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Deleuze, The Dark Precursor

Kaufman, Eleanor

Published by Johns Hopkins University Press

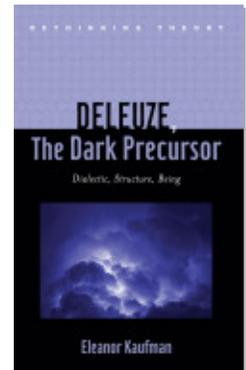
Kaufman, Eleanor.

Deleuze, The Dark Precursor: Dialectic, Structure, Being.

Johns Hopkins University Press, 2012.

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Solid Dialectic in Sartre and Deleuze

NOT ONLY IS THERE a common persistence of the dialectic in the philosophy of Jean-Paul Sartre and Gilles Deleuze, but linked to this there is a persistence of the solid object that cuts to the very heart of a theory of temporality. Lurking on the horizon of smooth space is the equally intricate concept of solid time. Here, solid time is used in two related senses. First, it indicates a theory of temporality that is not fluid or continuous but rather makes concrete distinctions between past and present and between present and future. Second, it refers to the exemplary function of solid objects in illustrating the dialectical possibilities of time; rather than flowing like a river, time is malleable in the form of a solid object—it may be bent like a nail or cut like a piece of fruit. Solid, then, refers both to solid distinctions and to the literal solid objects that are used to make such distinctions. It is my contention that solid objects provide the framework for a phenomenology of time that goes beyond the customary limitations of the human and the corporeal.

Though Sartre discusses temporality at length in *Being and Nothingness*, it is fundamentally a time that is perceptible from the standpoint of a human consciousness located within a human body. Yet submerged within this eminently humanist enterprise is a counterrealm of “incorporeal transformations,” to draw on a concept from Deleuze’s *The Logic of Sense*. What links Sartre’s incorporeal to that of Deleuze is that both depend in their very form on a logic of complete separation. Such a juxtaposition of Sartre and Deleuze seems, particularly from a Deleuzian perspective, somewhat counterintuitive. Insofar as Sartre is often regarded as an unreconstructed humanist from the vantage point of a slightly later moment in French philosophy (the moment of Deleuze, Foucault, Derrida, etc.), it might be asked very justly what Sartre has to offer the so-called poststructuralist turn toward the inhuman, where, among other

things, the inhuman signals the question of what it might mean to regard the human from the perspective of the inanimate object.

The superlative model for this attention to the gaze of the inhuman is Jacques Lacan's anecdote of the sardine can in *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*. Lacan illustrates how the inanimate object, in this case a sardine can, repositions the human viewer in an unsettling fashion through its capacity to stare back. He tells a lengthy story about being a young intellectual "slumming" on a fishing boat in Brittany. A fisherman named Petit-Jean, spying a sardine can floating in the water (the fishermen helped supply the canning industry), accosts Lacan: "*You see that can? Do you see it? Well, it doesn't see you!*" Lacan analyzes the encounter as follows: "To begin with, if what Petit-Jean said to me, namely, that the can did not see me, had any meaning, it was because in a sense, it was looking at me, all the same. It was looking at me at the level of the point of light, the point at which everything that looks at me is situated — and I am not speaking metaphorically."¹ One thing that Sartre and Deleuze have in common is that they are not metaphorical thinkers. They are thinkers of difference and disjunction rather than similarity. Given this common focus on disjunction, Sartre provides the examples and Deleuze the tools to conceptualize how we might think the sardine can looking, though not so much at the level of the point of light as Lacan suggests, but at the level of the opaque solid object.

