

Describing “what happens when Deleuze reads other philosophers, as well as works of art” (256), Jean-Jacques Lecercle (2002) emphasizes throughout his study the compound methodology at work in Deleuze’s constructivist project: “by extracting a problem and constructing a concept, often against the grain of the text...*he reads for style*. He extracts the problem and constructs the concept that will express the specific philosophical gesture of the text, its philosophical and literary style” (*Deleuze and Language* 256). This perspective considers not only the developments presented specifically in unique ideas throughout Deleuze’s oeuvre—concepts proper that he explicitly identifies, including the Refrain (*Thousand Plateaus*) and the Fold (*Leibniz and the Baroque*)—but the implied (or more properly, “immanent”) problem therein, as well. Like Deleuze’s reading of Spinoza or Proust, for example, Lecercle’s task “involve[s] constructing language in Deleuze as a *problem*, in the strict sense that he gives to this concept” (3), in order to establish the contributions of Deleuze and Guattari’s “new pragmatics” beyond the respective contexts of linguistics and literature. A subtle yet integral component of studying Deleuzian methodology thus entails attending to the situation or conditions addressed by the unique concept respective to the discursive context, beyond “working with” as opposed to composing “discourse on” an object of study. Deleuze explicitly instructs on this point: “Philosophers introduce new concepts, they explain them, but they don’t tell us, not completely anyway, the problems to which those concepts are a response. ...The history of philosophy, rather than repeating what a philosopher says, has to say what he must have taken for granted, what he didn’t say but is nonetheless present in what he did say” (*Negotiations* 136).

This remark provokes a line of inquiry for my project, while also alluding to the distinctions of disciplines (or apparatus, *épistémè*) that Deleuze elaborates with Guattari (1994) in *What is Philosophy?*. Describing Philosophy, Science, and Art as creative disciplines in parallel, they explain that “constructivism has two qualitatively different complementary aspects: the creation of concepts and the laying out of a plane” (36); in this view, “Analogous problems are posed for each plane” (216). Consequently, the disciplinary orientation of any endeavor toward “knowledge production” takes on fundamental importance, beyond implications for methodology; my approach is directly informed by and proceeds from this point, concerning Deleuze’s constructivist method and oeuvre. For philosophy, they explain, “the plane of immanence requires a creation of concepts” (42); distinguishing moreover, “The problem of philosophy is to acquire a consistency without losing the infinite into which thought plunges...*To give consistency without losing anything of the infinite* is very different from the problem of science, which seeks to provide chaos with reference points, on condition of renouncing infinite movements and speeds and of carrying out a limitation of speed first of all” (42). The contrast between encounters *with* and limitations *of* chaos (Life) evokes the first component of a Deleuzian treatment of Art, the discipline that “creates the finite that restores the infinite” (197). A problem (defined philosophically herein) emerges thus within the unique concepts that Deleuze creates pertaining to, or more precisely by his *working with* particular art forms—overall opposing transcendental perspectives or treatments, as in representation, which he reiterates in his fundamental maxim: “experiment, never interpret” (*Dialogues* 48). Within this context, for example, Brian Massumi (2002) posits that “Deleuze’s logic of seriality and potential is what allows him to make sense of asignifying expression. In turn, it is the idea of asignifying expression that allows him to argue that speech and gesture can be literally...creative: ontogenetic; adding to reality” (*A Shock to Thought* 24). The notion of “asignifying expression” indeed describes the area of study undertaken here, relating directly to Deleuze’s description of literary novels’ functioning though “compounds of sensations” and “relations of counterpoint” (*WP* 188)—analogous to color in painting (182) and to vibration, motif, and theme in music (189).

