Introduction

Gilles Deleuze's work has become a key component of the contemporary theoretical landscape, but it is also a homage to the peculiar power of monsters. In contrast to the title of Francisco de Goya's famous etching, Deleuze states early in the opening chapter of *Difference and Repetition* that it is not just the sleep of reason that produces monsters; it is also the insomniac wakefulness of thought (1994 [1968]:29).[1] This claim, which returns in *Anti-Oedipus* (Deleuze and Guattari 1983 [1972]), prefaces a story of the subordination of difference to representation at the hands of the history of Western philosophy. For it, the lightning bolt of difference has been a great scandal for identity and must be denounced as monstrous in response. But is the claim that difference appears monstrous and accursed merely Deleuze's way of positioning himself as its saviour? If so, why do monsters seem to appear at so many key junctions in his work?

Whereas Deleuze's use of horror-inspired imagery is well attested to (e.g. Culp 2016, MacCormack 2010, Powell 2005), the status of the monster as such has received relatively little attention. In order to consider the monstrous, this chapter will treat Deleuze's philosophy as a practical programme for thought for which monsters matter. A few preliminary caveats are in order: while the ethos of this chapter builds on a trend that emphasises a redemptive and practical dimension of Deleuze's thought (e.g. Hallward 2006, Lapoujade 2017 [2014]), I will focus on what happens in encounters with monsters and on what can be said about a hypothetical world in which such encounters are possible in relation to some of the ethical injunctions that Deleuze endorses. Whereas it would be difficult to isolate a single determinate use of the French noun *monstre* and its adjectival *monstrueux* in Deleuze's work, it will be possible to abstract an understanding of monstrosity that is consistent with the function of many of the monsters that are encountered throughout it and discuss what it could mean for committing to Deleuze's philosophy in practice. This is what this chapter will begin to do.

With these notes and caveats in mind, the chapter will be divided into three sections. I will begin the first section by departing from the early mentions of the monstrous in *Difference and Repetition* and summarise that book's task of overturning Platonism in terms of something to be achieved. This summary

[1] Where a monograph or edited collection in a different language corresponds directly to the English translation that I cite, I give the year of the original's publication in square brackets unless there are reasons for doing otherwise. Where Kant is concerned I refer to the pagination of the Academy edition.

will lead to the notion of a "fundamental *encounter*" (Deleuze 1994 [1968]:139) that forces thought to think.

In the second section, I will discuss two examples of encounters from Deleuze and Guattari's *A Thousand Plateaus* (1987 [1980]) in order to see what they entail in practice. The logic of these examples, I will argue, can be consolidated in what Deleuze terms a "system of cruelty" (1998 [1993]:128).

Then, in the third section, I will thematise this system of cruelty with the help of Antonin Artaud's theatre from which it gets its name. The reason for doing so is to tease out some ethical implications of affirming a system in which encounters with monsters play a decisive role.

Overturning Platonism—a monstrous task?

Early on in *Difference and Repetition*, Deleuze tells his readers that cruelty and monstrosity are characteristics of a difference that is not yet mediated by representation (1994 [1968]:28-9). According to a formula that Deleuze adopts from the poet and playwright Antonin Artaud, this cruelty is nothing but determination. Difference, like a lightning bolt that sets itself apart from the surrounding darkness, Deleuze writes, needs to be made in and for that which maintains a relationship to the indeterminate, that is to say in and for thought. The direct association between determination and cruelty is consonant with the clearest definition of monstrosity that Deleuze ever gave. A 1981 exchange with Arnaud Villani opened with the peculiar question: "Are you a 'monster'?," to which Deleuze replied that

> to be a monster is first of all to be composite. And it's true that I have written on apparently diverse subjects. But 'monster' has another meaning: something or someone whose extreme determinacy allows the indeterminate wholly to subsist (for example a monster á la Goya). In this sense, thought is itself a monster (Deleuze 2007:39).

It is the latter meaning that I will focus on here. Like cruelty, monstrosity pertains to determination. Although Deleuze does not say so explicitly, that thought is monstrous in this sense is likely a reference to Kant's response to the Cartesian *Cogito*-argument. Kant held that the determinate "I think" indeed entails "I am" but that this is not enough to determine the mode of existence of the latter as substance (Kant, B406-413, cf. Deleuze 1998 [1993]:29). But why would determinacy appear monstrous or cruel? In response to this question, I will pose two hypotheses about how the monstrous is meant to be understood. These are neither mutually exclusive nor collectively exhaustive, but together they serve to set the agenda for what will follow:

> *Hypothesis 1:* The monstrous is a rhetorical device. It is the philosophical tradition's condemnation of difference that is presented as such for it to be rehabilitated by Deleuze.
>
> *Hypothesis 2:* The monstrous fulfils an ontological function. It plays a secret role in the philosophy of difference, wherein monsters somehow make a difference.

