

THE OBSCURE DRAMA OF THE POLITICAL IDEA: POSTCOLONIAL NEGOTIATIONS, DELEUZIAN STRUCTURES AND THE CONCEPT OF COOPERATION

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Abstract Deleuze rarely countenances concepts such as ‘rights’ or ‘democracy’ that comprise conventional political discourse. This is unsurprising, since these typically refer to properties of political identities or to intentional processes occurring between coherent moral agents; they reference the representational structures that Deleuzian philosophy aims to counter and unravel. His thought is nonetheless profoundly political in every aspect, insofar as it contends with the intensive dynamics of force relations that decompose and recompose forms. To understand political life in Deleuzian terms, we must first discover the immanent conditions of the political in the virtual Idea operating ‘underneath’ the political concept, in the intensive relations and serial dynamisms that determine the Idea to incarnate itself. Politics primarily concerns the force of virtual desire and the preconscious conditions of coupling: power acts in the dark libidinous passages between organised forms. This interaction describes a subterranean drama of relational individuation, directed by ‘partial’ and non-subjective ‘agents of communication’. This ‘obscure’ plane of differential force relations, then, is where the substance of Deleuze’s political concepts must be sought. In this paper, I understand Deleuze’s ‘structuralism’ in the light of a current political practice of negotiation that is shaping a new kind of relationship between the Indigenous Ngarrindjeri Nation and the South Australian State Government to produce a significant structural effect of decolonisation. I use this example to argue that a concept of cooperation is implied in Deleuze’s depiction of a systemic ‘difference operator’ that ‘relates difference to difference’.

Keywords: Deleuze, cooperation, settler-colonialism, Indigenous activism, post-structuralism, virtual politics.

In the late 1960’s and early 1970’s the philosopher Gilles Deleuze produced two important pieces, ‘The Method of Dramatisation’ and ‘How Do We Recognise Structuralism?’, that prefigure and summarise the approach developed in his major work *Difference and Repetition*. In these highly condensed discussions, Deleuze explains how appreciation of the *dramatic* nature and activity of thinking provides a way of understanding philosophical systems as ‘a pure theatre of places and positions’.¹ For Deleuze, philosophy is less a discovery and representation of truth, than it is a creative dramatisation

1. G. Deleuze, ‘How do we recognise structuralism?’ in *Desert Islands and Other Texts 1953-1974*, D Lapoujade (ed), M Taormina (trans), New York, Semiotext(e), 2004, p175. (Hereafter *How do we recognise structuralism?*).

2. G. Deleuze, 'The method of dramatisation' in *Desert Islands and Other Texts 1953-1974*, D. Lapoujade (ed), M. Taormina (trans), New York, Semiotext(e), 2004, p 96 (Hereafter *Method of Dramatisation*).

3. P. Patton, *Deleuze and the Political*, London, Routledge, 2000. For an earlier, feminist appraisal of Deleuze's political potential, see (for example) R. Braidotti, *Nomadic Subjects: Embodiment and Sexual Difference in Contemporary Feminist Theory*, New York, Columbia UP, 1994.

4. E.g. N. Thoburn, *Deleuze, Marx, Politics*, London, Routledge, 2003; J. Read, *The Micro-politics of Capital: Marx and the Prehistory of the Present*, New York, SUNY, 2003; I. Buchanan & N. Thoburn (eds), *Deleuze and Politics*, Edinburgh, Edinburgh UP, 2008; J. Protevi, *Political Affect: Connecting the Social and the Somatic*, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota, 2009; J. Gilbert, 'Deleuzian Politics? A Survey and Some Suggestions', *New Formations*, 68, 2010 pp10-33; M. Svirsky, *Deleuze and Political Activism*, Edinburgh, Edinburgh UP, 2010; T. Nail, *Returning to Revolution: Deleuze, Guattari and Zapatismo*, Edinburgh, Edinburgh UP, 2012.

of concepts and 'a way of approaching the Idea as multiplicity'.² It is guided less by questions that seek to know 'what' something is, and more by questions of artistic production or direction: who, how much, when, in what way? In these early articles, then, it becomes apparent that concepts appearing in the Deleuzian theatre of philosophy have nothing to do with essence but everything to do with the compositional forces they comprise and the constructive process through which they arise. Deleuze depicts this process as a kind of conceptual choreography, involving a 'combinatory formula ... supporting formal elements which by themselves have neither form, nor signification, nor representation, nor content, nor given empirical reality, nor hypothetical functional model, nor intelligibility behind appearances' (*How do we recognise structuralism?* p173). However, this kind of claim has prompted scholars fairly to wonder what Deleuzian philosophy entails for the activity of politics and for political thought, which conventionally concerns these very things that Deleuze downplays. Political analysis addresses power and the ways it manifests in governmental *forms*, in social *meanings* and in *representations* of peoples and places. It considers how power operates by circulating or withholding informational *content*; and how it materialises *empirical conditions* of poverty and privilege and is in turn inflected and contested in these conditions. Political philosophy theorises *functional models* of governance and justice; and it frequently seeks a *rational organisation* behind the apparent chaos of social interaction, a definitive political reason that implicitly guides progress towards universal justice or perpetual peace.

A lively discussion persists within Deleuze studies concerning the relationship between Deleuze and the political, influenced in no small measure by Paul Patton's original work on this subject in his book published in 2000.³ A positive appraisal of the political potential of Deleuze's philosophy has also been redoubled in more recent scholarship.⁴ Nonetheless, Deleuze continues to occupy a 'marginal' or 'precarious' place in political theory.⁵ Many thinkers remain doubtful whether Deleuzian philosophy can sustain an effective political practice when it displays a considerable disdain for the forms, representations and conditions of actually existing political life and strife, and when it has recourse to the creative powers of a transcendent virtuality in which 'the people' are (perpetually) 'missing' or 'to come'. A missing people surely lack the substantial qualities necessary for agency and prescriptive action in worldly operations and transformations.⁶ In what follows I will not retrace this ground as such, but instead wish to pick a particular path across it by focussing on a specific political notion: the idea of cooperation. I hope to illuminate a Deleuzian conceptualisation of cooperative formation, which I suggest we may find in the figure of the 'obscure precursor' that plays a role in the orchestration of conceptual dramas. I argue that to understand adequately the political implications and the utility of Deleuze's dramatic approach to Ideas and their conceptual realities, it is necessary to appreciate how Deleuze understands philosophy as a very particular kind

of structuralism, and therefore to understand what it means for Deleuze to conceive agency as 'the structure itself'.⁷

The paper aims to develop this appreciation by contextualising its interpretation of Deleuze's dramatic method in relation to an actually existing political practice of cooperative negotiation, currently taking place as an effect of Indigenous activism in contemporary Australia. Other instances of structural emergence and transformation may be equally pertinent for this purpose; however, I have chosen the postcolony of South Australia as a site for analysis because I am especially familiar with this political landscape, having long been an active ally of Ngarrindjeri peoples' resistance to colonialism in this region. My aim is emphatically *not* to provide an ethnographic account of Indigenous nationhood and associated political practices, but rather to observe (from participation) an emerging phenomenon of cooperation that is significantly transforming political relations in postcolonial South Australia. The primary subject of analysis is therefore not the Ngarrindjeri people or their sovereign activities, but the nature of the *political relationship* between the South Australian government and the governing authority of the Ngarrindjeri Nation. In particular, I am interested in the structural transformations currently arising as this relationship changes through a newly instigated process of cooperative contractual agreement, which brings disparate cultural groups together in piecemeal and selective ways to consolidate new social habits through complex networks of strategic action and authority. I believe this novel form of inter-cultural agreement-making at the differential interface of Indigenous and non-Indigenous systems of law and governance constitutes a significant intervention to prevailing Western modes of political praxis, and thereby provides new scope for understanding and developing effective forms of resistance to (culturally) oppressive power structures.