Although Sartre would not grant a solid object the capacity to stare back, he defines it so forcefully in opposition to the human that a new objectival dimension is paradoxically opened up. Sartre frequently refers to a realm of solid, opaque objects — chairs, tables, and inkwells crop up a lot — as a backdrop for the human viewer. In *Being and Nothingness*, he poses a radical disjunction between the affect of a person and the objects that surround the person:

The dog-eared book with the well-read pages is not by itself a book of which Pierre has turned the pages, of which he no longer turns the pages. If we consider it as the present, transcendent motivation of my perception or even as the synthetic flux, regulated by my sensible impressions, then it is merely a volume with turned down, worn pages; it can refer only to itself or to present objects, to the lamp which illuminates it, to the table which holds it.²

This example from the early part of *Being and Nothingness* illustrates Sartrean method at its most extreme. Although Sartre qualifies statements such as this, especially at later points where he introduces the complexity of the body and the gaze in their relation to others,³ his whole philosophy nevertheless rests on a series of absolute separations. The dog-eared book is not tinged with human affect, does not harbor a trace of Pierre's person, his self-consciousness, or of its proper history of production — “it can refer only to itself or present objects.” In *Sartre: The Origins of a Style*, Fredric Jameson highlights the fundamental opposition between things and consciousness that underlies Sartre's work, noting that “this particular work turns out to depend constantly and insistently on such an opposition.”⁴ Such an opposition might be expanded to include, at different junctures of Sartre's oeuvre, oppositions between ego and consciousness,⁵ self and other, and in particular between human and object. To be sure, there is a relation between the two terms of each opposition, a relation that, as many of Sartre's critics have noted, is hard to define because it seems to be constantly shifting.

Rather than adding one more voice in an attempt to delineate what the relations between opposing terms might entail, my aim is to focus instead on the opposition itself, on the flickering moments of boldly defined opposition that populate Sartre's philosophy and literature. Furthermore, there exists an odd copresence of extreme opposition with moments where the opposition is entirely undone, especially if Sartre's fiction is read alongside his philosophy. In *Being and Nothingness* — that work where objects are so carefully set apart from the human — one finds the following sentence that leaps out in the middle of Sartre's famous discussion of the caress: “In my desiring perception, I discover something like a *flesh* of objects.”⁶ “A *flesh* of objects” is a notion that anticipates Maurice Merleau-Ponty's concept of flesh in *The Visible and the Invisible* (where the corporeal and the incorporeal coexist in such a way that one cannot be isolated from the other), yet it is a notion that seems very un-Sartrean.⁷ In a similar fashion, Sartre's fiction, especially the early short stories collected in *The Wall*, are replete with flying statues, obsequious Turkish delight candies, wooden benches that register a death about to happen, and forks with evil intentions: in short, a world poised on the disintegration of a rigid boundary between the object and the human.⁸ Yet, as Jameson suggests with respect to *The Wall*, the opening up of the human/object distinction only serves to underscore the very separation it would seem to undermine:

So here the extreme humanization of things is the one formulation of them which will not falsify them: we know that they are not human, that they are the absolutely non-human, and the terms are sufficiently exaggerated for us to make no mistake about it. If all language is an assumption of objects, if all language is a kind of humanization, then the only safe formulation is one that pushes the humanization to absurd lengths, that labels and announces itself so blatantly a falsification that it can do no harm, and that behind it, behind this terrifying suddenly human mask, the inhuman being of things makes its presence felt. It is obvious that this literary solution, and the problem to which it was a response, are both dependent on the radical split of the world into two parts: only in a world where things were so divorced from consciousness and from its language would it be necessary for them to leap into their opposite to be presented.⁹

Sartre's great originality — in contrast to the more nuanced phenomenological writings of Simone de Beauvoir and Merleau-Ponty — is an almost vulgar penchant for defining two terms in the most extreme form of opposition. While Merleau-Ponty uses concepts such as flesh and even perception (not unrelated, despite Merleau-Ponty's protestations, to what Bergson does with matter and memory)¹⁰ to gesture to the mutual embeddedness, the intertwining of things that would appear to be separate, Sartre gives a radical separation to things that would appear to be interconnected. How can we even conceive of going into the absent Pierre's room and entirely dissociating Pierre's objects from his person? Such a thought process goes against the very fiber of a contemporary theoretical discourse that seeks to make alignments, chart interconnectedness, note the persistent traces of memory or history or what have you. Yet this is precisely what Sartre is suggesting at this juncture of his argument. The question, then, is what new perception is opened when we take Pierre's room and posit that, rather than his objects bearing the haunting traces of his person, the two are in some sense entirely distinct?