In examining these hypotheses, I will begin by recapitulating some of the key points from the first chapter of *Difference and Repetition*.

Soon after having presented the monstrous nature of difference that has been subordinated to the dominion of representation, Deleuze proceeds to ascribe this state affairs to what he will later term the "dogmatic image of thought" (Deleuze 1994 [1968]:148). The effects of this image are summarised in the four shackles of: "identity in the concept, opposition in the predicate, analogy in judgement and resemblance in perception" (1994 [1968]:262) that together forms the core of an Aristotelian interpretation of Plato that has set the agenda for philosophies of difference since (1994 [1968]:59). It is for the Platonist, thus conceived, that difference in its pure state must appear monstrous and in need of hypostatisation in identity. The task that Deleuze sets for himself is to overturn Platonism.

Overturning Platonism means decentring or turning beyond rather than inverting. It has to be understood with reference to what Deleuze believes to have been Plato's principal concern, which above all was to select between competing claimants (1994 [1968]:127). In Plato, the just man is just only in virtue of his participation in Justice because only Justice is truly just. But on a deeper level, this relation only grounds a practical selection between different claims to the title of just. It is a way of distinguishing between two kinds of claimants: authorised copies or images and unauthorised simulacra. According to Deleuze, what Plato initiated has led to a situation in which difference

> must leave its cave and cease to be a monster; or at least only that which escapes at the propitious moment [when difference was subordinated to identity] must persist as a monster, that which constitutes only a bad encounter, a bad occasion. At this point the expression 'make the difference' changes its meaning. It now refers to a selective test which must determine which differences may be inscribed within the concept in general, and how (1994 [1968]:29).

What is at stake is not the inversion of the Plato's hierarchy between the Idea, the image and the simulacrum that has domesticated a difference that was considered to be monstrous. Rather, Deleuze wants to render irrelevant the logic of claims and claimants as the ground upon which divisions are made. In

other words, to overturn Platonism is to 'make a difference' according to another test that resists the primacy of identity, opposition, analogy and resemblance. Platonism will be overturned when its central question changes in such a way that it becomes impossible to recognise. This happens when it is no longer a matter of distinguishing the true from the false claimant, but of affirming that all beings are put to the same test of existence.

If Plato's principal concern was with claims and claimants, the question that guides the overturning of his legacy comes to concern what happens when no claimant can be singled out. In such a scenario, has not the claimed thing itself evaporated and given rise to a selection without ground? What, for instance, has become of Wisdom when the philosopher cannot be distinguished from the sophist? In an early course on grounding Deleuze says that: "The claimed thing is the ground," and suggests that it is precisely the claimed thing that "opposes the human being to the animal. The human being finds reason within the form of the enunciation of a right" (Deleuze 2015:43). So if the ungrounding of Platonism will dislodge the entire structure of claims, claimed things and claimants, it already hints at a becoming-animal of the human being. The role of the monster is to set this process in motion.

That it is so becomes clear in Chapter 3 of *Difference and Repetition* where Deleuze introduces something like a method for overcoming the primacy of representation. Halfway through articulating eight theses that characterise the dogmatic image of thought—which include the subsumption of difference under identity, opposition, analogy and resemblance—Deleuze mentions a "fundamental *encounter*" (1994 [1968]:139) that Plato had already distinguished from recognition, but whose promise has failed to materialise. This encounter is of pivotal importance for pursuing the thought without image that Deleuze seeks in order to liberate difference and overturn Platonism. Simply put, the goal of the fundamental encounter is for thought to encounter a sensible object that forces it to think, or as it were, awakens thought from its slumber. In the process, thought will come to *intimate the genesis of real experience* and afford difference ontological priority over identity (1994 [1968]:154). So what does such an encounter have to do with monsters?

