it to think.

As we have indicated, this program undergoes several changes throughout Deleuze’s oeuvre. First, the change one finds in the discontinuity between the books on Hume and Nietzsche, on one hand, and those in the books on Kant and Proust, on the other. The fracture line between these two moments of the same transcendental program concerns Deleuze’s new understanding of the importance of the Kantian theory of the sublime. The Hume and Nietzsche books ignore the role of this theory in a genetic comprehension of the faculties. In these books, what Deleuze takes into consideration in the analytic of the judgment of taste is only the concept of the beautiful. This explains why he considers Nietzsche’s theory of the will to power to be the true realization of a genetic comprehension of the faculties, in opposition to the Kantian deductive model that Deleuze reveals in his reading of the *Critique of Pure Reason*. In the Nietzsche book, Deleuze never considers the *Critique of Judgment*, he never recognizes what he will stress as Kant’s revolutionary discovery, in the experience of the sublime, of a genesis of thought on the basis of the work of art. In contrast to the readings of the Kantian sublime

of Lyotard or Derrida, which have now become classic, where it is a matter of the unrepresentable or the impossibility of representation, Deleuze treats paragraphs 23 through 29 of Kant's *Critique* as an entrance to the problem of the genesis of thought. For Deleuze, the concept of the sublime designates above all the dissonant play of the faculties, on the basis of the aesthetic judgment of something monstrous, colossal, or infinitely large. For Deleuze, what Kant discovered in 1791 was the aesthetic origin of all faculties, the point of their genesis, as the violence that art does to thought.

We may say that if Nietzsche could have been presented in 1962 as the true realization of the transcendental program, it's because in that book Kant appeared only as the author of a theory of the beautiful. Deleuze's first reference to the Kantian concept of the sublime appears only in 1963, in his article "The Problem of Genesis in Kant's Aesthetic." Our study has examined the hypothesis that it is the concept of the "sublime," as violence to thought generated by the work of art, that organizes the singular way Deleuze reinvents the heritage of the Kantian aesthetic in order to reread Proust in 1964. It is true that Deleuze, in his retrospective accounts of his own work, never takes this discontinuity into consideration. But—and this perhaps constitutes an important contribution of our work—it's only the recognition of this internal rupture produced in Deleuze's thought by the theory of the sublime that makes possible the complete elucidation of the speculative roots of the first edition of *Marcel Proust and Signs*, as well as the originality of his reading of masochism.

It's this same concept of the sublime as site of the genesis of the faculties and as the model of art that is also at work in *Masochism*. If in the first edition of *Proust and Signs* art is thought as an experience of violence to the faculties, where even the engendering of art's faculty of capture is born of an impossible as condition of the possibility of the faculties, in *Masochism*, however, this sublime and this theory of the faculties undergo a significant change, as we have seen. The sublime becomes denegation. The impossible becomes phantasm, fetish, the forbidden, the condition of the impossibility of pleasure. The faculties are regulated, no longer by a soul, but by the faculty of the creation of impossibles and frozen images: the imagination. The program of transcendental empiricism thus incorporates a new category: the law. And the understanding of literature here finds its first displacement. Fiction is no longer the involuntary experience of access to essences, but the creation, via an interdiction, of an impossible scenario.

It's this same category of the law that requires Deleuze to formulate a second edition of his Proust book in 1970. We have shown that the second edition of *Proust and Signs* is the first text to establish the relation between figures of the law, syntheses of time, transcendental principles, and types of machines. Proust, once more, functions as the laboratory of Deleuze's

theoretical experiments. The starting point for this shift from description of the syntheses of time to the modes of functioning of machines is the identification of the *Recherche* itself as a machine, a literary machine. It's Lacan above all who inspires the most fundamental aspects of the machines: their triadic structure. There are three machines: the machine of the fragmented real; the machine of desire, which sets the fragmented pieces in resonance; and the machine of the symbolic, which produces forced movement through the idea of death.

This change in the system of faculties affects the general table of signs—the central subject of the Proust book. As we have tried to show, in the 1964 edition, Deleuze examined four types of signs: sensible, amorous, worldly, and artistic. This four-term structure respected the table of the four faculties—in relation to Kant's four forms of time and the four types of essences. Now, to adapt his semiology to Lacan's tripartite scheme, Deleuze groups the four signs of 1964 two-by-two. The sensible and artistic are put on the side of Eros, the side of the imaginary. The worldly and amorous correspond to the machine of partial objects, that is, to the domain of drives, the domain of the Real. As for the machine of forced movement, Deleuze invents a different type of signs, signs of old age, illness, and death. These are the signs of Thanatos. From the 1964 edition to the second part added in 1970, from a regime of four times to a generalized trinity, Deleuze thus displaces his transcendental empiricism toward a vitalism of machines. This text is the announcement of *Anti-Oedipus* and all its politics of desiring machines.

In short, during the 1960s, Deleuze's approach to the great questions of literature was informed by the transcendental program of a reciprocal genesis of the faculties and the work of art. The classic themes, such as the status of the narrator, the nature of fiction, the unity of the work or the form of the pleasure of the text, are all derived from the system of general relations among signs, faculties, time, and essences in aesthetic experience. The *Recherche* is thus the great laboratory where it is possible to discover this simultaneous genesis of the experience of art and of its condition of possibility, where the condition is no larger than the conditioned, and where the transcendental does not have the form of a simple replication of the empirical. Which means, in our opinion, that the Proust book can be understood only as the decisive chapter of this project of a new empiricism.

