



Deleuze's Style

For over twenty years I have spent a good deal of my time reading books by Gilles Deleuze. They have often brought me great joy, and they continue to do so, even (or especially) after numerous rereadings. Where does this joy come from? It has something to do with what Deleuze calls style and the power of nonorganic life. In a 1988 interview Deleuze says:

Signs imply ways of living, possibilities of existence, they are the symptoms of an overflowing *{jaillissante}* or exhausted *{épuisée}* life. But an artist cannot be content with an exhausted life, nor with a personal life. One does not write with one's ego, one's memory, and one's illnesses. In the act of writing there's an attempt to make life something more than personal, to liberate life from what imprisons it.... There is a profound link between signs, the event, life, and vitalism. It is the power of nonorganic life, that which can be found in a line of a drawing, a line of writing, a line of music. It is organisms that die, not life. There is no work of art that does not indicate an opening for life, a path between the cracks. Everything I have written has been vitalistic, at least I hope so, and constitutes a theory of signs and the event. (PP 195–96/143)

An organism has died but a life endures. A way of writing, a way of thinking, a way of living—a style. What is that style? What is the nature, shape and movement of that unfolding line of signs and events? Deleuze remarks, “My ideal, when I write about an author, would be to write nothing that could fill him with sadness, or if he is dead, that

would make him weep in his grave: think *about* the author on whom you are writing. Think about him so hard that he can no longer be an object, and likewise so that you cannot identify with him. Avoid the double shame of the scholar and the familiar. Return to an author a little of that joy, that energy, that amorous and political life that he knew how to give and invent" (D 142/119). This is a tribute in the present tense to the joy, the energy, and the life of the event that continues to take place in those works that bear the name Deleuze.

The Imperceptible

Clément Rosset relates that a reader of *Difference and Repetition* once remarked to him, "I have the impression of eating a cracker that lacks butter. It's excellent, but it's dry" (89). This dryness (*sécheresse*) Rosset finds in all of Deleuze's early work (through *The Logic of Sense* and *Difference and Repetition*), a dryness that initially suffocates but eventually seduces readers through what it spares them: "Here, no tears, no emotion, no metaphysical shudders. . . . What characterizes Deleuze above all is a beautiful lack of enthusiasm" (Rosset 89). Rosset speaks of a "coldness" in Deleuze, an "'objectivity' quite indifferent to the content it examines" (89). When analyzing others' thought, says Rosset, Deleuze disregards the motives and goals that inspire the work and considers only whether the system of concepts coheres: "Deleuze tries to be indifferent to such affective 'significations,' like an anatomist concerned only about the articulations of the corpse he dissects" (90). Dryness, coldness, objectivity, indifference, the detached, clinical gaze of the forensic surgeon.

What Rosset astutely isolates here is the impersonality of Deleuze's style, the analytic rigor and ascetic sobriety of his thought. Deleuze himself, of course, values sobriety in other writers. To those who experiment with language through accretion, elaboration, and enrichment, Deleuze prefers Kafka, who accepts "the German language of Prague as it is, in its very poverty," and who goes "always further in deterritorialization . . . to the point of sobriety," making an "arid (*desséché*)" language "vibrate with a new intensity," or Beckett, who "proceeds through dryness (*sécheresse*) and sobriety, a willed poverty, pushing deterritorialization to the point that nothing remains but intensities" (K 34-35/19). Sobriety itself is not the goal, but only the means to a liberated intensity, a purification through elimination (how often Deleuze speaks of pure intensities, pure events, pure affects, pure images, and so on), an extraction of an abstract, vital line: "We

are trying to extract from love all possession, all identification, to become capable of loving. We are trying to extract from madness the life it contains, while hating the madmen who ceaselessly bring death to that life, turn it against itself. We are trying to extract from alcohol the life which it contains, without drinking: the great scene of drunkenness on pure water in Henry Miller. To do without alcohol, drugs and madness—that is becoming, becoming-sober, for a richer and richer life” (D 67/53).

What Deleuze eliminates in his writing is the personal—the anecdotal, memory-laden, intentional subject. The goal of writing, says Deleuze, is becoming-imperceptible: “The end, the finality of writing? Well beyond a becoming-woman, a becoming-black, -animal, etc., beyond a becoming-minoritarian, there is the final enterprise of becoming-imperceptible” (D 56/45). To be imperceptible “means many things . . . the (anorganic) imperceptible, the (asignifying) indiscernible and the (asubjective) impersonal,” and one aspect of becoming imperceptible is “to be like everybody else *{tout le monde}*” (MP 342/279), which in writing might mean to adopt an anonymous, conventional style. There are indeed many passages in Deleuze that seem to be indistinguishable at the level of form from the standard expository prose of academic philosophy, such as this brief excerpt randomly selected from *Difference and Repetition* (similar examples could be found in any of Deleuze's books): “Problems and their symbolic areas stand in a relationship with signs. It is the signs that ‘cause problems’ and are developed in a symbolic field. The paradoxical usage of the faculties—including, first of all, sensibility within the sign—thus refers to Ideas, which run through all the faculties and awaken them each in turn” (DR 213/164).