In order to answer this question, it will be helpful to discuss the purported effect of the encounter. This, in turn, requires a quick note about what Deleuze has to say about Kant's threefold synthesis of apprehension, reproduction and recognition in the faculties of sensibility, the imagination and the understanding, whose accord allegedly contribute to conditioning objective experience. Kant's own account is complicated, but basically these syntheses are acts that, respectively, order an intuited manifold in space and time so as to make it apprehensible, reproduce its successive parts and place it under the form of objectivity (A99-111). It is not, however, until the *Critique of Judgment* that Kant

discovers that the syntheses presuppose what Deleuze elsewhere calls an "aesthetic comprehension" (1978, no page) of both a unit of measure and that which is to be measured. This foundation is inherently unstable.

From Deleuze's text, it appears that the object of a fundamental encounter can be anything—he mentions Socrates, temples and demons (1994 [1968]:139)—as long as it fulfils the criterion of forcing thought to think. This means that it cannot be an object of recognition since it presents empirical sensibility with an indication of difference as such. An encounter means that the empirical act of apprehending an element fails. This is a painful event. Deleuze writes that what is encountered

> …is intensity, understood as pure difference in itself, as that which is at once both imperceptible for empirical sensibility which grasps intensity only already covered or mediated by the quality to which it gives rise, and at the same time that which can be perceived only from the point of view of a transcendental sensibility which apprehends it immediately in the encounter… when the imagination in turn is raised to the level of transcendent exercise, it is the phantasm, the disparity within the phantasm, which constitutes the *phantasteon*, which is both that which can only be imagined and the empirically unimaginable (1994 [1968]:144).

Here, the transcendent exercise of a faculty appears to be its grasp of that which is proper to it but is beyond the reach of its empirical acts, in the first instance the paradox of that which can only be sensed but is impossible to sense. What sensibility encounters and consequently fails to apprehend "are the demons, the sign-bearers: powers of the leap, the interval, the intensive and the instant; powers which only cover difference with more difference" (1994 [1968]:145). Here, pure difference is presented as a violent "dark precursor" (Deleuze 1994 [1968]:145) or something monstrous, and moreover, the effects of encountering it propagate from sensibility to the other faculties, subjecting them to the same ordeal.

Although Deleuze's account of this process is highly complex, to understand the role that monstrosity plays it is sufficient to see that he models the immediate result of the encounter on Kant's theory of the (dynamic) sublime. For Kant, the sublime is a "negative pleasure" (Ak. V 245) found at the limit of the abilities of the imagination. It occurs when the imagination is strained such that reason's demand for a representation of a determinate magnitude cannot be fulfilled, which turns the usual accord between these faculties into what Deleuze calls a "discordant harmony" (1994 [1968]:146) like in the experience of a stormy sea. In the sublime, then, the aesthetic comprehension that founded the syntheses of apprehension and reproduction is lost in chaos, but this loss leads toward a higher accord in an Idea that is engendered rather than

assumed and which is only determinable in practice (Deleuze 1984 [1963]:51-2). It is this kind of discordant-harmonic relationship that Deleuze thinks occurs in the encounter. To consummate the encounter as the overcoming of the image of thought, Deleuze will introduce a new philosophy of the Idea that he develops from the differential calculus and which will allow him to describe the intrinsic genesis of real experience from differences of differences.

Now, recall that Deleuze defines monstrosity as a determinacy that allows the subsistence of the indeterminate (Deleuze 2007:39). This is precisely what the object of the fundamental encounter is in relation to (e.g.) sensibility and the imagination: a determinate entity that is also given as imperceptible for empirical sensibility and unimaginable for the imagination by virtue of pointing toward an unmediated degree of intensity that wells up from beneath. The process whereby the sensible qualities it gives rise to are actualised is the topic of the last chapters of *Difference and Repetition* and discussing its details is more than I can do here. Instead, what I want to turn to in the next sections is the cost of encountering such difference since, crucially, it does not follow for Deleuze that monsters ought to be avoided even though they must be encountered as monstrous if they are to impact thought.

Monsters in action

While Deleuze says in *Difference and Repetition* that many things can serve a monstrous purpose (1994 [1968]:139), it is interesting to consider some of his actual examples. It turns out that monsters are in no short supply in Deleuze's later work. It seems valuable to examine what encountering these monsters can result in for anyone who is interested in deriving practical injunctions from Deleuze's philosophy. The examples I will use come from the tenth chapter of Deleuze and Guattari's *A Thousand Plateaus* on becoming-animal (1987 [1980]:232-309), a section of the book that is veritably teeming with monsters, but references to the same cases are also made elsewhere. But before I give the examples, a couple of remarks are in order.