Western liberal-democratic formations rest philosophically upon normative principles of competitive debate and sovereign autonomy in the contractual agreements that define a political structure and drive structural reform, but liberalism tends to obfuscate basic historico-structural conditions of social inequality that compromise sovereign parity in competitive contract negotiations (for example, structural inequalities generated through histories of colonisation). Neo-marxist philosophy often incorporates feminist and postcolonial perspectives to challenge the normative bourgeois assumptions and the race- and gender-neutrality underpinning classical liberalism, and marxism has been a vital force in collective struggles for decolonisation and sovereign independence. However, in accordance with its doctrinal emphasis on structural revolution as prerequisite for securing equity and justice in productive processes of social formation, marxism relies upon a conflictual framework of oppositional class politics for its conceptualisation of resistance. The experiences of many Indigenous peoples in the specific political context of settler-colonialism⁸ attest how these conflictual and competitive modes of Western politics (both liberal and socialist) can work to the detriment

5. I. Mackenzie and R. Porter, *Dramatising the Political: Deleuze and Guattari*, London, Palgrave MacMillan, 2011, p13.

6. See A. Badiou, *Deleuze: The Clamour of Being*, L. Burchill (trans), Minneapolis, Minnesota University Press, 2000; P. Mengue, *Gilles Deleuze ou le système du multiple*, Paris, Éditions Kimé, 1994; P. Hallward, *Out of This World: Deleuze and the Philosophy of Creation*, New York, Verso, 2006.

7. For a recent discussion of anti-colonial resistance in terms of structure, see M. Svirsky, 2016, 'Resistance is a Structure not an Event', *Settler Colonial Studies* DOI: 10.1080/2201473X.2016.1141462

8. See L. Veracini, *The Settler Colonial Present*, London, Palgrave MacMillan, 2015; P. Wolfe, *Settler Colonialism and the Transformation of Anthropology*, London, Cassell, 1999.

9. Non-Indigenous people constitute around 96 per cent of the Australian population.

10. See S. Bignall, 2014, 'The Collaborative Struggle for Excolonialism', *Journal of Settler Colonial Studies*, 4(4), pp340-356.

11. See G. Cajete, *Native Science: Natural Laws of Interdependence*, Clearlight, Santa Fe, 2000; L. Simpson, *Dancing on Our Turtle's Back*, Winnipeg, ARP Books, 2011; D. Bird Rose, *Dingo Makes Us Human*, Cambridge University Press, 1992.

12. Though beyond the scope of this essay, the wider ambition of my current project is to understand the de-colonial potential of the philosophies of expropriation, mutualism, cooperation, 'compossibility', correspondence and co-existence that have long constituted a minor strain within Western political thought, especially in the socialist anarchist tradition including Proudhon, Kropotkin and Tolstoy.

of minority resistance. This is often simply because the resident settler majority⁹ and its imposed state-form has the enduring sovereign might and the material or cultural capital to quash the claims of an Indigenous class severely impacted by colonisation and exhausted by many decades of struggle. Furthermore, a conflictual politics positions Indigenous peoples against the non-Indigenous settlers with whom they must realistically now co-exist for the foreseeable future, rather than aligning these two classes in solidarity against the persistently unjust structures of a colonial-type society; and so fails to challenge the basic paradigm of the relational system it ostensibly seeks to counter.¹⁰ Although there is nothing culturally essential about cooperation or conflict, Indigenous peoples often prioritise cooperative social practices of reciprocity and generosity that align with ontological principles of subjective plenitude and ecological interdependence.¹¹ Indigenous political perspectives can therefore be instructive for correcting the imbalances and inequities that have resulted over time through the worst excesses of modern capitalist-imperial Western thought. For the most part, this system of thought is predicated on an ontology of lack or scarcity corresponding with a politics of appropriation, in which cooperation is mostly under-valued and suppressed in the context of colonial contest and the natural world is considered simply a 'service benefit' for competitive human profit and consumption.

The potential value of this paper is thus broadly twofold. Firstly, I hope to enable better understanding of the political operation of the Deleuzian differential 'system' or 'structure' by articulating it in the illustrative context of a real world example of political negotiation that is currently producing impressive shifts in an historically rigid postcolonial social formation. Secondly, I hope to demonstrate the structural significance of cooperation as a genetic and transformative force in political systems, and thereby point to the usefulness of a theory of collaborative engagement as conceptual scaffolding to support the active transformation of systemic inequity and oppression. In seeking to develop this understanding, my aim is not to explain Ngarrindjeri political processes by imposing a Deleuzian framework of interpretation over Indigenous action, and certainly not to explain Ngarrindjeri to themselves in this way (of course, Ngarrindjeri have their own philosophical understandings of subjectivity, cooperative relationality and political systems, which have informed the development their resistance activities). Rather, in accordance with a decolonising sensibility that duly acknowledges Indigenous agency and authority in contemporary social formations, I aim to learn from the Ngarrindjeri leadership how a strategic politics of selective and piecemeal agreement, reached cooperatively, leads demonstratively to societal transformation. I then seek to situate this Indigenous-led praxis of transformative cooperation productively alongside, or in alliance with, a Continental philosophy of cooperation, which I find in Deleuze's 'structuralism'.¹² The first part of the essay outlines the political technologies of cooperative negotiation introduced by Ngarrindjeri over

recent decades. The second part refers to the Ngarrindjeri negotiation process and its resulting social emergences, to illuminate salient features of Deleuze's structuralism. The final sections elaborate a Continental philosophy of cooperation by referring to the systemic role of the 'dark precursor', as described by Deleuze.