But such mimicry is a ruse, a means of divesting oneself of personality in order to instigate a nonpersonal individuation, an event that has the identity of a season, a battle, or a disease: an “effect,” the “Doppler effect,” the “Kelvin effect,” the “Kafka effect.” Deleuze's style often seems conventional, but a “Deleuze effect” plays through everything he writes, even when he writes with someone else. The nonpersonal individuation of events proceeds *between* things, and in his work with Guattari the Deleuze effect arises *between* the two writers, who combine “like two streams, two rivers. . . Félix and I, and many others like us, do not feel that we are exactly persons. Rather, we have an individuality of events” (PP 193/141).¹ Far from being anomalous creations, Deleuze's collaborative projects only make patent the interactive nature of all his works, in which something passes between Deleuze and the various writers with whom he thinks: “It suffices that something passes through, a current that alone has a proper name. Even when you think you're writing by yourself, it's happening with

someone else who can't always be named" (PP 194/141). The Deleuze effect is metamorphic, mutative, constantly altered through the interactions that produce it, yet possessed of a nonpersonal identity that unfolds in its complexity as it is generated.

What is the source of the Deleuze effect, that nonpersonal style which plays through his works? One obvious element of this style is vocabulary, the collection of idiosyncratic terms that populate the Deleuzian discursive universe. Here one finds traces of the coldness and austerity Rosset identifies in Deleuze, for few of these terms possess sensual, concrete specificity. Several have a mathematical provenance, the geometric figures of point (*aleatory point, singular point*), line (*line of continuous variation, line of flight, line of supple segmentation*), and plane (*plane of immanence, plane of consistency*) or surface, as well as such concepts as *series, axiomatic, singularity, numbering number, n dimensions, qualitative multiplicity, distribution*, and so on. Others are borrowed from various sciences (*rhizome, black hole*) and many, of course, from philosophy. Most are abstract: *difference/repetition, expression, explication/implication/perplication, individuation, quasi-cause, extra-being, univocity, affect, percept, functive, prospect, problem, movement, speed, event, modulation, redundancy, resonance, subjectification, the virtual*. Some, such as *diagram* and *map*, are themselves names for abstractions. Greek and Latin words appear from time to time—*Aion/Cronos, compars/dispar, haecceities, nomos/logos, spatium/extensum/extensio*—and lend a similar distanced, disembodied (incorporeal) aura to the writing. Even when a possibly tangible referent is invoked, it is often dematerialized through a problematic combination of terms—an *abstract machine, a desiring machine, a machinic assemblage, a body without organs, a melodic landscape, a rhythmic character* (although one might say as well, and possibly with greater justice, that the abstract is made sensible through these combinations—palpable, sensual, *real*). But perhaps it is finally the strangeness of the lexicon (*crowned anarchy, schiz-flow, becoming-animal*), the heterogeneity of the abstract terms and their sheer number that are most striking about Deleuze's diction: an abstract, incorporeal, alien vocabulary for a new foreign language.

The Leaking Egg

But words do not take us very far toward an understanding of Deleuze's style. As Deleuze notes, "[W]hile vocabulary in philosophy is one aspect of a style, since it entails now the invocation of new words, now the uncommon valorization of ordinary words, style is always a matter of syntax"

(PP 223/164). By “syntax” Deleuze means not simply sentence structure but also the general dispensation of the materials of thought, the trajectory of a line of argumentation or a sequence of ideas.² This, I believe, is the sense of his remark, “Style in philosophy is the movement of the concept” (PP 192/140). For Deleuze, the movement of the concept is both internal and external, as we know from *What Is Philosophy?*² Each concept refers to other concepts, “not only in its history but in its becoming or its present connections” (QP 24/19). And each concept is itself in motion, consisting as it does of inseparable elements traversed by a conceptual point: “The concept is in a state of *overflight* {*survol*} in relation to its components, ceaselessly traversing them according to an order without distance. It is immediately co-present in all its components or variations, at no distance from them, passing back and forth throughout them” (WP 26/20–1).

Consider, for example, *insomnia*, a relatively modest concept that Deleuze develops in *L'Épuisé*, his 1992 study of four of Beckett's dramas for television.³ The concept's components are generated from four basic elements: the posture of a character (the Dreamer) in Beckett's *Nacht und Träume*; an image of disembodied female hands interacting with the head of the immobile seated Dreamer; Blanchot's notion that sleep betrays the night; and the description from Kafka's “Wedding Preparations in the Country” of a bifurcated dreamer who sends his body to the country while remaining in bed. Deleuze establishes “the *consistency* of the concept, its *endoconsistency*” (QP 25/19) by first pointing out that in the Dreamer's rigid posture we see the figure of a waking dream. Then Deleuze extracts from Blanchot's fragment on sleep, night, and dreams in *L'Espace littéraire* the opposition of sleep to night and the notion of a dream that belongs to night as opposed to sleep. (The key passage in Blanchot that Deleuze does not cite is “If you lack sleep, in the end exhaustion {*l'épuisement*} infects you; this infection prohibits sleep, translates itself into insomnia” [*L'Espace* 281].) Next Kafka provides Deleuze with an account of a doubled dreamer, which occasions the key observation that “one dreams alongside insomnia {*on rêve à côté de l'insomnie*}” (E 100/CC 171). (One recalls here the paralogic of Deleuze's remark that the Proustian essence “appears *alongside* {*à côté de*}” the individual elements through which it plays [PS 194/162], or in *Anti-Oedipus* the statement concerning the whole and its parts that “we only believe in totalities that are *to the side* {*Nous ne croyons à des totalités qu'à côté de*}” [AO 50/42].) Finally, Deleuze reads Beckett's image of hands touching the Dreamer's head as an image of the dream of insomnia, “a dream of the mind {*un rêve de l'esprit*}, which must be made, fabricated” (E 101/CC 172). As Deleuze articulates the components of the concept, a certain consistency

