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Breaking up with Deleuze: desire and valuing the irreconcilable

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In this article, Eve Tuck grapples with Gilles Deleuze's conceptualization of desire, finding it simultaneously generative and unsatisfying. Recognizing that Deleuze will not 'say' what Tuck wants him to say about desire – that it is smart, and constitutes expertise – Tuck reasons that there is only one thing she can do: break up with Deleuze. The article is organized into several break-up rituals, and in each of the rituals, the author works to understand, interrogate, expand, and extend conceptualizations of desire. In these ways, an articulation of what it means to value the irreconcilable is presented.

Keywords: Deleuze; desire; valuing the irreconcilable; theory use; indigeneity

If you don't admire something, if you don't love it, you have no reason to write a word about it.

(Deleuze 2004, 144)

Well it's four in the morning
Things are getting heavy
And we both know that it's over, but we're both not ready.

(*Our Window*, Noah and the Whale 2009)

I have been thinking with Deleuze for several years now, in my research with my youth co-researchers on school non-completion and push-out, and in my theorizing on theories of change and the purposes of educational research. At times, his concepts anchor mine and beam bright; other times his work lurks in mine, underfoot and troubling. Sometimes Deleuze provides a beacon, lighting the way out of murky, twisty labyrinths. Other times, Deleuze is the Minotaur, confounding the path, all the while seething at the center. His work makes some kinds of thinking easier, and other kinds of thinking more difficult. It challenges me, excites me, frustrates me, evades me. I *like* thinking with Deleuze; it, its own reward. His writing is simultaneously figurative and literal. When I read him, I read intensely, my nose near the page, fingers shoved in my ears to block the sound, eyes tracing chains of words (all an exaggeration, but gosh, it feels like this). And then, just as I am about to/able to finally suspend my disbelief that I must read to extract meaning, delight! A plateau of meaning is revealed. I bask and marvel at meaning hidden in plain sight:

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Close the door, make sure no one's listening, put your ear close to the page: I'm going to tell you a secret. It's not for publication. But should it fall into the wrong hands, should your own hands be the wrong hands, this will be of little consequence – the secret will remain transparent, inaudible, imperceptible. For the question of philosophy can only be posed as a confidence between friends. (Deleuze and Guattari 1994, 2)

I often spend ages paging through Deleuze, searching for the line where he said something or other specific about something or other. Then I realize, *that wasn't him who wrote that, it was me who thought that* – my firing synapses – *as I was reading him!* So saturated, so Technicolor is my experience of reading him, the experience is practically chewy.

Lately though, in part inspired by Deleuze and Guattari's assertions of desire as 'involution' (Deleuze and Guattari 2003), I have been theorizing desire and desire-based inquiry as counter to damage-centered research (Tuck 2008a, 2009; Tuck et al. 2008). In doing this, I found myself yearning to do something strange: I wanted to make Deleuze say something he was not saying about desire. I wanted him to say that desire is smart, is wise. Agentic. Though I looked and looked for some indication from him that he recognized desire as insight/ful, the recognition is not there. So, I am faced with doing what any self-respecting person would do when met by a companion who does not re-cognize her desire: I am breaking up with Deleuze.

This article begins and ends with my grappling and longing for more from Deleuze's already extensive and expansive framings of desire, and in the middle, moves through many of the now ritualized components of a break up. These rituals include the part with the trip down memory lane, the part with the letters to someone else, the part with the separating of our belongings, the part with the rehashing of old arguments that were never forgiven, and the part where I promise myself to be better off without him.

I feel invited and inspired to compose this article in this way because of Deleuze himself: he valued a tickling, a provoking of that which is irreconcilable, through creation, through close reading, through juxtaposition, and mostly through irreverent humor. 'In truth, there are never contradictions, apparent or real, but only degrees of humor' (Deleuze and Guattari 1990, 68). This is not to say that I am funny, but that I *should* be funny.

The part with the trip down memory lane

This discussion involves a (nostalgic?) look at what brought me to Deleuze's conceptualizations of desire in the first place. I first encountered Deleuze's work in a graduate course on non-Oedipal psychologies, taught by brilliant and dear Eve Sedgwick. As a doctoral student, I was weary of the onslaught of dichotomies with which I was confronted: reform versus revolution, reproduction versus resistance, global versus local, rigorous versus experiential. Reading *Anti-Oedipus* (1990) by Deleuze and his frequent collaborator Felix Guattari on that course for the first time was dizzying, and not quite pleasant. I saw that this book was about forgoing Oedipal configurations of regression and repression (illustrated as the false choice between an authoritative father and devoted mother – her shape and his hand [Williams 1991; Gordon 1996]) for a configuration that constituted the multiple, the dimensional, and the kaleido-directional. This text challenged and challenges me because it is concurrently conceptual and literal – they are writing about incest, about fascism, about schizophrenia, about each element of their elaborate philosophy both literally, and figuratively.

In part, this is, as Michel Foucault lauds in his introduction to *Anti-Oedipus*, what makes the text so profoundly ethical: its tenacity towards accuracy, towards the real, at macro and micro levels. Deleuze's work is a fractal. He is insistent that philosophy operates and resonates while scaling up and scaling down. 'What kind of truth could never be contradicted?' asks Deleuze theorist Philip Goodchild, 'A truth that is implicated and always annulled by its explication' (1996, 52).