I. POSTCOLONIAL NEGOTIATIONS

The British imperial colony of South Australia was established in 1836.¹³ Although it has recently announced its commitment to recognising rights through a process of treaty with the Indigenous Nations in its jurisdiction, the State of South Australia is yet to negotiate a just settlement with Indigenous peoples. Likewise, the Federal Australian Government has never entered into treaty with Indigenous Australians and does not recognise original or continuing Aboriginal sovereignty in this jurisdiction. The *Yarluwar-Ruwe* (Sea-Country-Body-Mind) of the Indigenous Ngarrindjeri people of Eastern South Australia continues to sustain Ngarrindjeri economy, community and cultural ways, despite the destruction caused by settler colonisation.¹⁴ Over the past 25 years, Ngarrindjeri people have survived and recovered from a toxic legal battle concerning the protection of the fragile riverine ecology in the context of a capitalist waterfront development planned without cultural sensitivity and regardless of the un-ceded sovereign right Ngarrindjeri assert to speak for the benefit of their Country and its interconnected lifeforms. The protracted conflict included a very public Royal Commission of Inquiry,¹⁵ which found it doubtful that women's special cultural traditions exist and determined that such traditions were 'fabricated' and needed no protection under existing legislation designed to safeguard Ngarrindjeri survival into the future.¹⁶ The Federal Court in a subsequent decision finally overturned this finding in 2001; but by then the contested development of the Hindmarsh Island Bridge had proceeded without halt. As Ngarrindjeri people had feared, the construction not only desecrated their key creation site and a culturally vital relationship between water and sky at the point of mingling where the fresh river water meets oceanic salt water; it also disturbed the human remains of women and children who are Ngarrindjeri Old People or ancestors. From this experience, Ngarrindjeri felt keenly that they were considered unequal before the liberal-democratic rule of settler law, and that their claims were seen as non-competitive and irrelevant in public processes and decisions that deeply affected their wellbeing and cultural survival.

In the context of this enduring political and juridical colonialism in South Australia, over recent decades Ngarrindjeri have employed an Indigenous 'nation rebuilding' approach to develop a new regime of postcolonial justice.¹⁷ In 2007, Ngarrindjeri formally reconstituted their traditional governing authority under a modern representative body, the Ngarrindjeri Regional Authority. Through this structure, the Ngarrindjeri community has been

13. S. Berg, *Coming to Terms: Aboriginal Title in South Australia*, Adelaide, Wakefield Press, 2010.

14. Ngarrindjeri Regional Authority, *Yarluwar-Ruwe (Sea-Country) Plan*, Ngarrindjeri Country, Ngarrindjeri Publishing, 2007, Available at <http://www.ngarrindjeri.org.au/our-history>

15. I. Stevens, *Report of the Hindmarsh Island Bridge Royal Commission*, Adelaide, Australia: Government of South Australia, 1995.

16. M. Simons, *The Meeting of the Waters: The Hindmarsh Island Bridge affair*, Sydney, Hodder, 2003; D. Bell, *Ngarrindjeri Wurrurarrin: A World That Is, Was, And Will Be*, Melbourne, Spinifex Press, 2003.

17. See S. Cornell, 'Processes of native nationhood: The Indigenous politics of self-government', *International Indigenous Policy Journal*, 6(4), 2015.

able to articulate its interests, aspirations and expectations in a series of self-authored policy documents and contractual agreements, thus deliberately expressing intentions for self-determination in terms comprehensible within the mechanisms of the common law imposed at the time of colonisation.¹⁸ However, this strategy does not rely upon settler-Australian constitutional law and legislation to recognise and protect Indigenous rights, but instead engages an innovative form of contract law that incorporates Ngarrindjeri cultural perspectives and asserts that Ngarrindjeri rights and responsibilities continue under their own Indigenous law.¹⁹ Indeed, negotiated consent for access and shared use of Country has always been an aspect of Ngarrindjeri legal and political traditions. In negotiating accords with the non-Indigenous powers now settled in their traditional jurisdiction, Ngarrindjeri stress that their own Indigenous law obliges them still to carefully manage and 'speak as and for' the Country that defines their Indigenous being as such. Agreements made under this negotiation regime thus sit at the interface of Indigenous and non-Indigenous systems of law. They recognise the independent legal traditions and the sovereign responsibility of each participant in the partnership, thus foregrounding mutual acknowledgement and shared agency. This committed respect for Indigenous sovereign authority is a very significant development towards decolonisation in Australia.

The Ngarrindjeri Regional Authority has co-signed a series of such agreements with local, State and Federal Governments and their departments, and with cultural or research institutions and archives such as museums, galleries and universities. These accords are known as 'KNY' agreements, standing for 'Kungun Ngarrindjeri Yunnan' or *Yunnarumi* agreements ('listen to Ngarrindjeri people speaking as Country'); at their core, they express a commitment for all partners to listen respectfully to each other's expressions of authority and expertise as a starting point for collaborative negotiation, decision-making, policy and natural resource management.²⁰ The KNY process does not set outcomes, but rather establishes virtual conditions of cooperative engagement, upon which a justly negotiated societal outcome can proceed. The virtual promise of cooperation thus becomes actualised through practice. This, then, is not an example of liberal anti-foundationalism: a KNY process isolates particular issues for discussion, and then establishes a consensual and cooperative ground enabling mutuality and parity in resulting political negotiations over matters that are the subject of disagreement. Importantly, this foundation – which bases the conversation on principles and practices of mutual authority or shared sovereignty²¹ – enables parties to begin the rectification of systemic inequities in power, governmental agency, and resultant control of economic resources. Most of these systemic inequalities stem from colonial histories of Aboriginal dispossession and the imperial imposition of Western liberal capitalism over Indigenous modes of collective ownership and productivity. Nonetheless, although Ngarrindjeri act collectively - as an Indigenous Nation - to better realise the ongoing

18. D. Rigney, S. Bignall, & S. Hemming, 2015, 'Negotiating Indigenous modernity: Kungun Ngarrindjeri Yunnan - listen to Ngarrindjeri speak', *AllerNative: An International Journal of Indigenous Peoples* 11(4) pp334-349.

19. S. Hemming & D. Rigney, 'Decentring the new protectors', In E. Waterton & S. Watson (Eds.), *Heritage and Community Engagement: Collaboration or Contestation?* London, Routledge, 2011, pp98-114.

20. S. Hemming, D. Rigney, & S. Berg, 'Ngarrindjeri futures: Negotiation, governance and environmental management', in S. Maddison, & M. Briggs (eds.), *Unsettling the Settler State: Creativity and Resistance in Indigenous settler-state governance*, Sydney, The Federation Press, 2011, pp98-113.