However, in making the Kantian theory of the sublime the focal point of his project of a transcendental empiricism, that is, in transforming a determinate understanding of aesthetic experience into a new approach to the theme of the faculties, Deleuze takes on a complex set of theses and presuppositions that he will later abandon, leading him to a vertiginous change of perspective and even a change of theoretical paradigms.

We can schematically state them in a rapid recapitulation of the first part of our study. Throughout our analysis, we traced five projects that moved forward in a parallel fashion as the deepening of his idea of a genesis of the faculties and that determined the principal books of the 1960s: a genealogical theory of the faculties (especially memory, imagination, and reason) related to Nietzsche's genealogy of bad conscience (*Nietzsche and Philosophy*); an architectonic of Kant's theory of the faculties (*Kant's Critical Philosophy*); a genetic theory of the faculties on the basis of the correlation between time, sign, and essence in the literary work of art (which one finds especially in *Proust and Signs*); an aesthetic theory of the faculties on the basis of the understanding of the paradox of pleasure in pain that he finds in the Kantian theory of the sublime (*Masochism*); and finally, the critique of the Kantian concept of the possible (which replaces with the concept of the "virtual" in *Difference and Repetition*).

Within each of these lines of research we have identified conceptual mutations, displacements, and even revolutions. The instance we have followed most closely was that of the question of masochism, which led us to a new approach to the question of pleasure in Deleuze's oeuvre.

Perhaps one of Deleuze's most significant contributions to an understanding of the relation between literature and perversion derives from the fact that he thought it not from the vantage of Sade, but by using Sacher-Masoch's novels as his point of departure. Masochism, through its paradoxical use of the pleasure principle, places us directly before the ultimate condition of the effects of a story on the reader. We can even say that one of the greatest chapters of the program of a transcendental empiricism is that dedicated to the analysis of masochism. Deleuze discovers an essential correlation between masochism and the faculty of the imagination. The masochistic phantasm, as object par excellence of the imagination in its transcendent use, is revealed as the point of genesis of the faculty of images.

The literature of Sade and that of Masoch let us see not only how aesthetic experiences are at the origin of a system of the faculties, but also the extent to which this system has its ultimate condition in the forms of the relation of desire to its objects: sadistic reason in the negation of the real through violence against the symbolic; masochistic reason in the denegation of the real through the suspension of desire in the ideal. And as in Kant, there is a harmonic correspondence between the faculties and their objects. Reason is the faculty of Ideas, pure imagination the faculty of the Ideal.

It would be difficult to exaggerate the role of the phantasm and the imagination in *Masochism*. Deleuze establishes a true correlation, a correlation of essence, between, on one hand, the process of denegation and suspense, and, on the other, the faculty of imagination. And the central thesis of the Masoch book is that according to which "masochism is the art of the phantasm"



(M 66; trans. modified). In the Proust book, the imagination appears, but as the effect of the unrealisation [*irréalisation*] produced by an investment in failed sense (or sentiment). It's in the Masoch book that Deleuze seriously dedicates himself to thinking the role of the imagination in the system of the faculties. This book can thus be seen as providing the great theory of the imagination. It is the moment where the question of nonactuality, in all these mechanisms of unrealisation as denegation, suspension, and fiction, first occupies the center of Deleuze's work.

And yet, Deleuze himself breaks this association of masochism and imagination, leaving us in the dark as relates to what his view might be of the import of the question of perversion for a theory of pleasure. Several years after the publication of *Masochism*, in *Anti-Oedipus*, references to masochism and sadism completely disappear. The perverse forms of desire are replaced by the theme of schizophrenia (a form of psychosis that Deleuze explicitly sets aside in *Masochism*, since, as he explains, perversion remains precisely between neurosis and psychosis). This evolution may be seen in the disappearance of the theme of perversion in *Anti-Oedipus*. It's this need to replace a theory of masochism as phantasm with a theory of masochism as program that organizes the chapter "How to Make Yourself a Body without Organs" in *A Thousand Plateaus*. The concept of masochism there abandons the equivalence of suspension–imagination–phantasm. It's the concept of the "Body without Organs" that evacuates the psychology of the phantasm from the explication of masochism. Deleuze thus returns to the theme of masochism, but in order to define it in contrast to a theory of the imagination.

These internal ruptures in the approach to the nature of masochism, which traverse Deleuze's work from *Masochism* to *A Thousand Plateaus*, have resonances in other lines of thought. Above all we have followed its impact on the evolution of his modal concepts, more precisely, on different figures of the concept of the "possible."

Our point of departure was the surprising return, in *The Fold* (1998), of the concept of the "possible." We know that this concept was rejected in *Difference and Repetition* in the name of the concept of the "virtual." But this return of the "possible" was seen not only in this book on Leibniz and the baroque. After 1988, the "possible" becomes the center of reflection on the forms of the nonactual. In *What Is Philosophy?* (1991), Deleuze defines the plane of immanence in its relation to the appearance of the other person [*autrui*] that reveals a possible world. Finally, in texts on Beckett and Melville from the 1980s and 1990s, the possible—in the forms of exhaustion or the mechanisms of a becoming-mineral through a creation of the impossible—becomes the great ontological subject of Deleuze's final texts.