Presenting a study of Deleuze’s constructivist methodology for philosophical discourse, then, will involve an “experiment” with the object of study beyond a simple or subordinate relation. Ronald Bogue (2003) indicates the latter instance, in which art forms would (merely) catalyze concept formation: “In *Difference and Repetition*, Deleuze says that genuine thought only begins with an external violence to thought, a jolt that forces thought out of its ordinary habits. That jolt is a fundamental encounter, a disequilibrium or deregulation of the senses ‘that can only be sensed’... All thought, then, begins in sense experience, in the becoming-other of the senses” (178). Recognizing the parallel relation of philosophy and art regardless of sequence, most scholarship—from André Pierre Colombat (1997) and Bogue to Lecercle and Simon O’Sullivan (2008), for example—has noted the prominent topic of *style* as a conjunction of both disciplines. Like Bogue later notes, Colombat conveys this salience, while evoking the further extent beyond the encounter as catalyst to thought: “the power of a concept, of a thought, and especially of a literary work can likewise be gauged by its ability to force us to think. The Deleuzian concept of style then enables us to better understand how a philosophical or a literary text does or does not affect us or, ultimately, force us to think” (590).¹ Any subsequent treatise must necessarily expound both the significance of Art for Deleuze’s project and the creative quality of constructivism, in order to present a methodological “procedure” as I seek to do. Alternatively phrased as the “three poles of philosophical style,” this compound perspective focalizes the main objects of study, concept and problem, in concrete rather than abstract terms; emphasizing “the philosophical trinity, philosophy as opera,” Deleuze identifies “concepts,

¹ Ronald Bogue, *Deleuze on Music, Painting, and the Arts*. 2003: 193-4. André Pierre Colombat, “Deleuze and the Three Powers of Literature and Philosophy: To Demystify, to Experiment, to Create.” *South Atlantic Quarterly*, 96, 3. (1997): 579-97.

or new ways of thinking; percepts, or new ways of seeing and construing; and affects, or new ways of feeling” (*Negotiations* 165). Within this reflexive context appears a distinct guide for constructivist discourse with art, pertinent for humanities work; Deleuze explains that “concepts don’t move only among other concepts..., they also move among things and within us: they bring us new percepts and new affects that amount to philosophy’s own nonphilosophical understanding. And philosophy requires nonphilosophical understanding just as much as it requires philosophical understanding” (164). Incorporating the unique features of art into the invention of concepts thus “makes expressionism the counterpart of constructionism” (*Negotiations* 147)—an intersection at which literary studies as a humanities discipline is positioned, apposite for proceeding with Deleuzian methodology by connecting theory and aesthetics. Presenting a research trajectory for scholars, in this case, Deleuze asserts that “philosophy is born or produced outside by the painter, the musician, the writer, each time that the melodic line draws along the sound, or the pure traced line colour, or the written line the articulated voice. ...it is necessarily produced where each activity gives rise to its line of deterritorialization” (*Dialogues* 74).

Considering the full implications of this perspective, my project proceeds with two primary tasks: fundamentally explicating Deleuze’s constructivist methodology for inventing philosophical concepts through encounters with art; additionally, demonstrating this “procedure” of working with literary texts, in order to illustrate the disciplinary relevance and to explore the philosophical problem immanent within a Deleuzian concept pertaining to literature. On the latter point, I undertake the problem addressed by Deleuze’s prevalent treatment of “asignifying expression,” which he indirectly articulates in a precedent to *Essays Critical and Clinical*: “Writing is very simple. Either it is a way of reterritorializing oneself, confirming to a code of dominant utterances, to a territory of established states of things.... Or else, on the other hand, it is becoming...something other than writing. Not every becoming passes through writing, but everything which becomes is an object of writing, painting or music. Everything which becomes is a pure line which ceases to represent whatever it may be” (*Dialogues* 74). Given Deleuze’s highly productive work with literature as “machinic assemblage” throughout his oeuvre, this is the concept that addresses an immanent problem of expression and deterritorialization; as Lecercle emphasizes, “Deleuze’s theory of language is of extreme potential interest to literary critics. The Deleuze event, being so clearly involved with language, enables us to decide that the highest task of literature is not to represent the event...but to *be* the event itself” (130). Thus, on the one hand, the literary “machinic assemblage” serves as exemplary concept for the goal of a project explaining Deleuze’s method.