21. For a discussion of 'shared sovereignty' in the international arena, see S. Krasner, 'Sharing Sovereignty: New Institutions for Collapsed and Failing States', *International Security* 29(2), 2004, pp85-120.

self-determination of their culturally collective mode of social, political and economic practices after colonisation, the structural shift signalled by the KNY process and its evident re-alignment of power and the relations of social production cannot easily be considered marxist or revolutionary in its character. Firstly, although they operate at sites of disagreement or power struggle, KNY interactions between powers are overall cooperative in nature, rather than oppositional or conflictual techniques for transforming a dominant regime of power. Furthermore, because they are most often established at *specific* sites of disagreement - such as water-use in a particular area, or the repatriation of Indigenous cultural property stolen by imperial museums - KNY exchanges rarely involve parties meeting as entire political or governing entities that represent the whole of their respective Indigenous and settler communities. Rather, KNY agreement-making is dispersed throughout the complex social-governmental network of the South Australian polity; each instance of negotiation brings particular elements (or organisations) of the Indigenous and non-Indigenous political systems together in a specific motivational context defined by a particular problem. The two systems of Indigenous and settler authority thus connect at multiple and diffuse sites; the level of agreement they enter into is not complete or unified, but rather is complex, piecemeal and selective, situational and provisional. Thus, the Ngarrindjeri Regional Authority and the South Australian State can find moments of accord that allow them to work cooperatively, even when they conflict in many other respects and overall their significant differences in outlook prohibit their seamless unification in a fixed governmental agenda that imagines itself to be impartially representative or culturally neutral. Importantly, however, although each KNY agreement subtends cooperative negotiation towards a focussed outcome for a particular issue of concern, taken together the sum of the agreements forged between Ngarrindjeri and the settler state amount to a cumulative exercise of Ngarrindjeri sovereignty manifest in diverse and myriad ways, over time registering their enduring responsibility for their Country in its entirety.²²

KNYs set the foundation for a new style of relationship between negotiating parties.²³ They aim to transform given modes of conduct inherited as a legacy of colonisation, by creating a new framework to guide respectful communication and thereby to instigate and habituate new forms of interaction. While KNYs aim towards the acknowledgement and accommodation of Ngarrindjeri sovereignty, they do not attempt to assert the dominance of Ngarrindjeri perspectives over those of the other participants in public conversations and they do not claim exclusive rights or sole jurisdiction over decisions affecting Ngarrindjeri Country. Ngarrindjeri understand that they are obliged to share their Country (as they always have with neighbouring Indigenous Nations) and they are not seeking exclusive rights over the area or issue subject to their jurisdictional claim. Rather, KNYs establish formal acknowledgement of Ngarrindjeri authority to negotiate with other interested parties cohabiting in

22. D. Rigney, S. Hemming, & S. Berg, 2008, 'Letters Patent, Native title and the Crown in South Australia', in M. Hinton, D. Rigney, & E. Johnston (eds.), *Indigenous Australians and the law* (2nd. ed., pp161-178). New York, NY: Routledge.

23. S. Hemming & D. Rigney, 2008, 'Unsettling sustainability: Ngarrindjeri political literacies, strategies of engagement and transformation', *Continuum: Journal of Media and Cultural Studies*, 22(6), pp757-775.

this region, to secure practical measures that affirm Ngarrindjeri intentions, aspirations and philosophies for the future management of their Sea-Country. Ngarrindjeri have negotiated some very significant accords that have resulted in significant overall transformations in the postcolonial political landscape, culminating most recently in the South Australian Government's new policy of recognising and supporting the self-governing capacity of Aboriginal Regional Authorities and its associated announcement in December 2016 of its commitment to a formal Treaty-making process with the Indigenous Nations in its jurisdiction. This is a ground-breaking (and long overdue) development in Australia, which to date remains the only British settler colonial nation that has never entered into Treaty with its First Nations peoples.

Through the authoritative communication and cooperative negotiation of cultural differences, new social effects take form. The repetition of behaviours and concepts embeds them in routine understandings and practices, which in turn produce newly normalised modes of conduct. Through their KNY negotiation platform, Ngarrindjeri engage partners in local, dispersed, micropolitical processes to transform the colonial structures of the South Australian state. Theirs is a practical structuralism founded on Indigenous social philosophy and an innovative technology of cooperative engagement in complex systems. This exemplary instance of cooperative interaction between differential cultures is producing a significant social, political and jurisprudential effect, which I suggest can help us to better understand and draw out the political implications of a comparable structuralism that we find in Deleuze's philosophy.

II. DELEUZIAN STRUCTURALISM

Deleuze's structuralism, as depicted in the essay 'How Do We Recognise Structuralism?', is indeed initially quite recognisable; for example when he explains that a 'structure is defined ... by the nature of certain atomic elements which claim to account both for the formation of wholes and for the variation of their parts' (p173). However, the structure as described by Deleuze quickly becomes something fabulous and difficult to comprehend. It morphs into a virtual 'multiplicity of coexistence' constituting a domain of 'singular dynamisms' and 'reciprocal determinations', swarming with 'larval' subjects that Deleuze describes as 'rather patients than agents' (*Method of Dramatisation*, p97). And yet despite their unformed, blind and semi-conscious quality, these vulnerable quasi-subjects that inhabit the structure are considered to be more durable than the well-formed individuals they come to compose. My task in the following sections of this essay is to better understand the operation of this system or structure.

Deleuze defines a number of criteria that characterise structures. The first is that they have a symbolic aspect (*How do we recognise structuralism?* p171ff). This is a pre-conscious level of operation hidden deep below the

formal compositions of the structure. The symbolic field of a system is where its genetic processes occur: structures emerge from subterranean interactions between the parts that comprise them, between atomic elements that combine to form complex orders. The state, for example, is an emergent complex order that results from the combination of individual citizens, where citizenship symbolises national belonging and legitimates participation in the state order. Now, it would seem quite reasonable to think, then, that the symbolic level of a system concerns the content or quality of the atomic elements that act as the raw material from which complex structures are formed. However, this is not quite the case for Deleuze's structuralism. In fact, he defines these symbolic elements solely as 'units of position'. The genetic impulse in Deleuze's structuralism therefore does not refer so much to the qualities or the inherent content of the simple atomic elements that populate the symbolic field of the system, but rather concerns the *relations* between these atoms and the 'combinatory formula' that obtains between them (p171). These relations impart to elements their meaningful content, as an effect of their position within the order that emerges. In alignment with this perspective, we can consider how the South Australian state is a structure composed in part by Indigenous and settler individuals, but the sense of these elements is not inherent; it comes from the way they are bonded to other elements in the structure.

Being Ngarrindjeri means entirely different things whether one is growing up in poverty in a fringe camp but remains connected to family and Country, or one is a Stolen Child growing up with an urban white family. And being a Minister has a particular sense when one is deferring to an Elder, and a different sense when one is acting in chief as a state organ vested with the power to decide whether or not a people exists or a culture is significant. Accordingly, like Ngarrindjeri concepts of structural colonialism and anticolonial resistance, Deleuzian structuralism in its unconscious symbolic and genetic aspect is concerned less with the atomic ingredients themselves, and is interested more in the *relations of force* that bind these elements within the structure and position them in orders and organisations. These force relations thereby qualify elements according to the position (or positions) they come to occupy within the structure. The sense of things, for Deleuze, is a function of virtual and mobile relations of expression obtaining between propositional items, which in themselves have no essential content.²⁴ This emphasis Deleuze places on the genetic role of the force relations occurring between the elemental units of the system is why Deleuze – and especially in league with Guattari – gives such a prominent role within his philosophy to the creative operation of desire as a genetic force of creative association. This is also why Deleuze and Guattari (like many Indigenous philosophies) conceptualise desire or association in terms of productive interdependence and affirmative connectivity towards complex organisation, and not (as is the case for Freud or Lacan) in terms of a symbolic figure or meaning that 'stands in' for the missing object.²⁵ In his

24. G. Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*, M. Lester with C. Stivale (trans), Continuum, New York, 2004. See also S. Bowden, *The Priority of Events: Deleuze's Logic of Sense*, Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 2012.