This evolution of Deleuze's modal theory, this passage from a radical opposition between the possible and virtual to an integration of the possible

into the plane of immanence (in the virtual), has a striking parallelism with the evolution—that we have also signaled in our study—of Deleuze’s reading of the Kantian theory of the sublime. Through the role that Deleuze grants the concepts of possibility and impossibility as figures of finitude, in experience, of a harmony beyond the discord between imagination and reason, this parallelism is almost inevitable.

As we have already shown, for Deleuze in the 1960s, the sublime is a superior form of harmony between the faculties at the limit of imaginative figuration, whereas in the 1980s, Deleuze presents the sublime as dissonance, as the deregulation of all the senses, the expression of the entrance of the impossible into the very field of the possibility of knowledge.

There is a third domain where this parallel metamorphosis is manifest. This is the domain of the theory of masochism, of this “negative pleasure” that characterizes the sublime in Kant. This theory suffers the consequences of this transformation, both in the modal concepts (possible, impossible, virtual, and actual) and in the concepts of the aesthetic of judgment (beautiful and sublime). If the reading Deleuze proposes of the techniques of suspense and awaiting that characterize the novels of Sacher-Masoch is built, from the beginning, on the enlargement of his interpretation of the sublime in Kant—retraction of vital forces and their displacement toward domains of the impossible and the unrepresentable—then, one understands that, as this interpretation passes from a model of harmony to a model of irreparable dissonance among the faculties, the very concept of masochism is no longer thought as the transposition of desire onto a plane of suspension in the impossible, in the phantasm. It becomes the experience of the total absorption of forms of pleasure in the immanence of desire. And this immanence corresponds precisely to the states of generalized dissonance of the faculties, that is, to what Deleuze presents as the concept of the Body without Organs, in the construction of a plane of consistency.

As we have indicated, from a chronological point of view, the theme of the sublime is primary. It may be found in the 1963 article “The Idea of Genesis in Kant’s Aesthetics,” and afterwards, in *Kant’s Critical Philosophy*, published the same year. The question of masochism only enters Deleuze’s work in 1967, in *Masochism*, whereas the opposition between the “virtual” and the “possible,” if it has a vague formulation in the first part of *Proust and Signs* (1964) and *Bergsonism* (1966), is only shown its full speculative consequences in *Difference and Repetition* (1968). Here, as well, in the order of appearance, there is something that is not arbitrary. Kant’s sublime is the concept that provides the theory of masochism with an aesthetics (as transcendental theory of the sensible and as theory of judgment in its relation to works) and a metaphysics of modality. For its part, the modal condition of this negative pleasure, which corresponds to masochistic denegation and

suspension, forces Deleuze to redefine the reality of the object of perverse desire (the virtual is revealed as the modal condition of the phantasm). There is an engendering of the concept of masochism through the Kantian theory of the sublime, and an engendering of the concept of the virtual through the transcendental interpretation of masochism. The Kantian sublime, through the idea of a peaceful violence of the faculties, allows a new understanding of the forbidden pleasure of masochism as the cruel play among the faculties of imagination, reason, and sensibility. This transcendental interpretation of masochism in turn helps us understand the importance of the virtual as fixation, in the symbolic plane, of fantasized objects of desire and thus as an ideal correlate (without being abstract) of worlds of fiction. It's this movement of the sublime to the virtual, while passing through the aesthetics of masochism, that is first revealed in *The Logic of Sense*. We believe that the way Deleuze modifies, sometimes imperceptibly, his definition of the concepts of the *possible*, the *sublime* and *masochism* can guide us in one of the most obscure domains of his approach to the question of literature, in what we have called in his first period: the question of fiction, of this strange experience of the creation of a nonactual world (without being abstract) that the writer contemplates as if it were the most intense of realities, in investing a desire that he refused to give to his objects of pleasure, in an almost inverted form of satisfaction.

In *The Logic of Sense* Deleuze thought fiction on the basis of an ontology of incorporeal events. However, we must remember that the central point of *The Logic of Sense*, as we have stressed, concerns the equivalence Deleuze establishes between the concept of Oedipus and the concept of the "event." The pure event is Oedipus, the phantasm of Oedipus. The relation between the incorporeal event and incorporated expressivity is thus given through the Oedipal family romance as phantasm. Deleuze makes the Oedipal family romance a pure event, an *eventum tantum*. And Deleuze even goes so far as to replace the concept of the event with that of the "phantasm-event." Psychoanalysis, the theory of the Oedipal phantasm, is thus presented as the science of pure events.