Given the complementary relation of constructivism and expression—noted in the “philosophical trinity” of concepts, percepts, and affects—an additional problem immanent within this concept concerns the nature of encounters. I will contend the paramount importance of this implication for scholars: whether our work functions to “capture” or limit the aesthetic object of study; or to invent (or innovate) in response to the catalyst of “philosophical gestures” new ways of thinking, seeing, and feeling. The latter is the “affective encounter” that Deleuze continually accentuates, with regard to Spinoza; thus we must not take lightly the implications for literary studies when Deleuze remarks how in certain authors, “the reader discovers admirably that they have written the novel of Spinozism” (*WP* 67). This is the second problem to investigate: a unique mode of reading and scholarship (thought) is necessary in order to create concepts through affective encounters with such novels—machinic assemblages with functions and forces of expression, lines of acceleration and aesthetic figures of percepts and affects, the “nonphilosophical” movements of sensation. As an analogous model, Simon O’Sullivan reflects that his *Thought Beyond Representation* is “about exploring the conjunction Deleuze and Art...[in order] to produce an encounter between Deleuze’s conceptual resources and the expanded field of modern and contemporary art (and the methodological field of art history in general)” (153). My project similarly seeks to address an area hitherto overlooked by the field, one productive for working with varying aesthetic forms of expression within a humanities discipline concerned with creating new (forms of?) knowledge. Likewise echoing Lecercle’s methodology, O’Sullivan strives “to explore, via Deleuze, another way of thinking art, beyond the ‘horizon of the signifier’, beyond textuality, but *not* through a return to traditional aesthetic theory [...]” (4)—rather, through “a series of thought experiments[:] different attempts at bringing Deleuze into contact with different milieus” (3). As both explication and demonstration of a particular literary concept and problem, the tasks I have undertaken are guided by the notion of “resonance”—which Bogue, Lecercle, and O’Sullivan all note between Philosophy and Art; and which Deleuze uses to describe both the aforementioned conjunction of *style* (in *Proust and Signs*) as well as the “consistency” of a concept with heterogeneous features (in *What is Philosophy?*). This “conductive” perspective suggests a promising approach for exploring the problem of asignifying expression and deterritorialization within the concept of literature as *machinic assemblage*, drawing upon Deleuze’s work with authors throughout his oeuvre, from *The Logic of Sense* to *Essays Critical and Clinical*—ultimately presenting the productive value of Deleuzian methodology for working with literature within a humanities project and discipline.

Chapter Outline

I. “Philosophy as Opera”

Beginning with an understanding of Deleuze’s style as connecting constructivism and expressionism, the first section details the methodology of encounters and the qualities of concepts, as explained in *Difference & Repetition* and *What is Philosophy?*. This entails the fundamental description of aesthetic figures as “blocs of sensation” in the sense of “asignifying expression” against representation; these figures provide the complementary “nonphilosophical” percepts and affects of Art in relation to Philosophy. The explication of the nature of concepts establishes them within the Deleuzian framework as polyvalent and heterogeneous assemblages, while evoking the immanent philosophical problem to be explored. Calling his publication part “detective novel” and part “science fiction,” Deleuze explains that empiricism “treats the concept as an object of an encounter” and adds, “I make, remake and unmake my concepts along a moving horizon, from an always decentered center, from an always displaced periphery which repeats and differentiates them” (DR xx-xxi). Thus in the second section, I review several notable encounters in Deleuze’s later works, in order to identify the “horizon” of the problem herein: Artaud, Whitman, Melville, D.H. Lawrence, Kleist, and Henri Michaux, for example. While the specific focus examines aesthetic percepts and affects, the general exemplar for the literary “machinic assemblage” concept is Deleuze’s encounter with Kafka; this “procedure” appears throughout, beginning here with the perspective on prose fiction—the “novelistic assemblage” as the chief type of expression.