25. G. Deleuze and F. Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, I. R. Hurley, M. Seem, H. Lane (trans), Minneapolis, University of Minnesota, 1983.

earlier essays on structuralism and the method of dramatization it is already apparent that, for Deleuze, there is nothing lacking in the structure, which is in fact always complete in its immediate form of organisation although it is always also being creatively reproduced by the shifting relations of force binding elements into complex orders.

If the first criterion of the structure is that it is caused by unconscious forces causing elemental interactions to produce emergent coherencies, the second criterion, then, is that it is 'local or positional' (*How do we recognise structuralism?* p173ff). However, this feature does not simply refer to the way force relations 'position' atomic elements in relation to others and thereby 'locate' them within an emergent order. Or it does; but the significance of this only becomes apparent when we appreciate how structural orders are infinitely more complex than they might intuitively seem. This is because, according to Deleuze, any particular composing element is not exhausted or used up when it enters into a given organisation but can be involved simultaneously in multiple orders or coexisting emergences. For example, Ngarrindjeri individuals will belong simultaneously to their family clan, their Nation *and* to the South Australian and national political communities. Within a structure, a composing element can therefore be subject to many simultaneous relations of force coming from multiple sources and can participate in many organisations; each of its many host organisations will qualify it in specific ways according to the special position it occupies, or the set of relations it participates in, within that establishment.

However, it is not only the simplest individual components of the structure that are made meaningful according to their location or position; just as *their* content changes according to the force relations affecting them at any particular time, so too the content of the emergent orders in which they participate also shifts. A government changes style when an Indigenous representative sits on each of its ministerial committees. It is important to understand that the relation of influence between composing elements and emergent orders is not uni-directional but always reciprocal, since the forces affecting simple elements and qualifying their content always also come from, and at the same time influence, the way their housing organisations are themselves positioned in the structure and relate to one another. When two complex orders are drawn into closer proximity, the force relations defining their composing elements will be affected. When the Ngarrindjeri Nation clashed with settler society over the Hindmarsh Island Bridge development, the Ngarrindjeri women whose sacred traditions were in question felt (further) diminished as citizens – they felt justice did not apply to them in the same way that it served the developers. And because of this weakening of its elements, as well as the way in which the legal battle caused conflict and a general sense of political alienation within the Ngarrindjeri community, the internal consistency of the Ngarrindjeri Nation was upset – thereby affecting its overall capacity to exercise a forceful presence at law. Thus,

simple elements are never isolated and free-floating in a system, ready to be combined with other free-floating elements to cause an emergence, but instead are always-already bound up in multiple complex orders that each qualify their meaning and determine how they can enter into combinations, even as the sense of these same complex orders are qualified by the content of the atomic ingredients they comprise. And their internal consistency influences how orders themselves are positioned in complex relationships of force with other orders comprising the structure. And structures, such as states, themselves are positioned in relation to multiple other structures in their local and general environments, such as businesses with interests in capitalist development. These complex and multi-levelled relations that qualify composing elements and emergent orders entails that systems are radically open and infinite. Everything in them moves constantly in tension with everything else, and meaning shifts endlessly as a consequence of the changing position of orders in relation to each other, which bring changes to the systemic arrangement of forces and also result in transformations in elemental configurations.

The 'positional' character of the structure and its composing elements and interacting forms is related to its third criterion: according to Deleuze, structures are 'differential' and 'singular' (*How do we recognise structuralism?* p175). The conceptualisation of these features is a consistent preoccupation for Deleuze, most notably in the *Logic of Sense* and *Difference and Repetition*, but also appearing at many points throughout his oeuvre. For example, in Chapter 9 of *Proust and Signs*, Deleuze presents the units and singularities of a system as 'cells' and 'vessels', and he explains how they are implicated in differential processes of folding or structuration, which he names 'complication' and 'explication'. In fact, in any system, an emergent order can be understood as a vessel containing cellular components. For example, the state is a vessel – often thought of as a ship – containing individual citizens. The cells find their arrangement in the vessel according to the reciprocal force-relations that bind them to form a consistent complex, an emergent whole or unification. Indeed, the condensation of elements into habitual relations of force produces the vessel itself, which takes shape around the associated components that form it, and which it subsequently defines. The vessel is, therefore, a 'determination of singular points that constitute a space corresponding to these elements'(p177). In this way, 'Every structure presents the following two aspects: a system of differential relations [between cells] according to which the symbolic elements determine themselves reciprocally, and a system of singularities [or vessels] corresponding to these relations and tracing the space of the structure'(p177). However, Deleuze insists, 'among all these sealed vessels there exists a system of communication, though it must not be confused with a direct means of access, nor with a means of totalisation'.²⁶ This is because the singular emergence – the vessel – is at once a 'closed container' full of content, and an 'open box' exposed in its relation to the

26. G. Deleuze, *Proust and Signs*, R. Howard (trans), Minneapolis, University of Minnesota, 2000, p126. (Hereafter *Proust and Signs*).

proximal environment of which it is a part. This environment as a whole is comprised of infinite other singularities or vessels, each with its own internal content that is nonetheless comprised of units it shares in common with other vessels; and consequently each vessel or singularity enjoys a contingent and shifting set of relations to the outside.

A vessel (such as a state) that hopes to exercise some directive agency to produce itself as a container of a particular shape or style, such as a non-imperial or 'excolonial' order must, therefore, consider the nature of its composing forces, and act upon these to determine itself as a particular or chosen form of emergence.²⁷ These composing force relations are both internal (between cells, such as citizen individuals) and external (with neighbouring vessels, such as Indigenous Nations). The formative agency will thus be involved in processes that are sometimes 'complicating' (drawing in elements and enveloping them to build internal content and consistency), and sometimes 'explicating' (opening out to the environment in order to unsettle its existing order, to engage new conjunctions and expand creatively). These productive processes of complication and explication depend upon the attitude the structure engages towards itself and others, with respect to its existing configuration, and its willingness to transform through engagement with alterity. Deleuze insists:

In any case, the symbolic elements and their relations always determine the nature of the beings and objects which come to realize them, while the singularities form an order of positions that simultaneously determines the roles and attitudes of these beings insofar as they occupy them. The determination of the structure is therefore completed in a theory of attitudes which explains its functioning (*How do we recognise structuralism?* p177).