Such a disjunctive logic is precisely what Deleuze employs in *Difference and Repetition* and *The Logic of Sense* when he emphasizes the need to make differences of kind rather than differences of degree. Using the model of division from Plato's *Sophist* (where everything is posed in terms

of a twofold distinction, and once a choice is made a new opposition presents itself, thus forming a lineage of the terms chosen), Deleuze is careful to note that it is a specific type of dialectic that is at issue here — one where there is no mediating term, where it is not so much the distinction at issue but the lineage that issues from the distinction. The following commentary on Plato in *Difference and Repetition* also appears nearly verbatim in *The Logic of Sense*:

For example, we divide art into arts of production and arts of acquisition: but then why is fishing among the arts of acquisition? What is missing here is mediation — that is, the identity of a concept capable of serving as middle term. . . . Division is not the inverse of a “generalization”; it is not a determination of species. It is in no way a method of determining species, but one of selection. It is not a question of dividing a determinate genus into definite species, but of dividing a confused species into pure lines of descent, or of selecting a pure line from material which is not. . . . Difference is not between species, between two determinations of a genus, but entirely on one side, within the chosen line of descent: there are no longer contraries, within a single genus, but pure and impure, good and bad, authentic and inauthentic, in a mixture which gives rise to a large species. Pure difference, the pure concept of difference, not difference mediated within the concept in general, in the genus and the species.¹¹

Although I would argue, in continuing the case for Deleuze’s often disavowed Scholasticism, that the *differentiae* that enable the predication of species from genus have more in common with Deleuze’s notion of “pure difference” (*haecceity*) than Deleuze would allow, what is significant here is precisely the series of differences rather than the specifics of the difference itself, the lineage of the line of descent rather than the third term that mediates between the first two — though, again, I do not agree that the *differentia* or “specific difference” is simply a mediating predicable, but that is another argument. As Deleuze writes of the dialectic in *The Logic of Sense*, “The Platonic project comes to light only when we turn back to the method of division, for this method is not just one dialectical procedure among others. It assembles the whole power of the dialectic in order to combine with it another power, and represents thus the entire system.”¹² The Platonic method of division here emerges as an ultimate

expression of the dialectic. It is precisely such a strong notion of difference, so strong that its status as dialectic is in fact called into question (is it still dialectic when the possibility of mediation is put into radical abeyance?)¹³ that is the crucial link between Deleuze and Sartre. Though their respective philosophies differ markedly in content — Sartre's humanism versus Deleuze's antihumanism is but one striking distinction — these philosophies share a law of form,¹⁴ a similar method (even a similar ethics) of radical differentiation.

This similar formal penchant for pure differentiation in Deleuze and Sartre is at certain moments marked by a convergence of content. The domain of temporality is such a point of convergence. Although they employ different terms and examples in their respective discussions of temporality, both Sartre and Deleuze draw on a fundamentally dualistic notion of time, and indeed a strange resonance inheres between Sartre's *Being and Nothingness* and *The Logic of Sense*. Moreover, both thinkers appeal to the nether realm of solid objects — and as we shall see, solid vegetables — in elaborating a philosophy of temporality.