The equivalence in *The Logic of Sense* between the phantasm and the event allows us to affirm that if Deleuze insists on the condition of the pure event of the phantasm, on its condition of ideality, on its neutral character, preindividual and impersonal, it is precisely in order to contrast the theory of the phantasm of *Masochism* and the theory we find in *The Logic of Sense*. As we have seen, in *Masochism* denegation was the founding mechanism of the perverse phantasm of masochism, that is, the very essence of the imagination. The imagination constitutes the phantasm through the suspension of the real, and the perverse phantasm is the negative of the real. By contrast, in *The Logic of Sense*, the pure event that constitutes the essence of the phantasm is neither

real nor imaginary. There is no distinction between a psychological lived experience (denegation, suspension) and a physical exteriority. It's because of this need to think the literary power/capacity of perversion beyond a theory of the perverse imagination that Deleuze comes to posit the phantasm as ideal and neutral. Unlike in the book on Masoch, in *The Logic of Sense* perversion as a literary mechanism is no longer the operator of denegation, nor a fact of the imagination. It is rather the "noematic" correlate of the incorporeal *even-tum tantum*, which is the Oedipal phantasm. The phantasm hence becomes a veritable metaphysical instance, the world of the Oedipal phantasm-event.

What we have tried to show is that this displacement in the theory of the phantasm has enormous consequences for understanding the literary work of art. We have underscored the fact that the entirety of *Masochism* is an experimental reading of the art of the novel as a perverse undertaking. Sade and Masoch are always considered as writers, and as great writers. To approach the process of phantasmatic fiction, not on the basis of a theory of the imagination and its mechanisms of denegation and suspension, but as the expression of a theory of the event, is to ground fiction in an ontology. The thought of the literary work of art thus becomes a description of epiphanies, of novelistic configurations of the world.

We believe that this equivalence among, first, the virtual plane of incorporeals, second, the perverse phantasm, and third, the world of fiction, is the origin of a misleading understanding of the role of the virtual in Deleuze's aesthetics. It is true that Deleuze introduces a theory of the virtual in his book on Proust (1964) in order to understand the nature of fictional essences. At a second stage, Deleuze thinks the plane of the work as phantasm in *Masochism* (1967) and in the appendixes of *The Logic of Sense* (1969). In *Difference and Repetition* (1968), Deleuze establishes a clear opposition between the "possible" and the "virtual." This opposition leads, in its final consequences, to the critique of the Kantian model of transcendental idealism. For the possible one must substitute the virtual. It's the virtual alone that realizes the program of a transcendental empiricism.

Here, then, we find the necessary imposition of the idea that it is the virtual that is the metaphysical concept par excellence that expresses the Deleuzian conception of the work of art. The idea of a relation between the crystal and the virtual is grounded above all in a reading of *Cinema 2*. But we have seen that this idea is not always true; that is, it does not exemplify Deleuze's program of reformulation of the transcendental aesthetic in all his works. On the contrary, we must stress that from *Anti-Oedipus* up to the cinema books, the concept of the virtual disappears. The transcendental plane is confused with the plane of the actual, and an actual that absorbs all forms of the real. In 1972, Deleuze senses that the virtual with which he had been working belonged too much to the structural model in the human sciences and to the

theory of the phantasm in psychoanalysis. For this reason, in 1975 he presents Kafka as the paradigmatic author of a real without the symbolic or the imaginary. The inscription of the work in the transcendental plane is thought as “collective assemblage of enunciation.” In *Kafka*, the literary work of art is thought as a machine of minorization of the structures of the actual (fascist powers/capacities and bureaucratic machines). Literature thus becomes a machinic and collective assemblage of enunciation that operates on the actual and always in the actual.

However, in 1978 in *Superpositions*, the book on Carmelo Bene’s theater, this absolute significance of the actual is formulated on the basis of a new concept: that of power/capacity [*pouissance*] (or potentiality) as the site of resistance to power [*pouvoir*] as the minorization of petrified institutionalizations of relations of force. This means that the actual is split between, on one hand, architectures of power [*pouvoir*] and, on the other, lines of variation, lines of resistance to this power that are presented with concepts of power/capacity [*pouissance*] or potentiality, and never with the virtual. The primacy of the actual is evident in this split. All the real is actual, and it is constituted by relations of actual forces, local and instantaneous. These relations of forces are petrified in mechanisms of power in the form of institutions. Bene’s works consist of an operation of minorizing the actual through amputation, that is, in transforming it into a real of less [*un réel de moins*]. Hence the title of Deleuze’s text on Bene is: “One Less Manifesto” [*Un manifeste de moins*].

In 1980, in *A Thousand Plateaus*, the absence of the concept of the virtual remains. In the theory of strata, in the pragmatics of statements, and in the analysis of the refrain or war machines, what is at play is always a philosophy of Nature centered on the immanence of the actual.

Nonetheless, as we have said, in his cinema books Deleuze returns to the concept of the virtual, identifying the image as a crystal of time. We thus must pose two questions. First, is it always the same concept of the virtual that we find in *Difference and Repetition*, *Masochism*, and *The Logic of Sense*, and that Deleuze abandoned in *Anti-Oedipus*? And then, is the new theory of the virtual, with the cinema books, thought in opposition to the concept of the possible? To both questions, we must answer: no. No, it’s not the same concept of the virtual in the texts of the 1960s and those of the 1980s. And no: the new theory of the virtual is no longer the refutation of the possible, but, on the contrary, a parallel plane to the plane of the possible. Starting from *The Fold* (1988), as we have shown, Deleuze retains the theory of the virtual while, at the same time, fashioning a theory of the possible.