This adherence to a scaled validity is a tall order for theorists and for Deleuze's readers. I note this with some irony, as it is precisely when a philosophy 'works' in the abstract but pays no regard for lived lives that I am most likely to be up at the ready to wheel, squeak, and demand grease. Deleuze's writing is confronting to me because he is unrelenting in scale, pushing that which I find compelling and provocative at the macro level past my comfort and my interests in the micro. I skip the passages about excretion. Hope I am not missing anything important.

The literal/figurative simultaneity of Deleuze and Guattari's writing becomes even more slippery for me as a reader because: '(a)lthough they may use some of the same words, ideas, and concepts, these are always deterritorialized – their meanings are changing, following lines of flight' (Goodchild 1996, 42). At first, I worked to trace the meaning of concepts: machines, the body without organs, rhizomes, wolf-packs, micropolitics and segmentarity. I would underline passages that helped me glimpse the import of these unfamiliar ideas, and then discover I had underlined everything. I was captivated by the there but not there, or not there but everywhere, qualities of the articulations of these concepts. I began to shift in my reading away from trying to grasp or trap meaning, towards a kind of open-handed hold that I use in my reading of poems (Tuck 2008a). This is the only way to deal with fugitive ideas. Well, there are probably more.

My reading a loose grip, an improvised grope, I had moved on to *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 2003) and *What is Philosophy?* (1994) and Deleuze's works on Kant, Spinoza, Bergson, Foucault, and *The Logic of Sense* (1990). I was ravenous. Deleuze's words were always at the tip of my tongue. So enamored was I of the rhizome, of segmentarity and flow, that I worked these ideas into my everyday conversations – into the composition courses I taught as an adjunct, into family dinners, on subways, at pubs, juice bars, and sushi spots. The figure depicting flow and poles, quanta, line and segments, power center (all of which constitute a cycle or period) on page 218 of the University of Minnesota Press edition of *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (2003) was especially featured. I have drawn that figure using my finger – in the air, on walls, on tables, on bathroom stalls while deep in discussion about the ways that change happens – more times than I could ever count.

In these conversations, I quoted Deleuze and Deleuze and Guattari like a true film fan quotes movies. Actually, I relied heavily on their words to express their ideas, because for me, their words sucked all of the oxygen out of the room. My words were no comparison to their words; my words were anemic, their words were 'language at its most distilled and most powerful', as Rita Dove has said about poetry. When writing alongside Deleuze, I had to fight off the impulse to quote him ad nauseam; I still have to fight off this urge. If I could do what I liked, I would just point to passages and be like, 'Word'.

Like many others, my attraction to Deleuze and Guattari was first sparked by the rhizome. As a novice in these ideas, I looked at the rhizome as metaphor to work literally. With the exception of a failed baby watermelon crop and a patch of dirt with a

few sunflowers in my childhood, I had very little first-hand experience with the underground workings of most plants. I had no idea what a rhizome was. Subterranean stems? Break off, interrupt, and it will start again from a new or old spot? Searching for connections, directions, without ceasing (Deleuze and Guattari 2003)? A blank look from me. I knew of no such plant activities. I chalked it up to my own inexperience with underground stems, but other scholars have noted that there is no correspondence between the conceptual rhizome and the botanical rhizome (Colombat 1991, 15).

My own epistemology – actively cultivated by my Unangan grandmother, and by my own being in the world as a writer and thinker – found a self-same companion in this beyond-structure of the rhizome, in which any point ‘can be connected to anything other, and must be’ (2003, 7). No roots, no starting place, no sequence, no ending place; only multiple sources, interruptions, interceptions, foldings, mergings, partings, multiple entry ways, exponential sequences, always, always the seeking out and out.

All of this took place over a matter of weeks, or years.

At the same time, I was developing a critique of damage-centered research. Much of social science and educational research seeks to document pain, loss, brokenness or damage in order to establish the grounds to informally or formally petition for reparations composed of political, material, or sovereign gains (Tuck 2009). Examples are easy to locate – they are studies that depict entire schools, tribes, and communities as flattened, ruined, devastated. These depictions are then communicated up the power chain in order to secure money, resources, and other benefits. In these studies, implicit promises made by researchers to their research subjects, ‘All we have to do is prove that you are damaged, and then we can get you what you need’.

Elsewhere I have traced this often-made promise to litigation discourse, in which the predominant theory of change is that effectively demonstrating damage will result in needed wins (Tuck 2009). My sense is that this promise likely comes from a benevolent place – that damage-documenting researchers are not intentionally deceiving, but rather, damage-centered research is balanced upon a problematic theory of change. Outside of the courtroom I cannot help but wonder, do those wins ever really come through? When the wins do not come through, researchers focus more intently on the effectiveness of the demonstration (legitimation, validity) but not on the flawed theory of change. The theory of change is flawed because it assumes that it is outsiders, not communities, who hold the power to make changes. Further, it assumes that those outsider power people behave as a judge or jury behaves, and can be convinced by strong arguments and evidence to give up power or resources.