One of the finest illustrations of Sartrean temporality is the example in *Being and Nothingness* of two nails that appear identical. However, one is newly made and the other was once bent but has been straightened. Though similar in appearance, upon hammering, one goes straight into the wall and the other becomes bent the way it had been before. Thus it would seem that the two nails react differently because of their different pasts. However, Sartre judges this example (given by one Chevallier) to be in bad faith and argues against the idea of the present being determined by its past. He writes that

to offer as proof of this permanence of the past the remanence of magnetization in a piece of soft iron is not to prove anything worthwhile. Here we are with a phenomenon which outlives its cause, not with a subsistence of the cause qua cause *in the past state*. For a long time after the stone which pierced the water has fallen into the bottom of the sea, concentric waves still pass over its surface; here nobody makes an appeal to some sort of action by the past to explain this phenomenon; the mechanism of it is almost visible.¹⁵

On the one hand, the very framework for Sartre's argument comes from a marked anthropocentrism, for he argues that there is no violence in the phenomenon of an object both possessing and possessed by its past — as if there were no violent history of the canning process that produced the sardine can — and suggests by implication that this investigation of material objects may serve as a groundwork for approaching the more complex question of the “past of *living beings*.”¹⁶ On the other hand, though devaluing the object used as an example, Sartre's writing is nevertheless haunted by solid objects, and not infrequently solid objects such as the nail that are acted on violently — cut, hammered, or bent.

Jameson notes, in his study of Sartre, the odd violence of Sartre's verbs:

[V]erbs of unusual violence, especially in the philosophic works where milder ones might have been used, keep things moving explosively forward: such verbs as “die,” “surge,” “seize,” “invade,” and so on. But such verbs have ambiguous effects: they do keep things going but at the same time they separate the new thing bursting into being somewhat irrevocably from all that has preceded it, as if it had been separated by the enormous gap of one of those instants.¹⁷

Sartre's solid objects, like his verbs, are surrounded by a syntax of violence, and they thereby undergird a logic of irrevocable separation. Though the objects are used as limit examples to distinguish them from the human, and also perhaps to gesture to a better and nonviolent realm in which human interactions will take place, they are conjured with such force and such relish that it is hard not to read a bit against the grain, to read in Sartre a fervor for the very realm of the inanimate that he is constantly setting off against the human.

What is noteworthy here is the *form* through which Sartre's temporal reflections are introduced, the violent exemplarity of inanimate objects that serve as a prolegomena to a study of human temporality. Although Sartre uses the objects in question primarily as a means of accessing the radical disjunction between past and present, it is hard to read these passages without considering the vivid specificity of the examples. Are the exuberant, and often exuberantly violent, actions performed on solid objects (along with the verbs used to describe them) perhaps a signal of something else? If so, this something else is not simply that the object

substitutes for some underlying violence actually directed toward the human or reflects its own production by the human hands. Rather, it is the object itself that points to a mode of perception that is beyond the limitations of the human, in spite of the fact that Sartre would claim to use the object only to anthropocentric ends.

In *The Logic of Sense*, Deleuze employs a notion of solid time that is strikingly similar in form to that of Sartre, though without Sartre's anthropocentrism. Like Sartre, Deleuze envisions two distinct notions of time, writing that

time must be grasped twice, in two complementary though mutually exclusive fashions. First, it must be grasped entirely as the living present in bodies which act and are acted upon [this would correspond to the notion of a purely present temporality, which Deleuze calls "Chronos"]. Second, it must be grasped entirely as an entity infinitely divisible into past and future, and into the incorporeal effects which result from bodies, their actions and their passions [what Deleuze terms "Aion"]. Only the present exists in time and gathers together or absorbs the past and future. But only the past and future inhere in time and divide each present infinitely. These are not three successive dimensions, but two simultaneous readings of time.¹⁸

While Chronos and Aion are on one level entirely distinct, they both reflect a copresence of present in past and future. In the present-centered Chronos, there is a live present of past and future. In the past- and future-centered Aion, there is a constant parceling and dividing of the present.¹⁹ Thus, Chronos and Aion are always inextricably bound up with each other yet defined according to two separate rubrics. This is not unlike the separation of the in-itself and the for-itself in Sartre's *Being and Nothingness*. While the for-itself is defined in terms of its being haunted by the in-itself (what Sartre terms "facticity"),²⁰ it is nonetheless present as a separate register. What is more difficult to ascertain is if or how Deleuze's Chronos/Aion distinction maps onto Sartre's in-itself/for-itself distinction. The complexities of this mapping come to the foreground when the disjunctive logic of both thinkers is illustrated by the example of the cut.