Interlude 1: Encountering Aesthetic Figures

The majority of this brief chapter demonstrates the “procedure” of connecting expression to concept creation with the specific focus of percepts and affects from literature; as described in the first section of chapter 1, the aesthetic figures comprise unique sensations extracted from life and composed in art. Effective examples like those from Deleuze’s readings feature in Leslie Marmon Silko’s *Ceremony* and Toni Morrison’s *Jazz*; illustrations of the “sobriety” that he privileges might be included if necessary, for instance from Marilynne Robinson’s *Housekeeping* or Don DeLillo’s *Underworld*. These discussions work toward both the “expression complement” to the main topic as well the secondary development: the connection to other concepts, as “philosophical resonance” (as Deleuze and Guattari explain in *What is Philosophy?*). In this case, these aesthetic figures relate the “asignifying expression” topic to Roland Barthes’ theory of *signifiance* (“third meaning” beyond denotation and connotation).

II. “Novelistic Assemblage”

With the methodology and orientation established, this section presents specific philosophical components and literary encounters from Deleuze’s oeuvre regarding the main concept and problem under discussion (“machinic assemblage”). In the first segment, the composition of a novelistic assemblage is explicated through topics including series, lines (and types), “transversals,” “aleatory point”; the related encounters in *The Logic of Sense* and *A Thousand Plateaus* are works by Carroll, Artaud, Lowry, Joyce, Henry James, Fitzgerald, and Pierrette Fleutiaux. In the second segment, I describe a single and important feature of an assemblage through multiple literary readings by Deleuze: he recognizes actual and virtual “edges” of de- or re-territorialization within Kafka, Beckett, Wolfson, “Bartleby,” and others; this perspective is elucidated in particular essays, “On the Superiority of Anglo-American Literature” (1977) and “The Mystery of Ariadne, according to Nietzsche” (1987).

Interlude 2: Narrative Lines

Using the work of Thomas Pynchon—specifically *V.*, *Gravity’s Rainbow*, and *The Crying of Lot 49*—to present illustrative instances, I will demonstrate the key topics of the novelistic assemblage described prior: aleatory points and lines of flight, as unique types of series and transversals that operate as “asignifying expression.” To complement the philosophical constructivism, I will explain the affective dimension of the aesthetic composition (“blocs of sensation”) through Jacques Derrida’s reading of *Ulysses*—in which he recognizes “a dominant affect, a *Stimmung* or a pathos, a tone” (*Acts of Literature* 291) in the “vibration” and “event” (308) of Joyce’s novel. This characterization of Pynchon’s work as “becoming-music” avoids abstraction in favor of the Deleuzian perspective of machinic expression, further developed in the next section.

III. “Literary Machine of Expression” : encountering Functions, Forces, Effects

The exclusive focus of this chapter undertakes the question of Art’s chief role for Deleuze’s project, not to represent but “to be the event,” as Lecerclé states; whether actual or virtual, literature operates through forces and effects, most importantly through “intensive use” of language as deterritorialization (such as “minor literature,” for example). I will devote particular attention in this section to the philosophical problem addressed by the main concept, which Deleuze & Guattari evoke in *Kafka*: “Writing has a double function: to translate everything into assemblages and to dismantle the assemblages” (47). Examining specific instances of the “literary machine” types that Deleuze discusses in *Proust & Signs* and *Kafka*, I intend to illustrate the respective functions and effects through supplementary “procedures”: the serial machine of fragments and lost time in Kathy Acker (e.g. *Empire of the Senseless*); the “machines of resonance” in Jonathan Safran Foer’s *Everything is Illuminated*; and the “production of catastrophe” (*Thanatos*) in Vonnegut’s *Slaughterhouse Five*. The last instance evokes the anti-representation theory of Maurice Blanchot in *The Writing of the Disaster* and *The Space of Literature*; this related perspective questions whether or which Deleuzian literary machines operate as deterritorialization, in the mode of the machinic assemblage as a new and non-Platonic concept.