More importantly, what does it mean for communities to reproduce damage narratives about themselves? What are the consequences of singularly defining schools, communities, and tribes as damaged? Are the long-term costs of these damage narratives worth the benefits (Tuck 2009)? Suspecting that they are not, I began contemplating a framework that sought to capture and reflect the complexity of people’s lives and communities. This framework, what I would come to call a framework of desire, is aided by Deleuze’s theorizing of desire, as I will discuss in the next section. This framework is intent on convoking loss and oppression, but also wisdom, hope, and *survivance* (Tuck 2009; Vizenor 1998). Anishinaabe scholar Gerald Vizenor tells us that storytelling that emphasizes survivance is an ‘active repudiation of dominance, tragedy, and victimry’ and these survivance stories ‘are the creases of transmotion and sovereignty’ (1998, 15).

A desire-based research framework recognizes and actively seeks out complexity in lives and communities. It dismisses one-dimensional analyses of people,

communities, and tribes as flattened, derelict, and ruined. Desire-based research frameworks appreciate that all of us possess a: ‘complex and oftentimes contradictory humanity and subjectivity that is never adequately glimpsed by viewing [one another] as victims or, on the other hand, as superhuman agents’ (Gordon 1996, 4; Tuck 2009).

The politics of desire

My work on desire prompted me to take a closer look at the ways in which Deleuze and Guattari were writing about desire, in their two volumes on capitalism and schizophrenia. Desire – not knowledge, not power, but desire – is the centerpiece of their collaboration. This desire is not confined to who is in one’s bed and how to get them there, but ‘becomes applicable in any context or relation: it is a spontaneous emergence that generates relationship through a synthesis of multiplicities’ (Goodchild 1996, 4).

Felix Guattari, in an interview on his shared work with Deleuze, contrasted their project of desire to the aims of their philosopher contemporaries on social change:

Admittedly, the current attempts to renew forms of popular struggle are difficult to wrest from the grip of boredom and revolutionary boy-scouts who, to say the least, are not too concerned with a systematic liberation of desire. ‘Desire! That’s all you ever talk about!’ This ruffles the feathers of the serious types, the responsible militants. We are certainly not going to suggest that desire be taken seriously. We would much rather undermine the spirit of seriousness, beginning with the domain of theoretical inquiry ... The work of theory should no longer be the business of specialists ... We started with the idea that desire must not be conceived as a subjective superstructure that is more or less occluded. Desire never stops investing history, even in its darkest periods. (quoted in Deleuze 2004, 217)

For Deleuze and Guattari, desire is not an absence – not something that is blocked or missing, so therefore wanting. It is not a hole, not a gap, not a lacking, but an exponentially growing assemblage. Their interest in it is in how it loosely accounts for unexpected and unanticipated turns in humanity and history. How is it that everything does not go as planned? As predicted? How is it that human beings act in ways that do not match their intentions? Even betray themselves? Desire, multiplicitous, complicated, paradoxical, is a way to begin to explain.

Foundational to Deleuze and Guattari’s desire are Friedrich Nietzsche’s ‘drives’, those parts of ourselves that interpret the world – remember that Nietzsche insisted that there are no facts, only interpretations. Deleuze scholar Daniel W. Smith clarifies Nietzsche’s frame of perspectivism:

It is not so much that I have a different perspective on the world than you; it is rather that each of us has multiple perspectives on the world because of the multiplicity of our drives – drives that are often contradictory among themselves. (2007, 69)

Smith continues with words from Nietzsche:

‘Within ourselves’, Nietzsche writes, ‘we can be egoistic or altruistic, hard-hearted, magnanimous, just, lenient, insincere, can cause pain or give pleasure’. We all contain such ‘a vast confusion of contradictory drives’ that we are, as Nietzsche liked to say, multiplicities, and not unities. Moreover, these drives are in a constant struggle or combat with each other. (Smith 2007, 69)

Deleuze and Guattari's theorizing of desire and the politics of desire is culturally specific, wholly situated within democratic capitalism, even at the same time that they are working to confront and expose the fallacies of this system (Deleuze and Guattari 1994, 44; Goodchild 1996, 71). Desire is not 'natural' or 'spontaneous' (Deleuze 1997, 185). When they talk about desire as an assemblage, as in Nietzsche's drives, the components of desire are fragments, bits and pieces accumulated over a lifetime. The bits and pieces are sovereign, are distinct, and remain so within an ecology of a dynamic whole (Tuck 2009). Some, if not all, of those bits and pieces, Deleuze and Guattari say, are informed, imprinted by the social formation of democratic capitalism. 'This is an extraordinary claim: your very drives and impulses, even the unconscious ones, which seem to be what is most individual about you, are themselves economic, they are already part of what Marx called the infrastructure' (Smith 2007, 71).

Yet Deleuze and Guattari also insist that democratic capitalism is itself schizophrenic (while also *producing* literal and figurative schizophrenia). Capitalism erupts from the interface of two distinct flows: 'the decoded flows of production in the form of money-capital and the decoded flows of labor in the form of the "free worker"' (1990, 33). However, unlike prior/historical social formations – which Deleuze and Guattari assert yielded coherence and full applicability – 'the capitalist machine is incapable of providing a code that will apply to the whole of the social field' (33).

Democratic capitalism, which cannot reconcile itself, is the context of Deleuze and Guattari's incongruous desire, which is also irreconcilable. It is desire's nature of being unresolved and self-incompatible that makes desire *productive*.