The first thing to note is that Deleuze and Guattari's aim in the relevant part of *A Thousand Plateaus* is not perfectly equivalent to Deleuze's earlier challenge to the dogmatic image of thought. Nevertheless, there is a certain methodological parity insofar as monsters are concerned as impactful objects of encounter. Additionally, there remains in the notion of becoming-animal a redemptive dimension that echoes the earlier work and is tied to Deleuze's reading of Spinoza. These similarities form the basis for my discussion and they will become clear over its course. The second point is that many examples that Deleuze and Guattari make use of appear to be either physically violent or end in disaster or premature death. This is important since, as I argued above, facing a monster is

harrowing by definition; that is, monsters are encountered as monsters irrespective of what else they may be (e.g. Socrates, temples, demons).

With that said, my first brief example is that of Captain Ahab and Moby-Dick's final encounter. Deleuze and Guattari refer to Herman Melville's single-minded captain on a number of occasions in *A Thousand Plateaus*. For instance, "Captain Ahab has an irresistible becoming-whale… operating directly through a monstrous alliance with the Unique, the Leviathan, Moby-Dick" (1987 [1980]:243). After three days of hard pursuit (following a much longer build-up), Melville's story culminates in a direct struggle between the adversaries. The injured whale thrashes and rams Ahab's ship, the *Pequod*, which is badly damaged and soon goes under as a result. When Moby-Dick resurfaces after a brief dive, Ahab stands ready with a harpoon in a smaller whaleboat. He strikes his enemy, but the line runs foul and without a word, Ahab is pulled by it into the sea. Only the narrator and—possibly—Moby-Dick survives.

My reason for highlighting this example is simply that Deleuze and Guattari tend to cite it so favourably. It is presented as a paradigmatic case of becoming-animal wherein the participants are carried from their ordinary contexts and perhaps discover their own monstrosity. Such a becoming is supposed to be impersonal, but it is not clear if this eliminates responsibility. In either case, it is a curious relationship between disparate forces that shows what can happen in an encounter. As Ahab's first mate pleads to his Captain, it is indeed the latter and not the whale who is the agent of the pursuit: "It is thou, thou, that madly seekest him!" (1851:628). While Ahab and Moby-Dick may each undergo their own involuntary becoming it is not at all to the same effect. To this may be added the sinking of the *Pequod*, with crew and all. It is true that Deleuze and Guattari warn their readers of the potential dangers of experimenting (e.g. 1987 [1980]:250), but one can wonder if these warnings are sufficient given the stakes that are often involved. My point here is not to say that becomings should be avoided because they imply (presumably incalculable) risk, but rather to (again) emphasise that risk cannot be eliminated *and* that the "subject-in-becoming" (Braidotti 2006:148) is not necessarily the one who bears the brunt of it.

The second, less brief example that I want to discuss is tied to Deleuze and Guattari's references to the Kantian ethologist Jakob von Uexküll's animal worlds. von Uexküll's core idea is that animals experience their surrounding worlds in terms of a circle that emits signs which are organised according to specific bodily capacities (2010 [1934]:48-49). If one were to consider a simple flower, it would constitute disparate and unbridgeable meanings for a spider attaching her web to it, a cow feeding on it and a human picking it. Each animal possesses a number of receptor organs that can be affected by certain signs that

the animal's environment emits. In addition, the animal has a number of effector organs through which it can act on its environment according to its needs and perceptions. In a vision that in some ways pre-empts cybernetics, this crisscrossing of action and passion—effecting and receiving—forms a closed circuit between each animal and its world. No animal can transcend its world as it is structured by its physiological affordances (von Uexküll 2010 [1934]:132).

Deleuze and Guattari refer to von Uexküll's work on three occasions in *A Thousand Plateaus* (Deleuze and Guattari 1987 [1980]:51, 257, 315). Each reference concerns the relation between an animal and its associated circle. By way of example, they consider von Uexküll's study of spiders and ticks as inventories of signs or affects (1987 [1980]:257). About the latter animal von Uexküll famously writes:

> The eyeless creature finds the way to its lookout with the help of a general sensitivity to light in the skin. The blind and deaf bandit [the tick] becomes aware of the approach of its prey through the sense of smell. The odor of butyric acid, which is given off by the skin glands of all mammals, gives the tick the signal to leave its watch post and leap off. If it then falls onto something warm—which its fine sense of temperature will tell it—then it has reached its prey, the warm-blooded animal, and needs only use its sense of touch to find a spot as free of hair as possible in order to bore past its own head into the skin tissue of the prey. Now, the tick pumps a stream of warm blood slowly into itself (von Uexküll 2010 [1934]:45).