Just after the passage cited above, Deleuze goes on to quote the brilliant

study by the early twentieth-century French philosopher Émile Bréhier, *La Théorie des incorporels dans l'ancien stoïcisme*:

When the scalpel cuts through the flesh, the first body produces upon the second not a new property but a new attribute, that of being cut. The attribute does not designate any real *quality* . . . , it is, in fact, neither active nor passive, for passivity would presuppose a corporeal nature which undergoes an action [not unlike Sartre's discussion of the nail]. . . . [The Stoics distinguished] radically two planes of being, something that no one had done before them: on the one hand, real and profound being, force; on the other, the plane of facts, which frolic on the surface of being, and constitute an endless multiplicity of incorporeal beings.²¹

In this quotation Bréhier locates in the Stoics the distinction of being cut from the attribute of cutting. The one supposes a “corporeal nature,” the other a more counterintuitive “incorporeal being.” This in turn maps onto the division between Chronos as purely present and Aion as locus of past and future and of incorporeal events. For Deleuze, the incorporeal inheres in the past and future (Aion) and in the transformative possibilities of each. The incorporeal inheres in the verb, in the *attribute* of being bent or being cut, and not in the physical present of the cut itself. According to this system of mapping, Deleuze's Aion corresponds to Sartre's for-itself and Deleuze's Chronos to Sartre's in-itself (Sartre writes following the example of the nail that “these observations enable us to refuse *a priori* to grant a past to the in-itself”).²² However, Sartre not only links the in-itself to the past a few pages later,²³ but in the example of the nails, the present appears imbued with the incorporeal, insofar as it marks the present sameness of the two nails as opposed to their past-laden material histories where one is bent and the other straight. I argue, particularly in part 3, for the importance of attending to the potential of the incorporeal or virtual present where the present's force of inertia has the potential to arrest movement and being in a fashion that is provocative for thought. Yet at this juncture of attempting to coimplicate Sartre and Deleuze, suffice it to say that the mapping of Aion/Chronos onto for-itself/in-itself could work both ways, thus highlighting how Sartrean and Deleuzian temporalities are both marked by a structure of division that seems eminently reversible. When

we move to the examples of Klossowski (in the remaining chapters of part 1) and Blanchot (in part 3), the reversibility will no longer be thinkable in the same fashion.

Such a reversibility even at the heart of what would seem to be irreversible is epitomized by the figure of the cut, which serves as a limit case in approaching a phenomenology of the inhuman. Deleuze, following Bréhier, makes a distinction between being cut and the attribute of being cut, the latter *not* being coterminous with the cut body. This second incorporeal cutting might be seen as reversible in that the cut is not irreparable. Yet when Sartre speaks of the cut, it is with the strikingly liminal vegetable example of cutting fruit. In positing that it is nothingness itself that separates human consciousness from a consciousness of its past (“it is necessary then that conscious being constitute itself in relation to its past as separated from this past by a nothingness”), he argues that “neither has there been an abrupt interpolation of an opaque element to separate prior from subsequent in the way that a knife blade cuts a piece of fruit in two.”²⁴ By distinguishing nothingness from this opaque element that separates, he implies that a fruit cut by a knife has a simple temporality that is not infused with the nothingness of the more complex human temporality. What, however, if we were to take Sartre’s example of the fruit and give it a Deleuzian twist by suggesting that the act of cutting also carries its incorporeal transformation such that on some level the cutness of the fruit is an attribute and not a corporeal state? This allows for a multiple set of associations. It suggests that what the human perceives as a radical transformation in the state of an object (the fruit being cut, the nail being bent) but also perceives as a nonthreatening form of violence (it is after all, an inanimate object or vegetable being cut and not a human) is doubly wrong.