emerges, a notion of a constructed, mental, nocturnal, waking dream. Over the components the oscillating point of the term “insomnia” “pass[es] back and forth” in “a state of *overflight*” (QP 26/20–21). And in the midst of this process of conceptual unfolding appear other interrelated concepts—*exhaustion*, the *possible*, the *image*—each indicating a line of movement inherent in the concept of insomnia that sends it beyond itself to other concepts.

The movement of the concept described in *What Is Philosophy?* is not dependent on the concept's mode of exposition. But there is also in Deleuze's writing a shape to the unfolding of concepts, a dramatic, dynamic form that is part of his style. Deleuze says that he tries to write in such a way that a page “flies off in all directions {*fuie par tous les bouts*}, and yet such that it is closed in upon itself like an egg” (PP 25/14). The egg, of course, plays an important role in Deleuze's treatment of individuation in *Difference and Repetition*; and in *Anti-Oedipus* and *A Thousand Plateaus* the Body without Organs is said to be an egg. The egg “is traversed by axes and thresholds, by latitudes, by longitudes, by geodesic lines, it is traversed by *gradients* that mark the becomings and the passages” (AO 26/19); “the full egg before the extension of the organism and the organization of the organs” is “defined by axes and vectors, by gradients and thresholds, by dynamic tendencies with mutations of energy, by kinematic movements with the displacement of groups, by migrations” (MP 190/153). The egg is implicated, or enfolded, difference, and in its unfolding we trace the passage from the virtual to the actual, from an initial differentiation (a set of “differential relations or virtual matter to be actualized” [DR 323/251]) through incipient individuation (an “intensive field”) and dramatization (“spatio-temporal dynamisms”) to the specific and organic differentiation whereby species characteristics and organic parts are given actual form.

Obviously, if the page is this kind of an egg, it necessarily “flies off in all directions,” moving along its various axes, thresholds, vectors, and gradients. But the page-egg is also “*bien fermée sur soi*,” closed in upon itself, an explicated entity that eventuates in a determinate form. The problem is to fashion a leaking egg, one that continues to flee even as it closes in on itself. One way of understanding this problem is in terms of the refrain, whose three aspects are the point, the circumambient space, and the line of flight. The refrain may provide a single point of order in a field of chaos; it may organize a stable domain around that point; or it may open a way out of that organized circle, “as though the circle itself tended to open onto a future, as a function of the working forces it shelters” (MP 383/311). These are “not three successive moments in an evolution,” but “three aspects of a single and same thing, the Refrain” (MP 383/312), yet they do trace a

drama that one can follow on the Deleuzian page. An incipient point of order—the definition of a term, the establishment of a binary opposition, a suggestive quotation, an image, an example—determines the gradient, threshold, or axis of individuation that the page will follow. As the implications of this initial point are developed, a structured territory begins to form, and the egg closes in on itself (although vacuoles of diverse conceptual components, virtual points of alternative individuations, remain suspended in the ovular protoplasm). Then something unexpected happens—a spark, a break, a crack, a leap—a line of flight opens onto the next page.

“In philosophy, it’s like in a novel,” says Deleuze; “you have to ask ‘What’s going to happen?’ ‘What happened?’ Except the characters are concepts, and the settings, the landscapes, are space-times. One is always writing to give life to something, to liberate life where it’s imprisoned, in order to trace lines of flight” (PP 192/140–41). Each page creates the drama of imprisonment and escape, of a territorializing systematization of an initial distinction, and a liberating zigzag toward a new terrain. Creation, Deleuze observes, entails “tracing one’s path between impossibilities. . . . It’s Kafka who explains it: the impossibility of a Jewish writer speaking in German, the impossibility of speaking in Czech, the impossibility of not speaking” (PP 182/133), yet from these impossibilities Kafka was able to fashion new possibilities for the use of the German language: “A creator is someone who creates his own impossibilities, and who creates the possible at the same time. . . . You have to work away at the wall, because without a set of impossibilities, you won’t have that line of flight, the exit that constitutes creation, that power of the false that is truth” (PP182–83/133). The page is a theater of created impossibilities and possibilities, a stage of self-imposed, perilous constraint and unanticipated freedom⁴—Houdini in straitjacket and chains miraculously escaping from his self-imposed bonds.