The tick manifestly responds to three signs: it possesses a general sensitivity to light, it can apprehend the smell of butyric acid and it is capable of feeling the warmth of a mammalian body (although von Uexküll breaks these down into smaller components (2010 [1940]:178)). To the rest of the forest, it is and remains immutably blind.

But there is yet another aspect to von Uexküll's thought. At the same time as he reveals the animal's individual circuit, he posits a grand symphony of nature that envelops all animal worlds in the additive interlocking of all circuits of significance (von Uexküll 2010 [1934]:135). This motivates Deleuze to elsewhere call von Uexküll "a Spinozist when first he defines the melodic lines or contrapuntal relations that correspond to each thing, *and* then describes a symphony as an immanent higher unity" (Deleuze 1988 [1981]:127, italics added). This description is, moreover, consistent with how von Uexküll is presented in *A Thousand Plateaus*. Although von Uexküll argues that directly perceiving this higher unity of nature is impossible as such, it is manifestly possible to posit its existence. What makes von Uexküll a purported Spinozist

is that the symphony of nature is reinterpreted by Deleuze as the immanent cause of each being's individuation and that some of the beings that scuttle across it are capable of reaching an apprehension of themselves in it (how else could Spinoza have written his *Ethics*?).

The way to reach such an apprehension leads through practical experimentation. In mixing von Uexküll with Spinoza, Deleuze extrapolates from ethology an inventory of affects that amounts to a famous replacement of deontology for an ethics aimed at establishing and understanding what a body can do (e.g. Deleuze 1988 [1981]:124-5, Deleuze and Guattari 1987 [1980]:257). The example of von Uexküll's tick and its environment is illuminating because it shows that the structure of the encounter between bodies can be applied beyond the human beings' particular affordances.

With the examples of Captain Ahab and the tick's world in mind, let me now ask, is there a way of linking the monstrous dark precursors and fundamental encounters of *Difference and Repetition* to the signs of von Uexküll's animal worlds? In his essay, "Spinoza and the Three 'Ethics'" (Deleuze 1998 [1993]:138-51), Deleuze appears to do just this. In it, Deleuze follows Spinoza to distinguish between signs "of one body upon another, the state of a body insofar as it suffers the action of another body" (Deleuze 1998 [1993]:141) and concepts. Signs do not refer to other bodies or beings conceptually, but are states of bodies under the influence of other bodies that result in either augmented or diminished powers to act (1998 [1993]:140).

Concepts, on the contrary, are common notions that refer to an agreement between two or more composite bodies, extending to encompass, in the last instance, all bodies (e.g. concepts of movement and rest) on the plane of nature (Deleuze 1998 [1993]:142). A key problem for Deleuze's Spinoza is how concepts can be derived from signs, which are given more or less randomly as different bodies encounter one another. To acquire a concept from an agreement between two bodies requires that one selects from the "passional affects" (1998 [1993]:144) that result from these chance encounters. It is here that Deleuze mentions the dark precursor again:

> This selection of the affects is the very condition for leaving the first kind of knowledge [of signs], and for attaining the concept through the acquisition of a sufficient power. The signs of augmentation remain passions and the ideas that they presuppose remain inadequate; yet they are the precursors of the notions, the dark precursors (Deleuze 1998 [1993]:144).

In *Difference and Repetition,* communication between disparate terms inaugurated thought's turn toward its own intensive nature like dark clouds precede a lightning strike (1994 [1968]:119, 145). The situation is similar in the

purview of Spinoza's acquisition of concepts from signs even if it does not yet recall monstrosity. The sign-affects that result from aleatory encounters are always suffered as passions and one can only affirm the chance of a fortunate encounter and select what affects conform with one's body thereafter. Deleuze says that this is no small task, for at every turn there are the despots and pontiffs that empower themselves through the infliction of servitude and unhappy passions upon others, effectively preventing them from acquiring concepts (Deleuze 1998 [1993]:145).