Deleuze and Guattari refer to the ecology of a thing, and all that a thing consumes, and all that a thing spits out and leaks out, as a machine. Desiring-machines take the place of Nietzsche's drives, within Deleuze and Guattari's philosophy, but unlike drives, desiring-machines are not necessarily located in the body or mind. The literal-figurative quality of Deleuze's work would require that desiring-machines *are* in the body, but also at molecular and platonic scales. Desiring-machines are in the smallest imaginable components of life, and also exist as ideas or ideals, hanging out there in the sociological imagination. Desiring-machines are fueled by experiences and by the products and by-products that they themselves produce. Desiring-machines work by cannibalizing desire, past desire, desire-in-formation, so that the distinctions between them are blurred beyond recognition. There is no new, pristine desire; there is no old, preserved desire; there is only desire that is becoming.

Deleuze and Guattari contrast the workings of desiring-machines with the workings of technical machines, which work only when they are working, and do not work if they are out of order. Technical machines often do not break, but stop working because they have worked themselves so much as to wear out:

Desiring-machines, on the contrary, continually break-down as they run, and in fact only run when they are not functioning properly: the product is always an offshoot of production, implanting itself upon it like a graft, and at the same time the parts of the machine are the fuel that makes it run. (Deleuze and Guattari 1990, 31)

If we misunderstand desire to work in the ways that technical-machines – say, crayon machines – work, then we will only recognize products that are shaped like and leave traces like crayons. That desiring-machines 'work' by malfunction that they produce through unintended outcomes of incomplete production-cycles is one of the most

overlooked yet profound epistemological shifts offered by Deleuze and Guattari. The epistemology afforded by desiring-machines is one that does not fetishize completion, closed circuits, or discrete processes. Rather, it makes room for the unanticipated, the uninvited, the uncharted, and unintended.

Though they come undone, desiring-machines are productive, and Deleuze and Guattari tell us that what they produce is nothing other than reality. In fact, they say, no machines produce reality other than desiring-machines. But more on this later.

Deleuze is adamant that desire is revolutionary. ‘This doesn’t mean that it wants revolution’, he writes. ‘It’s even better. Desire is revolutionary by nature because it builds desiring-machines which, when they are inserted into the social field, are capable of derailing something, displacing the social fabric’ (Deleuze 2004, 233). If there is anything that is positioned to dramatically change existing social formations, it is desire. Desire, unpredictable, loyal to no one, can interrupt that which seems already-determined, and set in stone. Desire skips the mandatory meeting, cuts in line, burps during speeches, flips the bird in wedding photographs, and laughs during the moment of silence.

Deleuze cautions us to not forget that desire also fouls things up for us when it seems that the world is going *our* way. It is not an ideology against a particular thing, and to relegate desire to ideology is, ‘a perfect way to ignore how desire works on the infrastructure, invests it, belongs to it, and how desire thereby organizes power: it organizes the system of oppression’ (Deleuze 2004, 264). Desire is an unstable element – it works by breaking down. Desire is radioactive.

The part with the letters to someone else

With Deleuze, there were always other men. For Michel Foucault, Deleuze had a particular admiration and tenderness. I do not begrudge Deleuze his intellectual affair with Foucault; I am not a jealous mistress. Foucault and Deleuze respected each other; they seemed to write for one another. They agreed and enjoyed agreeing, and disagreed and enjoyed disagreeing. One of the things upon which they enjoyed disagreeing most, was desire.

On 4 March 1972, Deleuze and Foucault were interviewed together for an article that would appear in *L’Arc*. Their discussion interrogated the nexus of theory, power, the Marxist conceptualization of *interest*, and desire. ‘A theory won’t be totalized, it multiplies’, Deleuze claimed, ‘It’s rather in the nature of power to totalize, and you (Foucault) say it exactly: theory is by nature opposed to power’ (Deleuze 2004, 208). Deleuze goes on in the interview to dismantle reformist notions of change.

Later in the exchange, Foucault takes up Deleuze’s characterization of theory, and its opposition to power. Foucault notes:

Power is being exercised wherever we find it. No one person, properly speaking, holds it; and yet it is always exercised in one direction and not another, by this group in this case, by this other group on this other case. We don’t really know who has power, but we know who doesn’t. (Deleuze 2004, 211)

Later, Deleuze responds to the problem of diffuse power:

(W)e see who does the exploiting, who profits, who governs, but power is still rather diffuse – I would offer the following hypothesis: even Marxism, especially Marxism

has posed the problem in terms of interest (it is a ruling class, defined by its interests, that holds power). Suddenly, we run smack into the question: how does it happen that those who have little stake in power follow, narrowly espouse, or grab for some piece of power? Perhaps it has to do with *investments*, as much economic as unconscious: there exist investments of desire which explain that one can if necessary desire not against one's interest, since interest always follows and appears wherever desire places it, but desire in a way that is deeper and more diffuse than one's interest. (Deleuze 2004, 212, emphasis in original)

Towards the end of the interview, Foucault summarily notes, 'The play of desire, power, and interest is still relatively unknown. It took a long time to know what exploitation was. And desire, it has been and promises still to be a lengthy affair' (Deleuze 2004, 212).