In *L'Épuisé*, for example, one can follow a sequence of escapes, initially modest but increasingly daring as the essay progresses. Deleuze opens with the following page-egg:

The exhausted [*l'épuisé*] is much more than the tired [*le fatigué*]. “It’s not just tiredness, I’m not just tired, despite the climb” [*Nouvelles et textes pour rien*, 128; *Stories and Texts for Nothing* 76]. The tired person no longer disposes of any possibility (subjective): hence he cannot realize the least possibility (objective). But possibility remains, because one never realizes all of the possible, one even causes it to be born to the extent that one realizes it. The tired person has only exhausted the realization, whereas the exhausted person exhausts all of the possible.

The tired can no longer realize, but the exhausted can no longer possibilize. "That the impossible should be asked of me, good, what else could be asked of me?" [*L'innommable* 104; *Three Novels* 338]. There is no more possible: a raging Spinozism. Does he exhaust the possible because he is himself exhausted, or is he exhausted because he has exhausted the possible? He exhausts himself in exhausting the possible, and inversely. He exhausts that which *is not realized* in the possible. He puts an end to the possible, beyond all tiredness, "in order to end yet again." (E 57–58/CC 152)

First we encounter a point of order—the opposition of *l'épuisé* and *le fatigué*—followed by a citation indicating the source of the opposition and perhaps justifying the distinction (although the innocuousness of the cited passage suggests a parody of the learned reference, a playful reading-along-with-Beckett rather than a demonstration of the judiciousness of the commentary). Then Deleuze performs a Ciceronian *partitio*, dividing *le fatigué* into its subjective and objective dimensions while generating the key terms *possibility* and *realization*. Two symmetrically balanced sentences contrast *le fatigué's* exhaustion of realization and *l'épuisé's* exhaustion of possibility, a second quotation punctuates the paragraph, and then a spark—"a raging Spinozism"—flashes from the page, an unexpected leap toward an outside (in this case a virtual vacuole unactualized in the essay). A closing treatment of the objective and subjective dimensions of *l'épuisé* echoes the opening discussion of *le fatigué*, a chiasmic play on various forms of the word "exhaustion" lending a Baroque air to the passage (somewhat unusual in Deleuze, no doubt inspired here by the Beckettian play of permutations that Deleuze later identifies as one means of exhausting the possible). The paragraph then ends with an ending, *l'épuisé* putting "an end to the possible," albeit only (in Beckett's words) "in order to end yet again."

By the paragraph's last sentence, the egg has closed in on itself, a structure has been individuated—a complex of symmetrically opposed clauses, sentences, and groups of sentences, interspersed with quotations and a scintillating fragment. "What just happened?" "What will happen next?" By no means has definitive closure set in, but neither is the way out self-evident. Only with the leap to the next paragraph is the line of flight revealed: "God is the originator or the totality [*l'ensemble*] of all possibility" (E 58/CC 152). With this unexpected move (who would have anticipated God?), new possibilities unfold, and the dimensions of the essay's organizational structure expand, the page-egg now including several paragraphs within it. A paragraph elaborating on the realization of the

possible is followed by paragraphs describing the exhaustion of the possible, the function of the combinatory in generating exhaustive permutations, and the role of language in such combinatories. As this section comes to an end, a more daring escape becomes necessary. How does one go beyond language when discussing a writer? Where can Deleuze go next? First he differentiates between language and a Beckettian metalanguage, "atomic, disjunctive, cut up, minced" (E 66/CC 156), *langue I*, then he invents a new possibility, a line of flight into a fresh domain for exhausting the possible, *langue II*, the voice that speaks the words. When in turn that section closes, a final, spectacular escape occurs with the disclosure of *langue III*, a language of anonymous space and pure images, the nature of which Deleuze details to the conclusion of the first half of the essay.

Water, Fire, and Air

If there is a repeating form to the movement of the Deleuzian concept, that movement is not at all uniform; it proceeds at variable speeds and in differing modes. One means of approaching those speeds and modes is through categories Deleuze fashions to characterize Spinoza's style. Deleuze notes that Spinoza is often said "to have no style, using as he does a very scholastic Latin in the *Ethics*. But you have to beware of those said to 'have no style'; as Proust noted, often they are the greatest stylists" (PP 224/165). In "Spinoza and the Three 'Ethics'" (in *Essays Critical and Clinical*), Deleuze elaborates on this observation, arguing that three coexisting elements make up the style of the *Ethics*. One's first impression of the *Ethics* is of "an incomparable power and serenity, passing and repassing through definitions, axioms, postulates, propositions, demonstrations, corollaries and scholia, bearing everything along in its grandiose course. It's like a river which now spreads out, and now divides into a thousand branches; now accelerates and now slows, but always affirming its radical unity" (CC 172/138). Yet in addition to this river of definitions, there is also a fiery sequence of scholia, polemical and combative, "like a broken, discontinuous, subterranean, volcanic chain, which at irregular intervals interrupts the chain of demonstrative elements, the great fluvial and continuous chain. Each scholia is like a lighthouse that exchanges signals with others, at a distance and across the flux of demonstrations. It's like a language of fire which is distinct from the language of the waters" (CC 181/146). Finally, there is an "aerial" *Ethics* which, though only manifest in part 5, is still virtually present throughout the entire work.