As we have indicated, the third moment of the use of the virtual begins with the cinema books. Here, we find the definition of the virtual within a theory of the image separate from the question of the imagination and the symbolic.

After these books, in 1988 Deleuze writes his book on Leibniz, where he first formulates the thesis of the existence of two different worlds, one possible and the other virtual. And in *What Is Philosophy?*, the great book of aesthetics of the last period of Deleuze's thought, one finds the affirmation that each artistic universe (Proust-universe, Rembrandt-universe) exists not as virtual or actual, but as possible. The virtual designates the mode of existence of events that are incorporated in artistic universes. Deleuze thus establishes a parallelism between the virtual world of pure events and the possible world of universes of art.

Hence, it is not difficult to understand why in this period Deleuze once again reformulated the terms of the program of a transcendental empiricism. He grants a reality to the possible. But, on the other hand, he retains the dimension of the virtual. Thus, there are two planes: the possible that is realized and the virtual that is actualized.

To the Kantian difference between the conditions of possibility and the modes of actuality [*effectivité*] that define the description of the formal and material conditions of phenomena, Deleuze now opposes the Leibnizian difference between actualization and realization or between the virtual and the possible. Deleuze can thus propose a new figure for transcendental empiricism—what he calls “Leibnizian transcendental philosophy.” Here is a new rupture in Deleuze's thought: the affirmation of two different worlds, one of the possible and its realization, the other of the virtual and its actualization. For Kant, Deleuze substitutes Leibniz, who allows him to think the virtual and the possible as parallel planes of the transcendental, and, thus, of a transcendental that is already rooted in the transcendent use of sensibility. With Leibniz, Deleuze avoids the impasse of transcendental idealism: the conditioned is not larger than its condition because the virtual does not exist on the same plane as the possible. With Leibniz, empiricism acquires two planes of the transcendent use of sensibility, that of the realization of the possible and that of the actualization of the virtual.

This last model of transcendental empiricism is very significant for the third part of our study. It is evident in Deleuze's return to literature. After his book on Leibniz, Deleuze abandoned questions about cinema and painting in order to grant a privileged position to the literary work of art. This is the case with the text on Beckett in 1992 and the studies published in *Essays Critical and Clinical* in 1993. Among these final texts on literature, we have focused on “Bartleby, or the Formula” and Deleuze's essay on Melville's “Bartleby the Scrivener.”

Literature, after *The Fold*, becomes a solitary experimentation with the characters who inhabit the real as realization of possible worlds on the edge of their proper impossibility. The immanence of a life is played at each instant in the immanence of a world that ceases to be possible. Literature is this

melee [*corps à corps*] of each character with all the figures of the impossible (the impossibility of writing, the impossibility of choosing, the impossibility of moving in a space, and the impossibility of even speaking).

We have distinguished this last concept of the impossible from the other impossible that Deleuze presented in his texts on Kafka and Bene as that which opens up possibilities. In these works, the impossible does not contain possibilities, but in its impossibility, it creates possibilities beyond itself, as divergent series. The impossible exists alongside the space of the possible and it creates other possibilities. It disjoins the possible, and makes it possible as a divergent series. The impossible is thus the very condition of possibility, the disjointed condition of all the possible. Deleuze posits the impossible as the condition of something else, itself possible. It's because it is impossible for Kafka to write in his own language that he creates a minor language. It's because Bene makes a text impossible, through the amputation of its content, that he creates a new staging of this text. In the Kafka book, creation is not only the effect of a set of impossibilities, but also the production of these impossibilities. And here in question is a concept of the impossible that is very different from the one we find in *Bartleby's* formula. In Kafka, Deleuze aims to think the conditions that produce an unheard-of literature, a minor literature, as expression of resistance to a major language, to juridical, economic, and bureaucratic powers/capacities. As an act of resistance, minor literature is always a battle; it is always a confrontation with limits. In quotidian resistance, this battle only produces the possible, that is, small re-equilibrations of forces in conflict. This concept of the impossible is central in the approach to the concept of "minor literature." The impossible that is in play there is the nonpossibility of being, and it's the absence of all possibility. This absence is also performative; it is first an event of language. And this, precisely, is the act of creation. In the Kafka book, creation is the invention of the new through transgression of an impossibility or through minorization of this same impossibility. The impossible is an element of language itself. The impossible: logics of pragmatic presuppositions, rules of interlocution, and assemblages of subjectivation. This is why literature is the laboratory par excellence of this impossible. It's with literature that one posits the impossible as exhaustion of language. And it's also with literature that one creates new possibilities. If the impossible has a metaphysical allure, it's as process of the self-implosion of language itself. The Kafka book may be understood as a solution, the literary solution of the impasse resolved by *Anti-Oedipus*, to wit: how can one go past the definition of the real as the unconscious and the definition of desire as lack? How can one go beyond psychoanalysis and affirm a positive and productive real?