On the one hand, we might say that the perceived radical transformation is but part of a series of incorporeal transformations. In this sense, Sartre’s two examples are somewhat at odds, for the fruit example implies an irreparable corporeal transformation, whereas the nail example argues that there is no substantial difference in the nails’ two histories. The nail, then, has undergone an incorporeal transformation and the fruit a corporeal one. But what makes the fruit’s cutting corporeal and the nail’s bending incorporeal? Does the fruit — or the human, for that matter — not harbor the same incorporeal potential? It seems that the underlying issue

here is that all objects harbor both corporeal and incorporeal attributes, and it may be a matter of perception as to which takes place at a given moment. (Perhaps from the fruit's perspective there is an incorporeal and not a corporeal transformation.)

On a second level, every act of cutting is an act of violence, whether it is on a human or on a fruit; we are always being cut, but what we have in the cutting of the fruit or the bending of the nail is an encounter with the limits of human perception, the fact of our inability to understand the temporality of the nail or the fruit in anything but our terms. As Derrida has noted in his interview "Eating Well" and as Deleuze notes in a later discussion of *Alice in Wonderland* in *The Logic of Sense*, one is always doing violence to both the inanimate and the animate other, and the question is how to do it ethically. Deleuze writes:

To eat and to be eaten — this is the operational model of bodies, the type of their mixture in depth, their action and passion, and the way in which they coexist within one another. To speak, though, is the movement of surface, and of ideational attributes or incorporeal events.

What is more serious: to speak of food or to eat words? In her alimentary obsessions, Alice is overwhelmed by nightmares of absorbing and being absorbed. She finds that the poems she hears recited are about edible fish. If we then speak of food, how can we avoid speaking in front of the one who is to be served as food? . . . How can we avoid eating the pudding to which we have been *presented*?²⁵

This is the eerie interpellation of Lacan's sardine can, which looks at him all the same. It is the nightmare of the edible fish looking back from its state as an inanimate object, confronting the human perceiver both with the violence he or she would rather not take note of and with the fact that this violence, this cutting, has its own nonviolent quality as a verb, as an attribute, as an incorporeal event that operates, if it is perceived at all, at the limits of human perception.

The very notion of cutting, whether as entity or as attribute, implies an object that is amenable to cutting. Although a fruit is all the more liminal in that it is largely liquid, it is nonetheless solid enough to be the object of a cut. But what about a substance so liquid as to be uncuttable? On the one

hand, such a substance resists the temporal permutations of the object that is fundamentally altered by a cut at a certain point in time, taking on, as it were, the attributes of the incorporeal. On the other hand, is a dialectics of liquid even possible in the fashion of a solid dialectics? Does not liquid always defy the method of division and separation that seems so basic to Sartre and Deleuze? This opens at once a number of lines of inquiry that might be summarized as follows: what is the place of the nonsolid in Sartre and Deleuze, and how is it both figured and gendered?