In part 5 Spinoza seems to proceed via a sequence of logical deductions, but the movement of his argument is so rapid, the leaps from point to point so great, that the chain of deductions breaks down and a new style emerges, a thought “in which signs and concepts vanish, and things begin to write by themselves and for themselves, as they leap across the intervals of space” (CC 186/150). No longer operating in the realm of concepts, Spinoza now speaks “pure, intuitive, direct percepts” (PP 224/165). Thus there are three books in the *Ethics*, a “river-book” of definitions, a volcanic “book of fire,” and “an aerial book, a book of light, which proceeds by lightning flashes” (CC 187/151).

With certain modifications and transmutations, the same schema may be applied to Deleuze. There is in Deleuze an *esprit de système*, the philosopher's love of the well-formed structure. Much of his work reads like an extended definition, a sequence of descriptions of interconnected terms whose nature, function, and relation are extensively detailed through a shifting play of discriminations, oppositions, similes, examples, and intertextual references. “It is the Planomenon, or the Rhizosphere, the Criterium (and still other names, according to the increasing number of dimensions). At n dimensions, one calls it the Hypersphere, the Mechanosphere” (MP 308/252). “One calls the *longitude* of a body the collection of particles belonging to that body in a given relation” (MP 313/256). “There is a mode of individuation very different from that of a person, of a subject, of a thing or a substance. We reserve the name *baecceity* for it” (MP 318/261). “And then there is an entirely different plane. . . . Thus, we call it the plane of Nature” (MP 326/266). A is B, X is Y, seldom has “is” (*est*) been used so often to create an “and” (*et*)!⁵ But unlike Spinoza, Deleuze does not generate definitions as components of arguments, demonstrations, and proofs, since for him philosophy involves the invention of concepts, not discussions, counterarguments, and responses to objections.⁶ His interest is less in defeating the opposition than in showing how concepts function, how they cohere, how they move.

And if there is in Deleuze an *esprit de système*, it is often directed toward objects that would seem to defy systematization. *The Logic of Sense* is a logic of *nonsense*, Francis Bacon a logic of sensation (and not even the sensation of the *corps vécu*, but that of the *corps sans organes*). *Anti-Oedipus* details the elaborate structural relationship between paranoid desiring machines, the cataleptic body without organs, and the schizophrenic nomadic subject. In Proust Deleuze finds a philosophy of essences and a taxonomy of signs, in Sacher-Masoch a clinical symptomatology and a theory of contracts and law. And even when Deleuze turns to other philosophers, it is to discover a

countersystem in their work, to take a transverse path through their thought, against the bias, commencing in the middle rather than with first principles—looking first at incorporeals rather than *ataraxia* (the Stoics), relations instead of sensations (Hume), faculties rather than a priori synthetic judgments (Kant), folds rather than monads (Leibniz), expression and bodies instead of substance, modes, and attributes (Spinoza). Finally, if Spinoza's stream of proofs and demonstrations flows with a calm, majestic serenity, Deleuze's river of definitions is more turbulent, full of eddies and whirlpools ("What interests me are . . . the retentions, the resonances, the headlong rushes, and all the larvae you find in a book" [PP 25/14]), the tone more intense. In *L'Épuisé* Deleuze says at one point of Beckett's exhaustion of words, "This second movement, very complex, is not without relation to the first" (E 67/CC 157), and in that simple aside, "very complex," we hear that intensity—the analyst's absorption with his object, his fascination at its functioning, his surprise at its intricacy, his cautionary respect for its seriousness ("don't take this lightly, dear reader; pay attention") mixed with the slightest touch of wry amusement.

If Spinoza's book of fire is isolated in the scholia of the *Ethics*, the Deleuzian counterpart is interspersed throughout his texts. We have already encountered this fire in *L'Épuisé* with the sentence "There is no more possible: a raging Spinozism." The fire is not that of a polemical or combative passage, as in Spinoza, but that of a flash of insight, a change in speed, a break, a gap. The distance between flashes varies from work to work, but no book is without them. Even the "dry" *Difference and Repetition* has its arresting moments when the abstract analysis shifts speed: "The entire world is an egg" (DR 279/216). "Difference is not negation, it is the negative, on the contrary, that is difference inverted, seen from below. Always the candle in the eye of the cow" (DR 303/235). "The embryo is a sort of phantasm of its parents. . . . Dreams are our eggs, our larvae or our properly psychic individuals" (DR 322/250). Sometimes it is a matter of a distant allusion ("a raging Spinozism"), at others, an unexpected image ("the candle in the eye of the cow"). At times, the flash develops slowly, culminating in an epigrammatic conclusion: "Sometimes the veins are folds of matter that surround living beings held in the mass, so that the marble tile is like a rippling lake full of fish. Sometimes the veins are innate ideas in the soul, like folded figures or powerful statues caught in the block of marble. Matter is marbled, the soul is marbled, in two different manners" (PL 6/4). At others, the spark leaps across microintervals, as in this cascade of appositives and exhortations describing imperceptibility: "What is needed is much asceticism, much sobriety, much creative involution: an English

elegance, an English fabric, blend in with the walls, eliminate the too-perceived, the too-much-to-be-perceived" (MP 342/279).