However, the subject or the agent of such 'attitudes' is never well conceived as the singularity itself, since singularities are composed of symbolic relations that are, for the most part, unconscious and unchosen:

structures are necessarily unconscious, by virtue of the elements, relations and points that compose them. Every structure is an infrastructure, a micro-structure. In a certain way, they are not actual. What is actual is that in which the structure is incarnated or rather what the structure constitutes when it is incarnated (p178).

For Deleuze, then, agency within the structure refers less to the self-conscious attitudes and effects of an actual/acting entity, than to the actualising movement of a pre-conscious and pre-individual, systemic *virtuality*. So, for Deleuze, 'the true subject is the structure itself': the differential relations and the singular points, the reciprocal determination of parts and the complete

27. S. Bignall, 'The Collaborative Struggle for Excolonialism', *Journal of Settler Colonial Studies*, 4(4), 2014, pp340-356.

determination of complex individuals, produced by the complication and explication of differences (p178). And so we arrive at the fourth criterion of Deleuze's structuralism with the idea of the systemic differentiator: the obscure or 'dark precursor'.

III. DRAMATISATION AND THE DARK PRECURSOR

In his talk on 'The Method of Dramatisation' given in 1967, Deleuze describes individuals as singular 'intensities', that is, as points of condensation or crystallisation of differential force-relations. He continues:

since intensity is difference, differences of intensity must enter into communication. Something like a 'difference operator' is required, to relate difference to difference. This role is filled by what is called an *obscure precursor*. A lightning bolt flashes between different intensities, but it is preceded by an *obscure precursor*, invisible, imperceptible, which determines in advance the inverted path as in a negative relief, because this path is first the agent of communication between series of differences (*Method of Dramatisation*, p97).

The first things to note concerning the dark precursor are its virtuality and that it runs 'between' individuals (conceptualised here as 'intensities' actualised at/as a point of singularity). For Deleuze, the virtuality of the structure in no way diminishes its reality, and he 'will say of structure: *real without being actual, ideal without being abstract*' (*How do we recognise structuralism?* p179). In its most expanded or ideal state, the structure is a virtual whole in which every possible actualisation coexists, each one depending for its actual existence on the relations materialised between the elemental parts of the structure. Every structure is thus a multiplicity of virtual coexistence: by dividing up, differentiating into forms, the structure *produces* the species that come to populate it; its genesis proceeds from virtual states to actual beings, from the virtual structure to its actualisation in a concrete form. The dark precursor plays this genetic differentiating role, but it does not do so by miraculously materialising substances from a pure virtuality. Rather, it works its creative effect by bearing on actual bodies: by bringing actually existing forms into intensive communication, so that they might share elements and transform mutually to create new complex forms, or generate new 'species', in which they both participate. This operation can be understood in two ways.

In the first conceptualisation, the dark precursor runs between two simultaneously existing *actual* forms and brings about their communication. To appreciate adequately the operation of the dark precursor as a systemic agent of communication, we must conceive communication in the very particular way it takes place between intensive structures, as Deleuze understand these. As we have seen, for him, structures are complex orders,

comprised of elements bonded together through regular or habitual relations of force. Because elements are shared between structures, they constantly mutate as orders come into new proximity and the force relations between their parts shift. Elements themselves, and their emergent orders, are qualified by these variable force relations in which they participate. This complex nature of structures entails that when two orders meet, they will not do so as molar entities, but rather as molecular assemblages. As they come into proximity, certain of their respective elements will combine, while other aspects will repulse each other, and others still will remain unaffected by the encounter; the relation in each case depending upon the potential of the force occurring between proximal elements. Deleuze describes this engagement as a 'bit by bit' process, where structures do not engage one another in their respective entirety, but rather make 'piecemeal insertions' into each others' forms.²⁸ This, then, is how the becoming of structures takes place. The role of the dark precursor as an agent of this productive process is not simply to draw whole individuals into contact and one-on-one communication, but more precisely is to advance a path highlighting potential bonds between particular elements. These may thus become swept up in a new combination of forces to produce a new complex emergence, forged in a piecemeal and selective fashion from the elements of the existing structures in an affective neighbourhood. And, the dark precursor not only highlights potential bonds, but also throws into relief elemental incompatibilities between forms, particular sites of disjunction where their elements cannot combine to produce a higher order that contains them both in a new relation.

28. G. Deleuze, *Spinoza: Expressionism in Philosophy*, M. Joughin (trans), Zone Books, New York, 1990; p237; G. Deleuze & F. Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia II*, B. Massumi (trans), Minneapolis, University of Minnesota, 1987, p504.

In the settler-colonial social structure of South Australia, the KNY agreement framework functions as a kind of 'obscure precursor' of the new relationship forming between the Ngarrindjeri Nation and the settler institutions of the South Australian state. For example, when they enter into negotiation, an agreement concerning management of water flows through the River Murray may be reached between Ngarrindjeri and the South Australian State Department of Environment, Water and Natural Resources. The parties will agree in some respects: for example, that extraction of water for irrigation must be limited, that blocking measures like weirs and bunds must be temporary and removable, and so forth. However, they will not agree in all respects: for example, that bunds involve a sacrilegious obstruction of the spiritual passage between water and sky; or about the ritual significance of gathering certain seasonal plants dependent upon water flows through the river system. Agreements can therefore be reached, even when the partners do not agree in many respects, and even where their particular differences and desires are strikingly incommensurable.

The dark precursor is responsible for the actualisation of virtual forms, where actualisation proceeds by communication between forms, and by 'exclusive rules, always implicating partial combinations and unconscious desires' at the elemental level (*How Do We Recognise Structuralism?* p179). As

a structuring agent of communication that 'relates difference to difference', the role of the dark precursor is precisely to trace (in a 'negative relief') the complex interface where individuals (will) meet. This potentially enables an attitude and a practice of cooperative engagement: a relational approach amenable to the discovery of sites of potential agreement and partial combination; and the recognition and isolation of likely sites of affective conflict where agreement is understood to be impossible and communication will not be productive. For Deleuze, then:

the entire work consists in establishing *transversals* that cause us to leap from one [...] profile to another, from one [vessel] to another, from one world to another, from one word to another, without ever reducing the many to the One, without ever gathering up the multiple into a whole, but affirming the original unity of precisely that multiplicity, affirming without uniting all these irreducible fragments (*Proust and Signs*, p126).