To the extent that this model is at work in Deleuze's treatment of Captain Ahab and the tick it is an applied model of nature that grounds an ethical imperative that is completely agnostic as to what ought to be done and which instead follows a logic of augmentation of powers according to applied experiments. Following von Uexküll's focus on organic affordances, it is unclear whether an animal such as the tick ever leaves its world of signs for concepts. Assuming that many non-human animals are incapable of forming more than simple common notions as a consequence of being unable to select between very complex alternatives (which Deleuze indicates is done rationally 1998 [1993]:145), is Deleuze not echoing Heidegger's infamous thesis on the animal's constitutive poverty in world from his lecture of 1929-30 (1995 [1983]:176) by virtue of the specific capacities of humans, even if he subsumes it in the ontological univocity of a plane of nature? I believe that the answer here is yes, that a system in which something like a fundamental encounter with another animal is possible does just this. Here it is interesting to consider that Spinoza held that humans have no particular moral responsibilities toward other animals whatsoever. His position was that

> the law against killing animals is based more on empty superstition and unmanly [sic] compassion than sound reason. The rational principle of seeking our own advantage teaches us the necessity of joining with men [sic], but not with the lower animals, or with things whose nature is different from human nature. We have the same right against them that they have against us. Indeed, because the right of each one is defined by his virtue, *or* power, men [sic] have a far greater right against the lower animals than they have against men [sic]. Not that I deny that the lower animals have sensations. But I do deny that we are therefore not permitted to consider our own advantage, use them at our pleasure, and treat them as is most convenient for us. For they do not agree in nature with us, and their affects are different in nature from human affects (Spinoza 1985 [1677]:566).

As damning as this passage may seem today, the problem is not simply that different beings possess vastly different abilities since Deleuze could reasonably deny that anything like Spinoza's conclusions follow. Secondly, it

may also be that forming concepts from chance encounters is simply the best that can be done in the world that Deleuze takes Spinoza to describe (cf. Deleuze 1981, part 3 on 'truncated Spinozism'). That is, if the ability to do so is unfairly distributed, it is simply an unfortunate fact of Spinoza's system (or of nature) that calls for great care and sensibility for the capacities of others. And finally, Deleuze is of course not Spinoza. The problem, however, is that there is relatively little said about such care in Deleuze's work when he does philosophy in his own name. For instance, both *Difference and Repetition* and *A Thousand Plateaus* appear to endorse an imperative to affirm chance encounters with objects that do violence to thought.

This can be shown by a comparison with Spinoza. In Spinoza, besides signs and concepts, there are "essences" or "singularities" (1998 [1993]:148) that serve as the foundation for relations between terms. Deleuze is quite vague about the nature of essences in the essays on the "Three 'Ethics'," but says more about them in his *Expressionism in Philosophy: Spinoza* (1990a [1968]), which, alongside *Difference and Repetition*, was submitted for his doctorate. There, essences are identified as degrees of intensity or power (1990a [1968]:303). In *Difference and Repetition*, discovering intensities was a key part of the condition for overturning Platonism by accounting for the genesis of real experience. To explore the *methodological* similarity, I will say something about how these intensities or essences can be discovered.

In the essay on the "Three 'Ethics'" Deleuze presents Spinoza as having introduced essences by means of a gap, a leap or an enthymeme. The function of such lacunae "is to bring together to the maximum degree terms that are distant as such, and thereby to assure a speed of absolute survey" (1998 [1993]:150). The central idea is that unrelated terms can be connected in one fell swoop and that this constitutes a different method than the careful acquisition of concepts from sign-affects. In *Difference and Repetition* the fundamental encounter that overpowered empirical sensibility fulfilled the similar role of relating different terms and taking thought beyond recognition in a direct apprehension of intensity. In both cases, thought's development is preceded by a passion: a monstrous sign-bearer, a white whale crushing a ship or a vampire's bite. And just like an encounter with a monster raises the faculties toward their transcendent objects and erodes their foundations, a connection between disparate terms such as a whale and a monomaniac captain can deliver the latter to essences.

The problem with all this is the apparent epistemic-ethical imperative to acquire higher kinds of knowledge requires that other beings are taken up in our own discoveries. There is nothing in this that resembles a doctrine of mutual consent. Instead, the outcome of a fortuitous meeting between a tick and a dog is simply determined by the respective capacities of each, as is the relationship between Captain Ahab and the White Whale. The difference is that

in the latter case, Ahab's active search for the adversary depends on subjecting Moby-Dick to diminutive passions. If one goes from acquiring concepts to discovering essences the problem is only amplified since it becomes a matter of bringing together "terms that are distant as such" (Deleuze 1998 [1993]:150).