It is difficult to see from this exchange that Deleuze and Foucault disagree about desire – they appear to be united in the belief that desire is fertile territory for theorizing. What we do see is the way that they both wrestle with the diffuse nature of power – a keystone in each of their respective frameworks of power. Foucault calls this 'today's great unknown: who exercises power? and where?' (Deleuze 2004, 211). It is clear who is exploited and who benefits by exploitation, but it is difficult to categorically say much more.

'Investment' and then 'desire' become placeholders in this conversation for that which is a more complicated, more nuanced way to think about Marx's conceptualization of interest. Within the problematic Marxist notion of interest, there is no room to satisfactorily understand why a person would act in ways against her own interest.

Years later, Deleuze, writing with Guattari in *Anti-Oedipus*, would take up Wilhelm Reich's work exclaiming:

the astonishing thing is not that some people steal and that others occasionally go out on strike, but rather that all those who are starving do not steal as a regular practice, and all those who are exploited are not continually out on strike. (1990, 29)

Foucault, Reich, Deleuze, Guattari, all of us, are concerned with how people can continue to participate in their own domination and exploitation. How is it that we collude in our own oppression, when there are so many of us, that if we ever truly stood up, or sat down and said, 'No, not anymore', we would bring the globe to a grinding halt? Why do humans, throughout history, tolerate fascism?

Deleuze and Guattari argue that:

Reich is at his profoundest as a thinker when he refuses to accept ignorance or illusion on the part of the masses as an explanation for fascism ... no, the masses were not innocent dupes; at a certain point, under a certain set of conditions, they *wanted* fascism. (1990, 29)

This appraisal reveals a theorizing of desire that stands in contrast to what others have come to call false consciousness. Though Deleuze and Guattari go on to bemoan that Reich undermines his own wise assertions by relying on psychoanalysis to reconcile seemingly irrational desire (1990, 29), they accept and build upon the premises of desiring in contradiction, and in contradictory ways. 'The fact there is massive social repression that has an enormous effect on desiring-production in no way vitiates our principle: desire produces reality, or stated another way, desiring-production is one and the same as social production' (Deleuze and Guattari 1990, 30).

This notion that desire produces, that desire is productive, is the primary point of contention between Deleuze and Foucault. Foucault positions desire as that which ‘remains always unthought at the heart of thought’ (Foucault 1970, 353). For Deleuze, desire is the source of all reality and truth: ‘If desire produces, its product is real. If desire is productive, it can be productive only in the real world and produce only reality’ (Deleuze and Guattari 1994, 26; see also Goodchild 1996, 74).

Foucault could not embrace Deleuze’s conceptualization of desire, as told here by Deleuze:

The last time we saw each other, Michel says to me, with much kindness and affection, something like: I cannot bear the word desire; even if you use it in another way, I can’t stop thinking or living that desire = lack, or that desire is the repressed. Michel adds: As for me, what I call ‘pleasure’ is perhaps what you call ‘desire’; but in any case I need another word than desire. (quoted in Ewald 1994)

This story comes from a series of notes by Deleuze, written in 1977, that examined the congruencies and incongruencies between his works and Foucault’s works. At the time, Foucault was in the wake of the chilly reception of his first volume of *The History of Sexuality*, so as an act of friendship, as an act of taking Foucault’s work seriously, to comfort him by way of reading him closely and wrestling with his ideas, Deleuze wrote back. These notes, which Deleuze would categorize from A–H, were entrusted to Francois Ewald, to give to Foucault. Ewald would go on to write the foreword for them in *Magazine Littéraire* in 1994.

Ewald’s foreword to the notes emphasizes the admiration Foucault and Deleuze held for one another. They met in 1962, and had several encounters, opportunities to think together, but they both longed for time to more fully engage one another’s ideas. When Foucault was hospitalized just before his death in June 1984, one of his last wishes was to see Deleuze again, but it was not to be. Deleuze’s accounting of the last time he saw Foucault, above, was likely an accounting of the last time they met. Their last in-person conversation was a disagreement about desire. ‘These notes are thus the last text of the Foucault-Deleuze exchange, a call which went without response. In them can be found, beyond the friendship between two men, all that can be wished of the dialogue between two philosophers’ (Ewald 1994, 325).

In the notes, Deleuze addresses Foucault’s dissatisfaction with desire, along with MF’s petition for ‘pleasure’:

Evidently it is again something other than a question of words. Since as for myself I can hardly bear the word ‘pleasure’. But why? For me, desire does not comprise any lack; neither is it a natural given; it is but one with an assemblage of heterogenous elements which function; it is process, in contrast with structure or genesis; it is affect, as opposed to feeling; it is ‘haecceity’ (individuality of a day, a season, a life), as opposed to subjectivity; it is event, as opposed to thing or person. (quoted in Ewald 1994)

Deleuze refused Foucault’s characterization of desire as absence, as deficit. Rather, Deleuze and Guattari declare that desire is ‘involution’ (2003). Desire is engaged. Desire is exponential. It produces itself and it produces reality. It produces that which we could never anticipate. Yet, I see Deleuze’s refuting of Foucault’s desire = lack as a missed opportunity to be thoughtful about the ways that desire is not only productive, but smart. I take this up in the next section.