The affirmative work of 'establishing transversals' is accomplished by the method of dramatisation described by Deleuze in *Difference and Repetition*, and in a more focussed way in the essay on method published in 1972. Dramatisation does not seek the essence of a thing, but proceeds by understanding and orchestrating the conditions under which a composition takes shape; that is, by understanding and seducing the specific desires that shape attitudes and relational practices. It is guided less by questions that seek to know 'what' something is, and more by questions of artistic production or direction: who, how much, when, in what way? When Ngarrindjeri meet with government representatives to discuss an issue of particular concern, they are faced with a number of initial decisions: given the agenda, will the meeting proceed better if it takes place on Ngarrindjeri Country, or in a ministerial boardroom? Who will speak for Ngarrindjeri during the negotiation? Who will the government representatives be, and what personal attributes do they have? How sympathetic are they expected to be to Ngarrindjeri perspectives? How much compromise is acceptable, and where should the negotiation end? 'All these conditions define dramatisation, and its attendant questions: *in what case? who? how? how much? ... a drama beneath every logos*' (*The Method of Dramatisation*, p103). These are strategic and diagnostic questions relating to values and interests empowered (consciously or subconsciously) by an author in the course of a work's construction; they are necessarily posed in the critical analysis of a creative work because dramatisation is a process of desire, or of desiring-production.

At a macrolevel, the Ngarrindjeri Nation understands what it hopes to achieve, and the State, too, inevitably has a set of objectives it hopes to meet. However, the eventual course of the discussion remains open and is significantly influenced by the specific capacities and desires of the participants present in the negotiation room. Even if the Ngarrindjeri Nation

29. G. Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, P. Patton (trans), London, Athlone Press, 1994, p75.

and the South Australian State consider themselves agents in the negotiation process, these structures in their totality are not immediately conscious of the processes and decisions that transpire, since the event of negotiation actually takes place via the actions of individual negotiators. These individuals comprise a multitude of pre-subjective individuations, each one potentially the embodiment of a kind of pre-subjective will or directive power: a 'little self underneath the self that acts'.²⁹ Each individual negotiator will enter the discussion knowing more or less what they want to achieve on behalf of the collectives they represent; and because the negotiation takes place in accordance with the conditions specified by the KNY framework, negotiators know generally what to expect from each other during the discussion process. However, they do not know in advance what the actual outcome of the discussion will be. Even at its conclusion, the overall social effect will not become transparent until it is combined with the effects of other negotiations taking place simultaneously (with other Ministers, with the museum, with local councils). Individual negotiators exercise considerable flexibility and strategy during the course of the negotiations, and they seek to maintain consistency with the aspirations of the collective bodies they represent, but theirs is the agency of 'larval subjects': it is the minute exercise of a part in relation to other parts with which it engages, and not of the Whole in its entirety. We see, then, that 'Deleuzian [s]tructuralism is not at all a form of thought that suppresses the subject, but one that breaks it up and distributes it systematically, that contests the identity of the subject, that dissipates it and makes it shift from place to place, an always nomad subject, made of individuations, but impersonal ones, or of singularities, but pre-individual ones' (*How Do We Recognise Structuralism?*, p190).

If structural action takes place through the intimate work of larval actors engaged in partial relations at specific sites of engagement, the dark precursor is a virtual *director* or *conductor* of the structural dramas that take place when complex forms meet, and is thus responsible for shaping the eventual emergences and serial transformations of a system. This, for Deleuze, defines the fifth criteria of a structure: its serial quality, its continual becoming. 'Every structure is serial, multi-serial, and would not function without this condition'(p182). Accordingly:

[t]he determination of a structure occurs not only through a choice of basic symbolic elements and the differential relations into which they enter, nor merely through a distribution of the singular points which correspond to them. The determination also occurs through the constitution of a second series, at least, that maintains complex relations with the first (p183).

I have described the way in which the dark precursor can be thought to determine the structural dramas that bring actual forms into communication, thereby bringing about the mutual becoming of forms and their serial

transformations, and so causing new emergences to result from their partial combination. However, there is a second way of understanding how the dark precursor plays a role in serial transformation of structures. In this second conceptualisation, the precursor does not only trace its dark path between two *actually* existing forms; it also (at the same time) runs between an actually existing order and a *virtual* order that does not yet exist, but which it is bringing into being through the process of communication, as a future effect of the mutual becomings caused in the act of communication. This operation relates to the sixth criteria of the structure: according to Deleuze, structural processes follow an empty place or position within the structure, where determinate content is missing (p184). In political systems, it is 'the people' who are missing, and who are perpetually being determined in the dramatising strategies that actualise the structure. Accordingly, '[t]he subject is precisely the agency [*instance*] which follows the empty place... the subject is essentially intersubjective' (p190). For example, in the South Australian context we can observe how the polity exists actually as a configuration of individuals and their relations. Historically, these relations have been colonial in character, dominated by settler interests and influential social forces weighted by accrued settler privileges; and these have materialised the enduring colonialism of South Australian settler society. Accordingly, in South Australia, an 'excolonial' people are missing. However, with the development of the KNY negotiation regime, we are beginning to see the emergence of a new social formation in South Australia, a political society comprising Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples characterised increasingly by their negotiated interests and by a more respectful and listening attitude of engagement. This society remains largely virtual but we can sense it taking shape, as the 'we without content' that is the empty space of the coming society morphs into more definite forms of 'excolonial' existence (*Proust and Signs*, p128).³⁰

I indicated earlier how, as it traces a virtual path between two *actual* forms, the operation of the dark precursor is associated with a method of dramatisation driven by pre-individual or partial strategies of desire. By contrast, this second conceptualisation of the dark precursor as a mediator between an actual people and a virtual people – a currently existing people and a future people to come - is linked more closely to the operation which Deleuze describes as fabulation, or story-telling. Creative processes including constructivist philosophy, minor literature and cinema (I would add Ngarrindjeri politics of resistance and KNY jurisprudence) engage in the falsification of powerful forms of actualised being, through the potency of a virtuality that precedes them as their source of invention. The potentiality of this virtual condition derives from the ways in which it can be 'remembered' experimentally as the creative source for new constructions, new actualisations of being, which can contest the apparent perpetuity of existing forms: 'story-telling is itself memory, and memory is invention of a people'.³¹ For this to take effect, constructive agents must find ways to plug virtual forces, virtual

30. S. Bignall, 2014, 'The Collaborative Struggle for Excolonialism', *Journal of Settler Colonial Studies*, 4(4), pp340-356.

31. G. Deleuze, *Cinema 2: The Time-Image*, Athlone, London, 1989, p223.

32. G. Deleuze & F. Guattari, *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*, Trans. D. Polan, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, 1986, p41.

33. G. Deleuze. *Essays Critical and Clinical*. Trans. D. Smith & M. Greco. University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, 1997, p4.

34. P. Patton, *Deleuze and the Political*. Routledge, London & New York, 2000; P. Patton, *Deleuzian Concepts: Philosophy, Colonization, Politics*. Stanford University Press, Stanford, 2010.

35. G. Deleuze. *Spinoza: Expressionism in Philosophy*, p237.

desires, into 'real assemblages that are in the process of coming into shape'.³² In this way, a fabulating thought does not simply represent a given reality, but rather creates a new world: 'it is the task of the fabulating function to invent a people'.³³ Fabulation invents a new subjectivity, a group subjectivity that forms as a consequence of the tale the coming people is able to tell about itself. In the case of South Australia, this is an unfinished story: the coming effect of the collective enunciation of Indigenous and non-Indigenous agents, working together to invent a genuinely shared path for the mediation of their communities. This step constitutes the final criterion Deleuze recognises in structuralism: the movement from subject to practice (*How Do We Recognise Structuralism?* p189ff).