So even if Deleuze succeeds in overturning Platonism, his account is associated with, if not dependent on, commitments that relegate the majority of beings to live in relative darkness. For if Deleuze and Guattari's reworked Spinozism concerns the tactics of subterfuge against despotism, it must assume the anteriority of passion. Moreover, if all beings initially find themselves in something like Spinoza's knowledge of signs, if this knowledge often means suffering, and if most non-human animals cannot overcome this knowledge, then the immanent unity of nature would appear to constitute a veritable symphony of violence whose terror it is the privilege and burden of sapient beings to affirm for the sake of their own epistemic-ethical development. Crucially, this development appears to be incorporated in a system that hinges on encountering the alterity of the monster or radically other *as* other. I will follow Deleuze and call such a system a "system of cruelty" (1998 [1993]:128).

Deleuze's system of cruelty

Having looked at some examples of monstrous encounters, let me now develop the connection between monstrosity and cruelty by recalling that Deleuze draws from Artaud's understanding of the latter as "irreversible and absolute determination" (1958:101) which is consonant with how Deleuze defines the power of monsters (1994 [1968]:29 1998 [1993]:39). Based on this, I will discuss some parallels between the logic of the fundamental encounter in *Difference and Repetition*, Deleuze's reading of Spinoza and Artaud's Theatre of Cruelty to consider some recurrent themes in Deleuze's thought.

According to one manifesto, the first spectacle of the Theatre of Cruelty would "stage events, not men [sic]" (Artaud 1958 [1938]:126). This Gnostic theatre (cf. Goodall 1994), with its screamed glossolalia, wild incantations and hieroglyphic gestures was intended to break with the personal psychology that had dominated French drama during the first years of the twentieth century. Against such timidity, the Theatre of Cruelty would provide a "spatial language" (Artaud 1958 [1938]:71) capable of transforming its audiences' lives by means of a carefully planned and orchestrated assault on all of their senses.

In a talk, Deleuze gave before the *Société française de philosophie* in 1967 (Deleuze 2004 [2002]:94-116) the Theatre of Cruelty was referenced as a precursor upon which to construct a philosophy that could dramatise different intensive dynamisms. As part of a question concerning the relationship

between tragedy and drama, Maurice de Gandillac said to Deleuze that his allusion to Artaud's theatre was sufficient proof that "you are not an optimistic philosopher, or if you are, it's in the way Leibniz is, whose vision of the world is, all things considered, one of the most cruel imaginable" (2004 [2002]:107). If we bracket the supposed cruelty of Leibniz's world, Deleuze's reply is remarkable because of its implied assent:

> You asked me whether dramatization in general is related to the tragic. I don't see there being any privileged relation between them. The tragic and the comic are still categories of representation, whereas there is a more fundamental relation between dramatization and a certain mode of terror, which can entail a maximum of clownishness as well as grotesque… (Deleuze 2004 [2002]:108).

Building on my argument so far, Gandillac was probably the first to intimate a deep-seated pessimism in Deleuze's thought that is associated with his attempts to overcome the primacy of judgment (and identity) by means of cruelty or monstrosity. For the human being experiencing itself as such, what Deleuze posits as the sufficient means for struggling against the dogmatic legacy of Platonism—and all sorts of despotic and priest-like figures—is and must be a harrowing event, which is developed through his readings of Spinoza, Kant and Artaud.

According to Deleuze, the method of dramatisation that would come to animate *Difference and Repetition* could create a philosophical event on par with the Theatre of Cruelty (Deleuze 2004 [2002]:98). Since for Deleuze, Artaud always discovered "through suffering" (Deleuze 1990b [1969]:95), it may not be so farfetched to believe that on Deleuze's account, the sufficient condition for thought's awakening lies in the overcoming of primordial passion conceived as a kind of default state of bodies in the world maintained by different agents of judgment. Like in the Theatre of Cruelty, this is supposed to happen in the untold shock of an encounter.

For Deleuze, then, resuscitating philosophy may require a method that reveals the "cruelty which things can exercise against us" (Artaud 1958 [1938]:79, compare Deleuze 1989 [1985]:166-74). As I have attempted to show, there is a recurrent theme in Deleuze's work where thought's apprehension of itself is pushed into movement by an encounter with *something* indistinct for the cognitive faculties and which subjects them to passions that may or may not engender in thought an idea or apprehension of intensity. Whenever this happens, thought rises toward its own essence by grasping a monstrosity or cruelty that, according to Artaud's formula equals life (1958 [1938]:114). The monster, the sophist, the bloodsucking parasite and the false pretender are the signs that forcefully relate force to its founding indeterminacy. Although Artaud

held that cruelty is irreducible to bloodshed (1958 [1938]:79), who can tell when bloodshed can be excluded in practice?