It's in *Superpositions*, in Bene's theater, that we witness the beginning of a new modal configuration of a theory of literary art, an art of power/capacity

[*puissance*] against power [*pouvoir*]. According to Deleuze, Bene is an author who creates new potentialities in the original texts on which he performs an amputation of elements of power. In *Superpositions*, Deleuze speaks only of “power/capacity” and “potentiality.” However, this concept of power/capacity or potentiality, between the possible and the virtual, will be abandoned in favor of the clear affirmation of two strata of the real: a possible and a virtual. If Kafka is the author of the real without the possible or the virtual, Bene is the author of the idea of potentiality through minorization that contains in itself the mixture of these two planes that have not yet been defined. Bene thus represents the first step of this new aesthetic of the possible. The essay on Bene, although inserted in the same lineage as Kafka’s, that is, although affirming the real and the procedure of minorization of the dominant real, speaks to a period of impasse. This is a period where Deleuze needs to go further in this asphyxiating real, to affirm it as a different positivity of the virtual and yet as an impossible for which he did not find a complete formulation until *The Fold*.

*Superpositions*, however, is a book where Deleuze is confronted with an impasse: How does one make actual a virtuality that inhabits an asphyxiated reality, without falling into Aristotelian power/capacity [*puissance*] or the possible that he had so long criticized as a bad image of the nonactual?

The concept of the impossible that Deleuze formulates with Leibniz is found especially in “The Exhausted” and “Bartleby, or the Formula.” There, the impossible becomes a limit situation, with no exit, a pure positing, an ultimate and final positing. In the Bartleby text, Deleuze does not make the impossible the pathway to creation. Here, the impossible only produces the impossible. The formula is the positing of this first impossibility as the performance of pure impossibility, of impossibility in itself. “From the moment he says I WOULD PREFER NOT TO (collate), he is no longer *able* to copy either” (CC 70), that is, “the effect of the formula-block is not only to impugn what Bartleby prefers not to do, but also to render what he was doing impossible, what he was supposed to prefer to continue doing” (CC 70). The formula destroys the two possibilities of the act of preferring: the preferred is also the non-preferred. “In short, the formula that successively refuses every other act has already engulfed the act of copying, which it no longer even needs to refuse” (CC 71).

The impossible in *Kafka* is a concept for thinking creation, whereas in the Bartleby text it is that which dissolves every act of creating. Despite the parallelism that Deleuze draws between Kafka and Melville, Melville’s story is never presented as the expression of a minor literature and Bartleby is not the laboratory for understanding what Melville’s constraints are, and what the conditions of his literary procedure are. The impossible in question in the Bartleby text is thus a concept belonging to another domain. It is not



the expression of limits that impede new possibilities. Melville is indeed the writer of a new nation, of a nation of émigrés, of multiple languages, and of a nation of universal fraternity. The impossible thus is no longer a political concept. On the contrary, it bears on what Deleuze calls “fabulation,” which belongs to another aesthetic problem, that of the relation, not to power [*pouvoir*], but to truth.

It’s on the basis of the definition of the possible that Deleuze distinguishes the figure of the exhausted from that of the fatigued in Beckett. The fatigued only exhausts his realization; he is the impossibility of realizing, thus leaving open the possible in itself. He exhausts, to use Deleuze’s formulation, the “subjective” possible. The exhausted, for his part, is the one who exhausts the very possibility of the possible; that is, he exhausts the “objective” possible. He impossibilizes all realization, and he creates both the impossibilization and the impossible itself.

Bartleby and Beckett are thus two creators of the impossible. They exist in the originary state of nothingness, given that, as we have seen, according to Deleuze, exhaustion is primary in relation to the possible, which is always a possible of realization, one that arrives only with realization. In the originary state of nonpreference, the possible is always already exhausted, and hence with no possible realization. Bartleby’s logic of nonpreference and Beckett’s logic of exhaustion think nothingness as impossibility or the exhaustion of realization as activation for nothing. Before any realization, before any possible, there is only exhaustion. The expression “I gave up before birth” from Beckett’s “I Gave Up Before Birth” becomes, as Deleuze says, “Bartleby’s Beckettian formula” (CC 154).

Beckett’s formula, “I gave up before birth,” and Bartleby’s “I prefer not to” express another logic beyond every possible. A logic as the renunciation of all preference and all possibility. Bartleby’s activity is expressed by what one finds in “The Exhausted”: “one remains active, but for nothing” (CC 153). If Bartleby renounces obeying the orders of his boss, it’s not through inertia or passivity, but through an activity of not-doing, and through an action exhausted for nothing.

How then should we classify the impossible within this tortured thought on literature? And how should we classify the impossible as the paradoxical center of the final version of the program of a transcendental empiricism? It’s in “Bartleby; or, the Formula” that the impossible is thought up to the limit. Bartleby is the crystal character, a totally exhausted possible, that is, the impossible crystal. There is nothing more to realize; all possibles have been exhausted. The crystal is not death; rather, it is the complete actualization of all the virtual. It’s the ultimate figure of transcendental empiricism: this coincidence between the condition and the conditioned, and between the field of the sensible and the field of the judgment of taste. Bartleby is the one

who prefers not to write, because he has become himself in the nothingness of experience, and in the experience of himself as character of a story he refuses to write, thus cancelling the very condition of every story. *Bartleby* is the symmetrical inverse of Proust: the latter is confronted with the impossibility of being a writer and his work is the infinite story of this impossibility of being a writer. *Bartleby* absorbs, within his impossibility of writing, his work that itself will write this same impossibility. The result, in Proust, is that the character blends with the narrator and the two of them are the work itself; whereas in *Bartleby*, he can only be a character who, were he to become a Proustian narrator, would cancel his proper work through the decision not to write. From Proust to Beckett, an entire metaphysics of the virtual, of the possible, of the actual, of potentiality, of the impossible as crystal, and of the exhausted possible, can now, for the first time, be speculatively enunciated as the unique movement of thought—and always in such a way as to push to the limit the violence that every work of art produces on thought.