IV. CONCLUSION: THE IDEA OF COOPERATION

Deleuze's structuralism is profoundly political in every aspect, insofar as it contends with the intensive dynamics of the force relations that decompose and recompose forms. A Deleuzian politics primarily concerns virtual forces of association, or desiring-production, and the preconscious conditions of coupling: power acts in the dark libidinous passages between and 'before' organised forms. This interaction describes a subterranean drama of relational and intensive individuation, directed by 'partial' and non-subjective 'agents of communication' who form molecular assemblages that progressively determine the molar actualisations of a structure. This 'obscure' plane of differential force relations, then, is where the substance of Deleuze's political concepts must be sought. Paul Patton has catalogued a range of Deleuze's political concepts, for example explaining how concepts of colonial capture and resistance are implied in the virtual Ideas of territorialisation and deterritorialisation that trace the emergences of a structure.³⁴ Here, I have considered how a political concept of communication is implied in Deleuze's depiction of the 'dark precursor' as a 'difference operator' that 'relates difference to difference'. The structural role of the dark precursor is precisely to trace the complex interface where a connection will spark between complex individuals.

Understanding the Spinozist nature of Deleuze's structuralism allows us to see how the orders comprising a structure meet 'bit by bit' as a result of the selective way they interlace and intersect at their complex interfaces.³⁵ Some of their composing elements are shared in common and can present potential sites for the development of common notions, while other aspects of their constitutions will be incompatible and will not allow for successful combination to produce a more complex organisation. I suggest that the dark precursor is poorly understood when it is thought of as simply revealing the interface of a passive or chance encounter; it is *best* (or adequately) conceived as a systemic force that *operates actively* on differences to shape their interactions and to influence the collective formations that emerge

as a result of chance meetings. And because communication is less active when it is simply one-sided, and more active when it occurs as a mutually enhancing exchange between partners, I suggest the dark precursor is *most* adequately conceived as a difference *co-operator*. It may be objected that I am eliding how, for Deleuze, the dark precursor is hardly a friendly figure, but instead is a spontaneous force of violence that causes sparks to fly between singularities as they clash in mutual opposition. This is certainly true in part, and yet I want to insist that such a conception does not fully appreciate the agentic implications of the concept of the ‘difference *operator*’; that is, as a genuine ‘operator’ of virtual expression, the dark precursor functions as an *active* force of structural composition. I think we must take seriously Deleuze’s Spinozism as a philosophy that is interested in the developing adequacy of Ideas, as existence becomes incrementally better understood in terms of its *active* capacities for entering into creative compositions.³⁶ Elsewhere, I have argued that Deleuze draws a normative aspect from Spinozan common notions and the potential they suggest for directing relational practices towards joyful compositions. These constitute a kind of ‘love’³⁷ that celebrates the mutually enhanced affective potential of individual orders, when they combine serially to form arrangements that are ever more complex. It thus appears that in the notion of the dark precursor we observe something like:

a structuralist hero: neither God nor man, neither personal nor universal, made up of non-personal individuations and pre-individual singularities... For a new structure not to pursue adventures that again are analogous to those of the old structure, not to cause fatal contradictions to be reborn, depends on the resistant and creative force of this hero, on its agility in following and safeguarding the displacements, on its power to cause relations to vary and to redistribute singularities, always casting another throw of the dice. This mutation point precisely defines a praxis, or rather the very site where praxis must take hold. For structuralism is not only inseparable from the works that it creates, but also from a practice in relation to the products that it interprets. Whether this practice is therapeutic or political, it designates a point of permanent revolution, or of permanent transfer (*How Do We Recognise Structuralism?* p191).

In her book on Deleuze’s concept of the dark precursor, Eleanor Kaufman suggests a somewhat counter-intuitive thesis for scholarship on Deleuze: although it operates at a point of permanent revolution, or of permanent transfer, the notion of the dark precursor in fact offers something like a stasis around which everything in the structure slides and moves in formative processes.³⁸ This, indeed, is something we also see in the KNY negotiation framework, which I have presented as a philosophically allied exemplar of Deleuze’s dark precursor, insofar as both are ‘difference operators’ that ‘relate difference to difference’. The KNY framework is additionally exemplary

36. G. Deleuze. *Spinoza: Expressionism in Philosophy*. See also M. Gatens, ‘Affective Transitions and Spinoza’s Art of Joyful Deliberation’ in M. L. Angerer, B Bösel & M. Ott (eds) *Timing of Affect: Epistemologies of Affection*. Diaphanes, Zurich, 2014.

37. See H. Stark, ‘Deleuze and Love’, *Angelaki* 17,1, 2012, pp99-113.

38. E. Kaufman, *Deleuze, the Dark Precursor: Dialectic, Structure, Being*. John Hopkins Press, Baltimore, 2012.

of a systemic ‘difference *co-operator*’, and accordingly provides a basis for an adequate (that is, active) understanding of the conditions of productive political communication. KNY negotiation practices are in a sense virtual and mobile, being incarnated provisionally in response to specific problems and involving differential partnerships formed in various situations dispersed across the network of settler-colonial institutions and power. However, these mobile practices also *actualise* the virtual ground of cooperation contained within the principles of the KNY framework. Although they do not determine in advance the actual outcome of the negotiations, and must themselves be incarnated or actualised in cooperative practices, these virtual enabling conditions orchestrate the terms of engagement – of attitude and comportment – needed for cooperative practices that can result in the mutual benefit of partners and the radical transformation of systemic inequity.

It may still be objected that this analogy imputes too much positive content to the notion of the dark precursor, which is never specified by Deleuze as an agent of cooperation. However, this indeed is the stronger conclusion at which I wish to arrive. In the *operation* of the dark precursor as a virtual subject of actualisation – as a difference *operator* that actively determines ‘the structure itself’ by bringing virtual differences or singularities into constructive relations of decomposition and recomposition – we find not only a notion of creative communication but, more precisely, a political concept of *cooperation*. The structural role of the dark precursor, as a difference *operator* that brings existing orders into communication to influence the emergence of new complex orders, is actively to facilitate such meetings. Appearing in the problematic context of a structural event or encounter, the dark precursor reveals virtual sites of mutual compatibility where proximal elements meeting in a system can potentially cooperate to produce a more complex union, while also observing the limits of this unification by acknowledging where they disagree and can cooperate to avoid conflict or harm. I have described how Ngarrindjeri political philosophy has conceived the KNY framework as a virtual or potential basis for the cooperative negotiation of practices that are currently materialising the postcolony in South Australia. Likewise, I suggest the dark precursor sits within contemporary Continental philosophy as a virtual Idea of cooperation that is actualised through collaborative approaches in creative practices, and which provides a normative kernel to the wild dynamisms of Deleuzian structures.

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