The part with the separating of our belongings

The story I don't want to tell: I wake up most nights, late, in the space that wavers between darkness and light. I guess a lot of people do. When I wake up, I wonder first about where I am, even though I have lived in the same house for several years now. Maybe it's not that I wonder – waver over – *where* I am, but what *life I am in*. (Holman-Jones 2009, 614, emphasis in original)

The next ritual in a breakup, in this section I will untangle my own theorizing of desire from Deleuze's, and discuss the significance of *our* divergences, especially concerning epistemological implications. For Deleuze, desire is (just) another haecceity. My work, also drawing from Indigenous knowledge systems, insists that desire accrues wisdom in assemblage, and does so over generations. Further, desire is both the part of us that *hankers* for the desired and at the same time the part that *learns to desire* (Tuck 2009). Towards this end, I will present a desire that is a departure from Deleuze's desire; Desire is about longing, about a present that is enriched by both the past and the future; it is integral to our humanness (Tuck 2009). It is not only the painful elements of social and psychic realities, but also the textured acumen and hope.

But first, I should clear something up. Deleuze would take issue with one of the primary ways that I have described desire; that is, as contradictory. This is a quality that I have emphasized, here and elsewhere, and it is accurate, but not entirely precise. Deleuze's rationale for why desire and society are not contradictory is actually much more interesting than my insistence on defining desire and society in this way. Upon this, Deleuze and Foucault do agree, as Deleuze has noted:

A social field is not defined by its contradictions. The notion of contradiction is a global and inadequate one that already implies a strong complicity among the 'contradictories' in *dispositifs* of power ... In fact, it seems to me that another great novelty of Michel [Foucault]'s conception of power would be: a society does not contradict itself, or rarely. But his response is, it is strategized, it strategizes. I find that very beautiful. (Deleuze 1997, 187, emphasis in original)

I have called my approach to research a methodology of repatriation – a methodology that fuses and builds upon participatory action research and Indigenous and decolonizing methodologies (Tuck 2008b). It is crafted to be particularly attuned to insynchronicity: to observe contradictions within institutions and the ways those contradictions play out in lived lives. A methodology of repatriation views insynchronicity – the gaps between what institutions, people, and governments say they do and what they actually do – as revealing units of analysis.

As you can see, Deleuze's (and Foucault's) insistence that society does not contradict itself, that what seems to be contradiction is actually part of a strategy to maintain power, will require me to up my game and heighten the ways in which I theorize contradiction. Deleuze writes:

I would say, for my part, that a society, a social field, does not contradict itself, but what is primary is that it takes flight; it first of all flees in every direction; it is lines of flight that are primary (even if primary is not chronological). Far from lying outside the social field or emerging from it, lines of flight constitute its rhizome or cartography. Lines of flight are the same thing as movements of deterritorialization: they imply no return to nature; they are points of deterritorialization in the *agencements* [assemblages] of desire. (Deleuze 1997, 187, emphasis in original)

Deleuze imparts that what performs as contradiction in society are actually a multiplicity of lines of flight that 'flee in every direction'. These lines of flight undo that which is thought to be static, not by returning to earlier freezes, but by exploding what is possible and practical through the processes of desire.

In sum, desire is not contradictory. Desire is the process by which society seems to contradict itself.

Yet, in regards to Deleuze's prior point, taken from Foucault, that society does not contradict itself but rather, strategizes both territorializations and deterritorializations, I cannot help but wonder who the architects of the strategy are? This goes to the previously noted unknown, from Foucault: 'who exercises power? and where?' (Deleuze 2004, 211). It is where the line in the sand between me and Deleuze begins to come into view.

Deleuze seems to have resolved that there are not architects, that the nomadic, ceaselessly searching subterranean stem of desire territorializes and deterritorializes not by intention, but by design. For Deleuze – though he is adamant that desire is not the irrational, aberrant fodder that requires psychoanalysis – desire is largely unconscious (Deleuze and Guattari 1990, 30). Desire, the only machine that produces reality, revolution, is a process about which we are mostly unaware.

Deleuze's conceptualizations of desire are balanced on un-consciousness because otherwise, they would not sufficiently explain how people desire their own oppression, the major impulse for Deleuze to theorize desire in the first place. 'In the end, the answer is simple: it is because your desire – that is, your drives and affects – are not your own, so to speak' (Smith 2007, 74).

For me, the haecceity of desire *is* a sufficient explanation. Deleuze, however, insists that desire is unconscious:

Desire consists of interruptions, letting certain flows through, making withdrawals from those flows, cutting the chains that become attached to the flows. This system of the unconscious, or desire that flows, interrupts, begins flowing again – it's totally literal; and contrary to what traditional psychoanalysis tells us, it is perfectly meaningless. Without any sense, there is nothing to interpret. Interpretation is meaningless here. (Deleuze 2004, 232)

Clearly, he makes this insistence to rescue desire from psychoanalysis, to fend off those who aim to pathologize desire; yet, I hold that Deleuze gives too much up when he says that desire is perfectly meaningless.

We are at the edges of what Deleuze will say about desire, and I want him to say more. I want him to say that desire is smart – that it is purposeful, intentional, agentic; that it can teach itself, craft itself, inform itself; that it can make decisions, that it can strategize. It strikes me as out of character that Deleuze, so relentlessly scale-ular, would maintain that society strategizes territorializations and deterritorializations because of the haecceity of public desire, but does not afford desire at the level of personhood the same providence.