The "aerial" Spinoza emerges in part 5 of the *Ethics* when the geometric method gives way to "a method of invention that proceeds by intervals and leaps, hiatuses and contractions, like a dog searching for something rather than a reasonable man expostulating" (CC 185/149). The aerial Deleuze is most clearly evident at the culmination of his analyses, when a sequence of distinctions eventuates in the most abstract of observations. One thinks for example of Deleuze's treatment of the three forces in Bacon's paintings—the force that isolates a single figure within a structure, the force that couples pairs of figures in a relation of fact, and the force of separation that plays between the triptych's canvases—and of the climactic, ethereal evocations of that third force which makes possible "the separation of bodies in universal light, in universal color, which becomes the common fact of the Figures, their rhythmic being, second 'matter of fact' or Reunion that separates" (FB 56). Or one recalls Deleuze's description of Beckett's *langue III*, the pure image which is "not defined by the sublimity of its content, but by its form, that is, by its 'internal tension,' or by the force that it mobilizes in order to create the void or bore holes, loosen the grip of words, dry up the oozing of voices, disengage from memory and reason a small alogical image, amnesic, almost aphasic, now standing in the void, now shuddering in the open" (E 72/CC 159).

I would argue that much of the final chapter of *Foucault*, "Folds, or the Inside of Thought (Subjectivation)," is in this aerial mode, but above all the brilliant, cryptic paragraph on "absolute memory" and the self as a temporal fold. Here Deleuze opens with a reference to Leiris's "absolute memory" and then quickly ties it to the *hypomnemata* of the ancient Greeks. After briefly identifying memory as "the affect of self by self" (F 115/107), he leaps to Kant's characterization of time as "auto affection," at which point the tenuous links in the chain of association begin to break apart. Deleuze says that in part 5 Spinoza no longer speaks in concepts, or "new ways of thinking," but "in pure, intuitive and direct percepts," or "new ways of seeing and hearing/understanding (*d'entendre*)" (PP 224/165). Something similar takes place here, as Deleuze articulates the relationship between time and the self through the image of the fold: "But time as subject, or rather subjectification, is called memory. Not that short memory that comes afterward, and is opposed to forgetfulness, but the 'absolute memory' that doubles the present, that redoubles the outside, and which is made only with forgetfulness, since it is itself and ceaselessly forgotten in order to be remade: its fold in effect is confused with the unfold, because the one

remains present in the other as that which is folded. Only forgetfulness (the unfold) rediscovers that which is folded in memory (in the fold itself)" (F 115/107). It is as if thought at this point were taking place within and through the image, as if time, self, and memory were being directly and intuitively apprehended as folds—a speech not in concepts but “in pure, intuitive and direct percepts.”

Stuttering

Frequently Deleuze identifies style with stuttering, not so much stuttering in one's speech as making “language as such stutter” (CC 135/107). A great writer “is a foreigner in his own language: he does not mix another language with his own; he fashions *in* his language a foreign language that does not preexist it. To make language in itself cry, stutter, stammer, murmur” (CC 138/110). To fashion a foreign language in one's own tongue is to induce “a becoming-other of language, a minorization of that major language, a delirium that carries it away, a sorcerer's line that escapes the dominant system” (CC 15/5). And such a becoming is essentially syntactic: “Syntactic creation, style, such is the becoming of language: no creation of words, no neologisms have value outside the effects of syntax in which they are developed” (CC 15–16/5). Hence style in literature has a dual function: “It effects a decomposition or a destruction of the maternal tongue, but also the invention of a new language in the language, through syntactic creation” (CC 16/5). Deleuze cites Gherasim Luca and Beckett as exemplars of such syntactic creation. In his poem “Passionnement,” Luca disrupts the linguistic rules of paradigmatic selection and syntagmatic combination by creating inclusive disjunctions and reflexive combinations from the phrase “Je t'aime passionnement”: “Passionné nez passionnem je / je t'ai je t'aime je / je je jet je t'ai jetez / je t'aime passionnem t'aime” (CC 139/110). Here, “each word divides, but into itself (*pas-rats, passions-rations*) and combines, but with itself (*pas-passe-passion*)” (CC 139/110). Beckett, by contrast, works by accretion, adding words to the middle of phrases and sentences, while repeating them with slight alterations in exhaustive permutations.

One looks in vain for this kind of linguistic experimentation in Deleuze, but that is because style in philosophy, as opposed to literature, is determined by the movement of the concept, and if there is stuttering in Deleuze, it is a conceptual stuttering, a stuttering of thought itself. In *What is Philosophy?*, one of the characteristics of the modern “image of thought” is identified as “an ‘Incapacity’ (*Impouvoir*) of thought” which imparts a