What is possibly even more troubling than the uncertainties of a fundamental encounter being the locus of thought's supposed apotheosis is, on the one hand, the fate of the encountered entity or monster and, on the other, the implications for any more or less innocent bystanders. The case of Captain Ahab's unfortunate pursuit of Moby-Dick was of paradigmatic value for illustrating this point. Monsters can be almost anything as long as they force thought to think and, correlatively, an encounter with a monster is an encounter with *what is monstrous for thought whatever it may be*. It seems difficult to avoid drawing some disturbing consequences from this.

Since most of Deleuze's readers probably come to his work with an experience of themselves as firmly constituted agents who in their everyday lives are committed to something like the dogmatic image of thought, they would be justified in wondering whether the potential cost of an encounter is worth its occasionally vague benefits other than in singular cases. Such reservations ought to be intensified at the realisation that overcoming the image in question appears to be tied to affirming a doctrine of natural violence anteceding the pragmatics of its overcoming and, as I argued in the previous section, also appears to require permanently relegating the majority of beings to this state of nature as potential partners for becoming or "unnatural participation" (Deleuze and Guattari 1987 [1980]:240) regardless of their own needs or wants.

With all this said, it seems fair to call Deleuze's practical philosophy a philosophy of monsters inasmuch as it is a philosophy that attempts to put monstrosity into action against judgment. But judging by his penchant for cruelty, Deleuze can sometimes appear remarkably Gnostic, at least if one were to trust Georges Bataille, according to whom the heresies of figures like Valentinus and Basilides, despite their striving for beatitude, could be characterised by a "sinister love of darkness" (1985:48). With this in mind, it seems exceedingly important that in reading Deleuze (with and without Guattari), the monstrous is not allowed to become the object of a perverse fetishism. The real problem with committing to Deleuze's practical philosophy, then, is perhaps the scarcity of peaceful endings and successful encounters that can inform a more careful approach. Without an abundance of such positive examples, there is a significant risk that Deleuze's philosophy of monsters also becomes a rather monstrous philosophy.

Seldom is this risk better expressed than in Deleuze and Guattari's bestiaries that are borrowed, on the one hand, from authors like Melville and, on the other hand, from biologists like von Uexküll. As one reads Deleuze it is wise to keep in mind the ending of *Moby-Dick* in addition to the fates of Artaud, Kleist, Schreber and the many other real and fictional figures he is fond of invoking.

Taking the "bad encounter" (1994 [1968]:29) seriously can and should make a difference for how Deleuze is approached.

Conclusion

In summary, *Difference and Repetition* suggests that the play of pure difference can only be understood *after* difference is first vilified and receives its ability to wake thought from slumber. This is a recurrent turn of events in Deleuze's work. The monster is the secret pass code or sign-bearer that facilitates a passage that puts thought in motion. While monstrosity no doubt is a rhetorical device, it is precisely because of this that it carries the weight to affect thought. Again and again, monsters are called upon to illustrate key points and bridge gaps between perception and the imperceptible, determinacy and the indeterminate. With this in mind, the image of "a single and same Ocean" (Deleuze 1994 [1968]:304) for all beings that is evoked by the lyrical last lines of *Difference and Repetition* would perhaps have been better presented as a stormy sea. Not only is the plane of nature inherently terrible, but Deleuze appears to ground an ethics in what he thinks is the practical necessity of affirming such constitutive violence in order to overcome it. This is not to say that Deleuze's work cannot be liberating or useful, but that what philosophical or political liberation it can bring about may come with less palatable implications of its own. Finally, then, it seems warranted to support both of my initial hypotheses. The monsters of Deleuze's bestiary are at once of rhetorical *and* ontological import, but not in the sense that one might have first intimated. It is not just the case that new light is shone upon the apparently monstrous which is then redeemed. Rather, what is monstrous is monstrous only insofar as it appears monstrous and disturbs thought by sending it careening toward its own monstrosity. As the object that scandalises Platonist dogma, in a brilliant doubling of Zarathustra's relationship to the Eternal Return (Deleuze 1994 [1968]), the monster is the dark precursor to Deleuze's philosophy.

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