It should be noted that both Deleuze and Sartre are famously associated with the nonsolid. Among other things, there is Sartre's discussion of slime at the end of *Being and Nothingness* and Deleuze and Guattari's discussion of holey space at the end of "Treatise on Nomadology." Yet the nonsolid is in both texts a vague and uncharacteristic middle category.²⁶ According to Sartre, "[T]he slimy reveals itself as essentially ambiguous because its fluidity exits in slow motion; there is a sticky thickness in its liquidity; it represents in itself a dawning triumph of the solid over the liquid, that is, a tendency of the indifferent in-itself, which is represented by the pure solid, to fix the liquidity, to absorb the for-itself which ought to dissolve it."²⁷ Slime incarnates the reversal of the directionality Sartre has been at pains to set up throughout *Being and Nothingness*, in which the for-itself is defined in its active relation to the more passive in-itself. Here, slime designates the "revenge of the in-itself," which, by this definition, is also the revenge of the solid.²⁸ Paradoxically, this revenge has been acted out all along in *Being and Nothingness* (not to mention the rest of Sartre's oeuvre) in the very materiality of the solid object examples he returns to again and again. As much as his work is known for slime, viscosity, nausea, and the like, it is also and more flagrantly a veritable catalog of chairs, tables, inkwells, pens, and paper cutters (objects that are interestingly visible from the writer's desk).²⁹ These solid objects are put in the ambiguous position of the in-itself, at once the debased term of the dualism and that which ultimately and actively haunts the seemingly more intricate for-itself. They are also the necessary counterpart to the privileged term they are defined against, here the human. They are at once what makes the human human and the marker of the nonhuman persistence that haunts. The oppositional solid, then, is absolutely necessary to Sartrean phenomenology, whereas the in-between register of slime is more nearly a middle term used to illustrate the solid and liquid in relation. Although the synthetic moment of relational-

ity or “situation” is an important term for Sartre, my contention is that it is nonetheless subsumed by the more pervasive Sartrean methodology of extreme opposition.

Holey space serves much the same role for Deleuze and Guattari, coming in at the end of “Treatise on Nomadology — the War Machine” as the happy intermediary between the striated and the smooth. Deleuze and Guattari locate the metallurgists or smiths in an intermediate position between the sedentary peoples and the privileged nomads:

Smiths are not nomadic among the nomads and sedentary among the sedentaries, nor half-nomadic among the nomads, half-sedentary among sedentaries. Their relation to others results from their internal itinerancy, from their vague essence, and not the reverse. It is in their specificity, it is by virtue of their itinerancy, by virtue of their inventing a holey space, that they necessarily communicate with the sedentaries and with the nomads. . . . They are in themselves double: a hybrid, an alloy, a twin formation. . . . This hybrid metallurgist, a weapon- and toolmaker, communicates with the sedentaries and with the nomads at the same time. Holey space itself communicates with smooth space and striated space.³⁰

Again, this middle ground of the holey could be read as the hybrid intermediary between the smooth and the striated or the nomad and the sedentary. For that matter, I would contend that it is more the hallmark of the collaborative works — there is even less space for middle ground or mediation in Deleuze’s single-authored works. And despite the favorable description the smith as inventor of holey space receives, it is only insofar as the hybrid quality of the smith and the holey itself approaches the smooth and the nomadic that these terms take on a positive valence. It is ultimately on one side of the line of division that they fall, and their mediating function — like Sartre’s slime — is if anything more nearly the exception that proves the rule of nonmediation.³¹

It is precisely in the realm of nonmediation that I would locate the embedded feminist potential of this work. It is certainly not an easy task to redeem what would seem to be the relentless masculinist point of view of these writers, especially Sartre.³² It might seem that, by elevating the solid object as the marker of radical separation underlying the work of Sartre

and Deleuze, there is an unquestionable privileging of masculinist categories. Nonetheless, it is not so much solids that are gendered masculine as it is slime and holes that are gendered feminine, once again especially in Sartre.³³ Important work, notably by Luce Irigaray, has been done in defense of the often debased and feminized concept of the fluid.³⁴ Yet what has not been systematically undertaken is a feminist defense of the solid. One approach to such a project would entail a bracketing of the middle ground in favor of more extreme polarities, whether they be an affirmation of so-called essentialist categories, a claim of absolute difference, or even a direct reclaiming of attributes associated with the masculine, such as the solid and the mind. An example of the feminist potential of Deleuzian difference will be taken up in the next chapter, as we shift our focus to Deleuze and Klossowski. If Sartre and Deleuze do not provide the content for imagining a future project oriented toward the solid feminine, they do suggest a form, and as we shall see, the Deleuze-Klossowski conjunction brings that content and form closer together.