In this movement of a literature of the sublime of the faculties in the book on Proust, of the masochistic virtual in *Masochism*, of the actual in Kafka, of power/capacity in Bene, of a literature of the impossible as expressed by *Bartleby*, and of the exhaustion of the possible in Beckett, Deleuze always renews his program of transcendental empiricism. Each literary author offers him a new formula for his proper program: the involuntary exercise of the faculties, the productive imagination of suspended desire, the writing machine plugged into the real-actual, the amputation of the real, minorization, the prefer-not-to, the exhaustion of the possible.

There remains a final domain in this vertiginous recapitulation of the margins of Deleuze's thought about literature: the fundamental concept of life. This book is constructed on the hypothesis that life is, above all, thought by Deleuze in terms of the concepts of the event and the assemblage.

We have followed the archaeology of these two concepts. The concept of the event first arises cautiously in *Difference and Repetition* and then becomes the theoretical center of *The Logic of Sense*. It is completely absent in the books on Proust and Sacher-Masoch. But it's only with the concept of the assemblage that life is transformed into an operative literary concept. In this sense, the third part of *Proust and Signs*, published in 1973, marks a revolution in Deleuze's thought. It's the first point of application of the literary question of the concept of the assemblage. This third part thus must be read as a first anticipation of the philosophy of Nature that will serve as the ground of *Kafka*, published two years later. This book, perhaps the most fundamental that Deleuze (with Guattari) wrote on the nature of certain literary texts, is an immense theory of writing as assemblages of a community. Here, Deleuze says that the assemblage is "the object par excellence of the novel" (K 81; trans. modified).

It was in order to escape the concept of the event that Deleuze constructed the concept of the assemblage. He sensed the need to break with the psychoanalytic universe that had furnished him with concepts like the fantasy or Oedipus. He wanted to include a pragmatic dimension in the problem of expression, as well as to affirm an immanence of the real, a univocity of being without the symbolic or the imaginary. The assemblage is thus presented as double, at once as the expressed of the real and as production on the real. Everything is real because everything is relation of forces, demarcation of territories—in a word, political.

The critique of psychoanalysis in *Anti-Oedipus* led Deleuze (and Guattari) to a theory of literature without the concepts of the “imaginary,” the “symbolic,” “structure,” and the “phantasm,” that is, without all the instruments that organized Deleuze’s approach to literature in the 1960s.<sup>1</sup> Is it not possible, then, to think that if the concept of the *assemblage* replaced the concept of the *event*, this was a way of replacing the Lacanian model of sense, and all its concepts of the symbolic, imaginary and real, with another model? Against the concept of the event, still associated with the concept of the phantasm, the theory of the assemblage would thus arise as the affirmation of a single and sole dimension, the real, immanence. And the fact that the assemblage is double, assemblage of enunciation and machinic assemblage, signifies that this refutation was made point by point. The dimension of the collective enunciation was the site of the negation of the imaginary (either as the theory of faculties or as the phenomenology of the imagination); the dimension of the machinic was the effacement of the sphere of the symbolic, of relations of the law and the functioning of desire. To Lacan, to Freud, and to Lévi-Strauss (and to the event), Deleuze now opposes the assemblage as the real, a collective and machinic real, as production of desire. We are now faced with a new way of thinking literature: a political, machinic, and experimental paradigm.

It’s only within a theory of machines as theory of nature that the assemblage occurs. And this theory arises only in a precise period, between *Anti-Oedipus* and *A Thousand Plateaus*. It seems to us that *A Thousand Plateaus* constitutes a specific, different universe from that of *Anti-Oedipus*. First, *A Thousand Plateaus* introduces, within the theory of assemblages, a thought of strata and of territory. This allows Deleuze to formulate the thesis that art begins with mechanisms of the delimitation of a territory (birdsongs, colors of fish, botanical tropisms). Also, *A Thousand Plateaus* is the only moment when Deleuze thinks about several domains of art, not reducing his analysis to that of literature. For the first time, he formulates an enlarged experimentation of thought, one that concerns an artwork and one that thinks the idea of art equally in the domains of music, painting, and cinema. *A Thousand Plateaus* perhaps constitutes the necessary moment of the systematization of perspectives opened by *Kafka*, which led Deleuze to the books on Francis

Bacon and cinema, which he published immediately thereafter. It's as if Deleuze had to go through this method of stratification of the forms of life in literature in order to enlarge his theoretical field to domains such as cinema, theater, or music.