I am ready for a politics of desire that observes desire as enjoying *some/a lot of* self-determination, even as its lines of flight 'flee in every direction'. Desire, for my part, accumulates wisdom, picking up flashes of self-understanding and world-understanding along the way of a life. This wisdom is assembled not just across a lifetime, but across generations, so that my desire is linked, rhizomatically, to my past and my future. It is in the way I can tell my grandmother's stories with as much fullness as I

tell my own, a practice among many first peoples. I believe that our desire has expertise. In fact, I believe desire constitutes our expertise.

Deleuze, in some small ways, recognizes the dilemma of a politics of desire relegated to the unconscious: ‘The problem is knowing how the unconscious works. It is in knowing how “desiring-machines” work, and knowing how to use those machines’ (Deleuze 2004, 232). Deleuze, as could be predicted, does not rely on psychoanalysis, psychiatry, literature, political science, or any other discipline to resolve the understanding of the unconscious and desire. ‘The problem is not determining which science will be the human science par excellence’, he says, ‘the problem is determining how a certain number of “machines” endowed with revolutionary potential are going to fit together’ (Deleuze 2004, 237). This *articulation* of how change happens makes room for my conceptualization of desire as expert.

(Less sure now.) *Maybe a break up is a bad idea. Too dramatic.*

But, it’s as if he goes out of his way to not say that desire is smart.

Doubt. Wavering.¹

The part with the rehashing of old arguments that were never forgiven – brief distraction

Here, I embark on one of the last rites of a relationship: the part with the fights that never died, or the part with the plate of spaghetti flying through the air. To confess, my use of Deleuze’s works has always been complicated because of my Indigeneity. I experience this complicatedness as a knot, a hulking knot with many strands, each with their own knots contributing to the tangle. A primary strand in the knot has to do with those ideas in Deleuze’s works that are resonant for me because of my relationship to Indigenous knowledges – both the knowledges that are represented in the Indigenous academy and the stories of my grandmother’s kitchen table.²

For instance, how do I attribute Deleuze’s notions of rhizomatic interconnectedness, a notion at the very center of his philosophies, when for hundreds and thousands of years, interconnectedness has been the mainstay in many Indigenous frameworks, both tribal and diasporic? How do I as one person account for the interface of these concepts without falling into the traps put in place by the colonizers’ and academy’s long history of exploiting, romanticizing, and mining of Indigenous knowledge and the US tradition of ‘playing Indian’ (Deloria 1998)? It’s an issue of false inventions and giving credit where credit is due, and again an issue of describing and engaging in contentious, complex ideas.

Another part of the knot involves the problems that arise when interfacing Indigenous worldviews with poststructuralist theory or any project that has a focus on becoming and not being. As Sandy Grande insists:

The notion of fluidity has never worked to the advantage of Indigenous peoples. Federal agencies have invoked that language of fluid or unstable identities as the rationale for dismantling the structures of tribal life. Whitestream America has seized upon the message of relativism to declare open season on Indians. (Grande 2004, 112)

There is a paradox here, a tension at the very definition of Indigeneity that refuses to be reduced to blood-quantum or external designation, that nonetheless is concerned with how to reinforce our own self-determination and sovereignty when our primary

relationship to the Whitestream USA has only served to tell us that we are already dead (Tuck in conversation with Fine 2007). Sherman Alexie warns, 'In the Great American Indian novel, when it is finally written, all of the white people will be Indians and all of the Indians will be ghosts' (1996, 95).

Culmination: the part where I promise myself to be better off without you or unfixing the subject

Desire does not lack anything; it does not lack its object. It is, rather, the subject that is missing in desire, or desire that lacks a fixed subject; there is no fixed subject unless there is repression. (Deleuze and Guattari 1990, 26)

Finally, I turn to the last ritual, the parting itself. There are many ways that parting can go. In parting, there may be incantations spoken over a barrel of burning photographs and old letters. Or, the immediate replacement of the ousted lover with a new paramour. There may be keying of vehicles, cutting the ex's head out of photos, stalking of *Facebook* pages, 2am hang up phone calls, or other acts of symbolic aggression.

My impulse, in some ways, is to let bygones be bygones. What does it matter that Deleuze will not say that desire is smart? It is not as though I have been monogamous in this intellectual affair – I am theoretically polyamorous, even promiscuous. My theoretical promiscuity is evident in my thinking and research, my writing and teaching.

Still, my impasse with Deleuze is not around mere semantics, not a slim difference in meaning. His characterization of desire as wholly unconscious, and my conviction that desire is at least partially self-determined, represent a significant epistemological divide, too hefty to bygone.