specific movement to concepts: "As Kleist or Artaud suggests, it is thought as such that begins to snarl, squeal, stutter, speak in tongues, scream, which leads it to create, or to try to. And if thought searches, it is less in the manner of someone who makes use of a method than that of a dog that one would say is making uncoordinated leaps" (QP 55/55). One might argue that stuttering is fundamental to Deleuze's thought, in that paradox in his view is basic to the creation of concepts. The only constraint on the formation of concepts, says Deleuze, "is that these should have a necessity, as well as a strangeness, and they have both to the extent they respond to real problems. The concept is that which keeps thought from being a mere opinion, a view, a discussion, idle chatter. Every concept is necessarily a paradox" (PP 186–87/136). The oxymoron is the simplest form of paradox, a disjunctive synthesis through a conjunction of opposite terms, neither of which alone is adequate to express the idea in question. And as Deleuze shows in *The Logic of Sense*, no conjunction of opposites is stable and self-sufficient; each conjunction leads to another in an infinite regress. Often, Deleuzian definitions are explicitly oxymoronic (for example, the "waking dream" of insomnia), but we may take the oxymoron as a general figure for a way of thinking, a halting, obsessive, repetitive effort to name that which has no name (yet): "It's this, but it's also that; it's not this, yet it's not that either; it's like this, but it's also like this, and this, and this. . . ." Hence the frequent use of appositives in Deleuze, the proliferation of different names for the same thing (for example, "a becoming-other of language, a minorization of that major language, a delirium that carries it away, a sorcerer's line that escapes the dominant system" [CC 15/5]). Each term is juxtaposed to the preceding, each an apparent equivalent, but actually an addendum, an adjunct, a rider: "AND . . . AND . . . AND, stammering" (D 73/59).

There is also in Deleuze a conceptual stuttering between works, what we might call a "Proust effect." As Deleuze says in *Proust and Signs*, "Style is not the man, style is essence itself. . . . In truth, difference and repetition are the two inseparable and correlative powers of essence" (PS 62–63/48–49). In a great writer like Proust, "we say: it's the same thing, on a different level—but we also say: it's something else, but to the same degree" (PS 63/49). Concepts Deleuze develops in one book reappear in another, enter into new combinations, then dissolve and form further alliances and interconnections in a third. In each work, the concepts undergo a slight metamorphosis, as if each repetition of a concept were a mere approximation, an effort once again to give it a name, but also a discovery of something new in the concept that only emerges with its restatement in a different context. The body without organs is one thing in *Anti-Oedipus*, but considerably

more in *A Thousand Plateaus*, and something slightly different in *Francis Bacon*. Insomnia in *L'Épuisé* is a waking dream, but in "To Have Done with Judgment," it is a "dreamless slumber in which however one does not sleep" (CC 163/130). What we meet are themes in constant variation, or variations without themes, a ruminative, meditative differential repetition, halting, stammering, stuttering from work to work.

But the clearest instances of stuttering in Deleuze appear in those aerial passages when he strains to describe the ineffable—the Outside, pure light, sound in itself, and so on. Literary style, says Deleuze, involves not only the destruction of the mother tongue and the creation of a new syntax, but also a third aspect, that of pushing language "to a limit, to an outside or an underside consisting of Visions and Auditions which are no longer those of any language" (CC 16/5). "There is a painting and a music proper to writing, as the effects of colors and sonorities that rise above words. It's across words, between words, that one sees and one hears" (CC 9/lv). "Words paint and sing, but at the limit of the path they trace in dividing and combining. The words make silence. . . . Style is the economy of language. Face to face, or face to back, make language stutter, and at the same time carry language to its limit, to its outside, to its silence" (CC 142/113). Deleuze does not attempt to paint and sing through words, as do literary writers, but he does push language to its limits as he tries to say the unsayable and think the unthinkable. In *Difference and Repetition* Deleuze characterizes his transcendental empiricism as a disjunctive use of the faculties, repeatedly utilizing the same paradoxical figure: the *sentientium* is the insensible that the senses alone can experience; the *memorandum* is the immemorial that memory alone can remember; the *cogitandum* is the inconceivable that understanding alone can conceptualize, and so on. This figure recurs in all of Deleuze's discussions of the arts: the object of painting is to render visible invisible forces (FB 39); that of music, to render sonorous nonsonorous forces (MP 423/343); of cinema, to push the visible "to a limit which is at once invisible and yet can only be seen" and disclose a speech that "is at once, as it were, the unspeakable and yet what can only be spoken" (IT 340/260).

This is a conceptual stuttering basic to Deleuze's thought, and one that frequently forms the subject of the most aerial passages, those poetic flights in which Deleuze attempts to make palpable the insensible, the invisible, the inaudible, the unsayable through various devices—the combining of abstract nouns, concrete adjectives, and active, physical verbs, the use of arresting similes, metaphors, oxymorons, and so on—but above all through evocative, incantatory rhythms. At times the rhythms are

rough and muscular, as in this sequence of phrases from the final paragraph of *Foucault*: “Ce dehors informel, c’est une bataille, c’est comme une zone de turbulence et d’ouragan, où s’agitent des points singuliers, et des rapports de forces entre ces points” [This informal outside, it’s a battle, it’s like a zone of turbulence and of a hurricane, where singular points, and relations of forces between these points, move about] (F 129/121). At other times, the rhythms are quiet and self-effacing, like the subtle, complex pulsations and reverberations that play through *L’Épousé*’s description of visions and sounds imperceptible in ordinary language: “Des visions ou des sons, comment les distinguer?, si purs et si simples, si forts, qu’on les appelle *mal vu mal dit*, quand les mots se percent et se retournent d’eux-mêmes pour montrer leur propre dehors. Musique propre de la poésie lue voix haute et sans musique” [Visions or sounds, how can one distinguish between them? So pure and so simple, so strong, that one calls them *ill seen ill said*, when words pierce themselves and turn by themselves so as to show their own outside. Music proper to poetry read aloud and without music] (E 105/CC 173). But always in these invocations of the ineffable, one hears something of the shaman, the magician casting spells through a hypnotic musical cadence.