It's thus not surprising that the concept of the assemblage disappears after *A Thousand Plateaus*. It hardly functions in the cinema books, and only to describe montage. Afterwards, it will only be a question of the event. *A Thousand Plateaus* thus constitutes the platform for a new, and final, change in Deleuze's thought. It prepares the way for *The Fold*, the great book on the return of the event, purified of its psychoanalytic connotations. In this sense, the most representative text in *Essays Critical and Clinical*—the last great book on the literary question—is without doubt the essay on Bartleby. His formula expresses an inverted Leibnizianism. It is the pure mechanism of the negative incorporation of the event, of an event that is actualized as non-event or the event of the no. This nonactuality [*non-effectivité*] of the event is the reprise of the text on Masoch from 1967, where the rites of suspension become fictional figures par excellence. But now, literature is a disruptive experience of the event itself, either in its pure unactuality [*ineffectivité*] or in its infinite contract-suspense.

Art becomes fabulation, the invention of existences that subsist for themselves, as monuments, and that, themselves, enter into delirium, encountering speeds, and intensities. Such is the case with Bartleby, who inhabits his own formula, like a world that is impossible for himself. And it's also the case with Beckett's characters who, on the stage, have visions and auditions, have variations of intensity and exhaust all the possible as their proper mode of existence. Literature is the capture of the force of life as countereffectuation of events. Art is also the creation of a life that holds together all alone, and which, for itself, captures the intensity of the immanence of life. And it's through the explication of this mode of capturing life that Deleuze arrives at his ultimate program: the philosophy of the spirit. For the spirit, defined in *What Is Philosophy?* as "soul," "force," and "form in itself," is that which, in thought, manages to survey/fly over [*survoler*] chaos, to render it sensible, to cut/compose chaos in order to make it become a chaoide or a compound of affects and percepts. Spirit is the inorganic life of thought, the microbrain as pure auto-contemplation (of itself) without consciousness. The last figure of literary art in Deleuze thus rejoins the last figure of transcendental empiricism. Art becomes a veritable transcendental exercise, for it is at once cerebral experimentation (instead of faculties, Deleuze now proposes the brain, the micro-brain) as thought and artistic creation of a life, a life that, in its immanence, is the untimely positing of a people who are missing. Transcendental empiricism as the inorganic exercise of the brain and the positing of the impossible.

We now understand that the program of transcendental empiricism as research into absolute immanence—perhaps the only program that has “surveyed/over-flown” (should we say “haunted”?) all the changes in Deleuze’s thought—must find a final formulation. With the figure of the brain as spirit or form in itself, Deleuze makes the formal conditions or the conditions of possibility coincide with the real conditions of thought. Art and thought join one another as creation, the first as creation of sensations, and the second as creation of concepts. Thought has its genesis in an immanent spirit, a spirit as “form in itself” that makes the impossible sensible. And art is precisely this spiritual creation of impossibles. If, as we have seen, Deleuze himself claims that he has always been interested in vitalism, it is in this pure immanence, in the spirit as pure contemplation without consciousness, sensation in itself, that he comes to find, as if he were himself a Bartleby, his final formula: “Immanence: a Life . . .” Immanent life is thus at once a life as inorganic spiritual life, pure image in contemplation of itself, and a life as that which art produces in the name of a people who are missing.

What has thus happened with Deleuze is that he has become his own conceptual persona. And we, as readers of his philosophical oeuvre, which presents itself as a science-fiction novel, we have seen him legending *in flagrante delicto*.

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We began this book by taking up a question of Jacques Rancière concerning the existence of a Deleuzian aesthetics. Our study has attempted to respond to such a question but only as regards the literary art. We can only agree with Rancière when he shows us that Deleuze can only fall into a theory of *aisthesis*, which becomes an ontology of forms of the incarnation of the sensible as art. However, it must be stressed that, according to Deleuze, this return to a theory of *aisthesis* is perhaps the only way to disrupt the Kantian division between an aesthetics of sensibility and an aesthetics of judgment. And, according to Deleuze, some of the fundamental elements of contemporary art itself are what force us to a similar solution. What one finds, from Proust to Kafka, and from Artaud to Melville and Beckett, is always the process of inscription of the aesthetic of judgment in the aesthetic of the sensible, in order to ground the transcendental in an ontology of the sensible. However, between the transcendental plane and the plane of the sensible, there are all the planes of incorporeal events, of assemblages of desire, of figures of the possible, of fabulative becomings, and of dissonances in the experience of the sublime—in short, the entirety of a life [*toute une vie*]. Deleuze’s literary aesthetics, if he has one, seeks only to trace the plane that can capture, within each work, this transversal cut of sensation and judgment, of the transcendental and the transcendent use of the sensible as slice of life. And this

transverse slice of sensation and judgment, which is at the same time work and life, constitutes, according to Deleuze, precisely the most experimental trait of contemporary literature.

### NOTE

1. The entire program of *Kafka* is stated in the following sentences: “We believe only in a Kafka *politics* that is neither imaginary nor symbolic. We believe only in one or more Kafka *machines* that are neither structure nor phantasm. We believe only in a Kafka *experimentation* that is without interpretation or significance” (K 7). And in this program, there can be no doubt as to its goal: it is the whole of the literary paradigms before *Anti-Oedipus*, all of Deleuze’s paradigms before he met Guattari, that Deleuze and Guattari are now refuting.



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