So, in other ways to which I will acquiesce here, my impulse is to cultivate a way to actively *value* that which is irreconcilable with me and Deleuze. Still in formation, my ideas about valuing the irreconcilable take inspiration from Patricia Carini's work on valuing the immeasurable. In her discussion of valuing the immeasurable, Carini captures the 'manyness' of schooling – the inherent troubles of a system built for the numbers of students we teach, and all of their rich diversities – and how the immense project of schooling within manyness proffers, 'an inclination to distance ourselves, to make some space, to detach or disengage. Especially when resources of money, supplies, and that most precious ... time, are limited, we may seek efficiencies and economies' (2001, 168) of measurement. Carini goes on to mark, however, that 'there is that in learning which resists measurement' (173), and that:

When the immeasurable isn't recognized or valued, it tends to slip from view. Out of sight, it ceases to claim our minds and attention. We forget how to see it. Left to lie fallow these kinds of experiences tend to become not talkable. The language left for saying them, for exploring their meanings, grows rusty, archaic, clumsy on our tongues, and sometimes, embarrassing or forbidden. (2001, 175)

Carini goes on to describe a process by which she and her colleagues at the Prospect School would value the immeasurable through close description. School faculty gathered for extended periods of time to look at (not examine) student work and describe (not categorize or evaluate) what they saw. Through this process of close description, a deep valuing of students' works, lives, and learning emerged, a valuing that stood in stark contrast to other forms of assessing student work.

To describe *is* to value, Carini tells us:

Describing I pause, and pausing, attend. Describing requires that I stand back and consider ... Describing makes room for something to be fully present. Describing is slow, particular work. I have to set aside familiar categories for classifying or generalizing. I have to stay with the subject of my attention. I have to give it time to speak, to show itself.

I have to trust that what I am attending to makes sense; that it isn't a merely accidental or chance event. To discover the subject's coherence and how it persists in the words, I have deliberately to shift my own perspective in relation to it. (2001, 163)

To describe is to value: valuing the irreconcilable

I admire the work of Stacy Holman-Jones, who writes recently about 'Crimes Against Experience'. This essay – layered, special, astonishing – rhizomes 'experience as always inseparable from language – from self-subject, from others, from discourse, from difference, from love' (2009, 615). The essay is a describing of a parting, and it is a valuing of the irreconcilable. It does exactly what I would like to do to finish this article. It maps Julia Kristeva's essay 'Stabat mater', (1997/1987) (itself a mapping of mothering, the body, and subjectivity), Joan Scott's essay 'The evidence of experience' (1991) and Minne Bruce Pratt's poetry collection, *Crime Against Nature* (1990). Pratt's collection is a telling of deep grief and loss, in being separated from her sons after coming out as a lesbian, a telling echoed in Holman-Jones' stories as a lesbian woman once married to and now divorced from a man, and the mother of a(n adopted) beloved son.

Holman-Jones' essay brings us to the cusp of her divorce, to the bench outside the courtroom, leaning against her soon-to-be-ex-husband, nervously waiting for the judge to call them in, to make their parting final. Inside the courtroom, the questions from the judge demonstrate the court's inability to understand this kind of parting. The gavel cracks and startles. They are parted. They are sent from the room, 'forever ordered to visit our son' (2009, 612).

Holman-Jones' work teaches me about valuing the irreconcilable, as it also teaches me about walking away. The gap between what the court could see, hear, recognize, about the need to part, and Holman-Jones' experience of the profound, complicated need to part, smarts, stings. The struggle to explain how this came to be, to herself, to others, throbs. 'Were these identities, these facets of my being, something "always there simply waiting to be expressed" (Scott 1991, 792)? Yes. No. I'm not sure. I changed, I always have' (Holman-Jones 2009, 612).

Throughout her essay, Holman-Jones painstakingly describes and values experience. Her describing/valuing of experience says more than I can say in the final moments of my parting with Deleuze to describe/value that which is irreconcilable in our desires:

Rather than rely on 'simple' and 'unconscious associations', such differential understanding recognizes the 'distortions and diffractions' of experience, along with points of contact and acknowledgement in a dance of identification and dis-identification (Scott 2001, 203; see also Munoz 1999) ... I understand experience for the 'functions it serves, the dangers it presents, and the undisclosed possibilities that lie within it'. (Fryer 2003, 155, in Holman-Jones 2009, 615)

I call this, what I am doing here with Deleuze, a parting, but it is really a transgression (though if I were to call it a transgression, it would really be a parting). *Here, I walk away*. I say this to know:

[t]hat transgression [is] possible, without handing what I wanted away, abjected, only and always loss. I wanted to also know my desire as 'plentitude and abundance'. (Braidotti 2002, 60)

I wanted the astonishment of the extent of my existence. (Holman-Jones 2009, 613)

I cannot say anything more certain than this. Holman-Jones' essay unfastens a sadness inside me, and I am drenched in the feelings of loss that come. Breakups (grief, longing, desire) are like this; too permanent, yet too possible to undo. 'Well I don't think that it's the end, but I know we can't keep going' (Noah and the Whale 2009, track 2). Walking away does not mean that there is no walking back. Often, actually, walking away ensures walking back:

It is, for now, a textual, wavering, presence poised at the moment of something possible, ready for pleasure and for freedom. I've said that before, I know. Maybe, like the women in Pratt's poem, I keep forgetting. Maybe my 'story drifts way like smoke, like vague words in a song, a paper scrap in the water'. (Pratt 1990, 34)

And still, like smoke and water, it keeps returning, evidencing the ebb and flux of memory and desire. (Holman-Jones 2009, 614)

This walking, this valuing, this attending, there is not an easy ending.

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Notes

1. '(I)t is always on the most deterritorialized element that reterritorialization takes place' (Deleuze and Guattari 2003, 221).
2. 'American Indian metaphysics has the advantage of framing all questions of knowledge as fundamentally moral questions that literally reside in our everyday life' (Deloria and Wildcat 2001, 150).

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