Most often when Deleuze discusses style, he is speaking about literary style, and it is only with difficulty that one teases out the implications of his remarks for an analysis of style in philosophy. Such an effort is necessary if one wishes to characterize Deleuze’s style, since in an important sense he is a philosopher and not a writer. As he and Guattari make clear in *What Is Philosophy?*, there is a basic difference between philosophy and literature, in that philosophers work with concepts whereas artists work with percepts and affects. Yet Deleuze also remarks elsewhere that “the affect, the percept, and the concept are three inseparable forces; they go from art to philosophy and from philosophy to art” (PP 187/137). Style in philosophy, he says, “is stretched toward three different poles: the concept, or new ways of thinking; the percept, or new ways of seeing and hearing/understanding; and the affect, or new ways of feeling. They’re the philosophical trinity, philosophy as opera: you need all three to *create movement*” (PP 224/165). Of all the arts, literature is closest to philosophy, for literature and philosophy share language as their common medium—and their common enemy. Deleuze admires writers who create a foreign language within their native tongue, but who do so only in an effort to push language beyond itself, to auditions and visions, percepts and affects, that form the outside of language. The longer Beckett wrote, says Deleuze, “the less he could put up with words” (E 103/CC 172). There is a similar impatience with language

in Deleuze, a desire to do as Beckett and “‘bore holes’ in the surface of language” (E 103/CC 172), to seek an outside of language, a silence proper to speech, that makes possible a thought like Spinoza’s in part 5 of the *Ethics*, a thought not of concepts but of percepts and affects, new ways of seeing, construing, and feeling, which form the outside of concepts, their inherent surface and limit. It is at the limits of language, at the edge of the ineffable, that philosophy and literature interpenetrate, that Deleuze and Beckett join forces as philosopher-writer and writer-philosopher.⁷

Who Is Deleuze?

“Style is the man,” says Buffon, but Deleuze says style is essence, event, becoming-imperceptible, effect. Is Deleuze’s style dry, cold, objective, austere? At times, yes—occasionally to such an extent that it is indistinguishable from an anonymous expository prose. And always it is impersonal. But there are at least three Deleuzes: the fluvial Deleuze of definitions and systems, absorbed, fascinated, amused by the structures he is creating; the fiery Deleuze of epigrammatic flashes, scintillating, arresting; and the aerial Deleuze of cryptic speculation, thought in percepts and affects, sensually abstract, poetic, incantatory. Style in philosophy is defined by the movement of the concept—its endoconsistency, auto-*survol*, and involvement with other concepts—and by the syntax of arguments, the unfolding of lines of thought. Each of the three Deleuzes moves at a different speed and in a different mode, but there is a repeated movement in the Deleuzian page-egg, from individuating point of actualization, through explicating structure, to mutating line of flight, a perpetual drama of created impossibilities and unexpected possibilities, of self-imposed constraint and miraculous escape. And always there is stuttering, a halting, lurching movement from appositive to appositive (and, and, and), a differential repetition of themes in constant variation, a conceptual stuttering at the limits of language and thought.

In *What Is Philosophy?*, Deleuze and Guattari say that the true subjects of thought are not the philosophers who sign their works but the conceptual characters (*personnages conceptuels*) through which the thought unfolds: “Conceptual characters are the ‘heteronyms’ of the philosopher, and the philosopher’s name is the simple pseudonym of his characters” (QP 62/64). Who are Deleuze’s conceptual characters? One would be Houdini, the magician/illusionist obsessed with madness and death (“As soon as you begin thinking, you necessarily confront a line where life and death, reason and

madness, are at stake, and that line draws you on" [PP 141/103]), constantly binding himself in straitjackets and chains, imprisoning himself in coffins, boxes, and jars, and escaping from behind a screen, unseen. A secret identity, hidden, imperceptible. Another would be Alice, the naive, prim girl of metamorphic body and perpetual good sense, exploring with bemused equanimity the surfaces of Wonderland nonsense—but a mutating Alice, splitting into Sylvia and Bruno (Bruno, the lefthanded, stuttering child). A Stoic, empiricist character, but above all, a humorous identity. ("In all great writers you find a humorous or comic level that coexists with the other levels, not just seriousness, but even something shocking (*l'atroce*)" [PP 107/145].) And then there's Professor Challenger, Deleuze/Guattari's spokesman in "The Geology of Morals," the mad scientist who conceives of the earth as a living being and travels to lost worlds of untimely coexistence, the uncouth professor on the fringes of the academy, but also a two-headed, simian animal-man subject to monstrous becomings. "The destiny of the philosopher is to become his conceptual character or characters" (QP 62/64). So who is Deleuze?

Style him Alice H. Challenger.