IV. Style: Consistency and Transversality

This chapter addresses the concept and problem of asignifying expression through the perspective of *style*, as the connection of constructivism and expressionism in Deleuze’s methodology; this can be understood in a simple sense as “Deleuze’s style,” the “philosophical gesture” of his readings and concept creation that Lecerclé notes—positioning his *signature* in the tradition of Descartes, Leibniz, Nietzsche, *et al.* Along with “middle voice,” this discussion might benefit from additional theorization of the philosophical signature by Derrida and/or Agamben, as a supplementary and relevant extension of this treatment.

A broader question explored is whether a Deleuzian concept—the literary “machinic assemblage” in this case—evinces “singularity” or “stylistic consistency” given its very multiplicity, a fundamental principle of his philosophy; this paradox is treated in the particular discussion of a concept cohering as an assemblage with resonance between heterogeneous elements. The latter case concerns the integral notion of counterintuitive “consistency” that Deleuze develops with Guattari: for the philosopher’s construction of a concept “To give consistency without losing anything of the infinite” (WP 42). Like the “nondiscursive resonance” within a concept, they elaborate the heterogeneous composition in a different context: “What holds all the components together are *transversals*, and the transversal itself is only a component that has taken upon itself the specialized vector of deterritorialization. In effect, what holds an assemblage together is not the play of framing forms or linear causalities but, actually or potentially, its most deterritorialized component, a cutting edge of deterritorialization” (ATP 336). Their linking transversality, consistency, and resonance fashions Philosophy as “creative” in senses both constructive and stylistic: their rhetoric underscores the connection to Artistic style, just as Deleuze recognizes in Proust’s signature over disparate elements; and indirectly evokes Art as the discipline that “creates the finite that restores the infinite” (WP 197). Thus to emphasize this relation of “stylistic concept,” I show in the second section how literature enables understanding these topics, including their paradoxical notion of “consistency,” through Deleuze’s readings of Proust, Beckett, and Woolf; examples of these claims will additionally appear through “encountering” the machinic assemblage as transversal and deterritorialized “sonorous expression,” in the short fiction of David Foster Wallace.

V. Coda: Affective Encounter, Resonance Assemblage

Having progressed beyond referential and limiting thought (“stratified,” “territorializing”) to an intensive and affective concept, “staging” an encounter with asignifying expression produces a new and affirmative understanding of the “literary machine of resonance (*Eros*).” The result demonstrates the prospect that “Writers, poets musicians, filmmakers—painters too, even chance readers—may find that they are Spinozists” (*Practical Philosophy* 129); a “Spinozist,” Deleuze explains, is “the individual who...receives from Spinoza an affect, a set of affects, a kinetic determination, an impulse, and makes Spinoza an encounter, a passion” (130). This is precisely the type of scholarly methodology I will have emphasized as the “philosophical trinity” of Deleuze’s constructivist “opera” (concept, percept, affect)—our dynamic encounters with art as producing new ways of thinking, seeing, and feeling. My conclusion presents this new mode, alternative to rational thought and discourse, as undertaking Cixous’ disciplinary (and personal) challenge that “To hear well is to hear what is never said” (*Readings* 71). Accordingly, the “resonance assemblage” concept will emerge through an affective constructivist encounter with Foer’s novel *Extremely Loud & Incredibly Close* as an abridged “procedure,” signaling future work. The principle guiding the project’s limited as opposed to comprehensive treatment of literature is the continuous experimentation (and variation) that Deleuze emphasizes and personally demonstrates: “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 (process)* as a reality that is on its way and already there. The whole of this operation is to be called a Process, one that is precisely interminable” (*Kafka* 48).

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