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Tamsin E. Lorraine

Swarthmore College, tlorrai1@swarthmore.edu

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Feminist Lines of Flight from the Majoritarian Subject

Tamsin Lorraine Swarthmore College

Abstract

This paper characterises Deleuze and Guattari's conception of the majoritarian subject in *A Thousand Plateaus* as a particular – and inevitably transitory – manifestation of sexed and gendered subjectivity emerging with late capitalism from the always mutating flows of creative life and suggests that their notion of the schizo or nomadic subject can inspire feminist solutions to the impasses posed by contemporary forms of sexed, gendered, and sexual identity. Feminism can thus be conceived as a schizoanalytic practice that fosters the kind of alternative subjects for which Deleuze and Guattari call: subjects that move beyond oppressive self–other relations towards a form of subjectivity that can welcome differences as well as the differentiating force of life itself.

Keywords: Deleuze, Guattari, gender, feminism, identity, subjectivity.

Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, in works they wrote separately as well as together, present an ontology of becoming, a conception of the modern subject of late capitalism, and intimations of future forms of humanity with intriguing implications for feminism. Their ontology posits humanity as a flux of always mutating becoming intertwined with creative flows of non-human and inhuman life, and thus contests essentialist views of women and men as well as a binary division between the two. Their conception of the modern 'autonomous' subject posits the latter as inevitably shot through with a multitude of social flows in shifting configurations that can be mapped with respect to specific locations in larger social wholes, and thus suggests a subject produced through collective processes that we can better understand and invites discriminating genealogies of gender in its imbrications with other aspects of social identity. And their notion of the schizo or nomadic subject dramatises possible 'lines of flight' from dominant forms of

subjectivity, and thus inspires feminist solutions to the impasses posed by contemporary forms of sexed, gendered, and sexual identity.

In what follows, I characterise Deleuze and Guattari's conception of the modern subject as a particular—and inevitably transitory—manifestation of sexed and gendered subjectivity emerging with late capitalism from the always mutating flows of creative life and I explore the implications of their conception for a feminist project of social change. Although Deleuze and Guattari do not pursue this point the way I will throughout this essay, sexed, gendered, and sexual identity are central features of the oedipal subject, making the question of sexual difference a crucial one, at least if one wants to endorse their project of promoting schizo subjectivity as a project, as I will propose, of moving beyond oppressive self/other relations toward a form of subjectivity that can welcome differences as well as the differentiating force of life itself.

I. Oedipal Subjectivity and the Majoritarian Subject

According to the story Deleuze and Guattari tell in *Anti-Oedipus*, oedipalisation as a psychic structure of human subjectivity arose in the wake of capitalism's deterritorialisation from the social systems of meaning of previous cultures. *Anti-Oedipus* is in large part a critique of psychoanalysis for further entrenching oedipal subjectivity rather than (as Deleuze and Guattari propose) moving us beyond it, but it is important to remember that Deleuze and Guattari 'have never dreamed of saying that psychoanalysis invented Oedipus. Everything points in the opposite direction: the subjects of psychoanalysis arrive already oedipalized, they demand it, they want more' (Deleuze and Guattari 1983: 121). Although they think that psychoanalysis gets the unconscious wrong and has fallen for the ruse oedipal subjectivity entails—that what the subject wants but cannot have is an incestuous relationship with his mother (rather than, as they see it, to engage in forms of desiring production that might unravel or revolutionise the social status quo)—the oedipal subject characterised by psychoanalysis is an ideal type of a fleeting form of modern subjectivity. This type may be actually manifest in a relatively small number of instances given the deterritorialising flows that undermine it as well as the vagaries of family life, but it is a form of subjectivity whose further unravelling they hope to promote. If the oedipal subject is the retrenchment of a more traditional form of subjectivity precipitated by the frantic deterritorialisation of capitalism, the schizo subject is a new form of subjectivity also

precipitated by the deterritorialisation of capitalism – and it is the latter subject that Deleuze and Guattari prefer to support.

Although sexed and gendered identity may appear to be primary aspects of personal identity (checking off one's race or religion may or may not be required, but checking off one's sex usually is), on Deleuze and Guattari's view, oedipal subjectivity obscures the multiple social flows implicated in family life. Markers of difference that have stable social significance in the territorial and despotic social formations Deleuze and Guattari describe lose their credibility in a capitalist social formation. Deference to abstract calculations of the market such as the need for workers who can migrate from one workplace to the next in keeping with the skills needed to produce the products that will sell the best take precedence over the significance of concrete relations with others in a variety of relatively stable social networks. Cultural and institutional support for various identities is weakened by the commodification of ethnic and cultural differences. The flows affecting a subject's life are organised around sexed and gendered identities produced through a process of oedipalisation that requires constituting oneself as a lacking subject and taking up a position on either side of a sexual divide. Sexual difference becomes a crucial structural feature in the psychic structure of a personal self who can negotiate the speeds of capitalism without unravelling, but the flows affecting subjects are social, economic, political, cultural, racial, pedagogical, and religious, as much as sexed or gendered (see, for example, Deleuze and Guattari 1983: 274).

While sexual difference is important to the territorial and despotic social formations Deleuze and Guattari describe, it is not personalised in the form of sexed and gendered identity and sexual preference the way it is in modern society.¹ According to Deleuze and Guattari's view, human subjects enter into polyvocal and multiple relations with their world. A child is always making assemblages – pushing an ant along with a stick, jumping in a puddle to see the water splash, blowing bubbles in the milk to see them cascade over the sides. These assemblages unfold not as expressions of the secret desires of a personal self, but through body parts becoming the working parts of assemblages that connect with the world in terms of their capacities to affect and be affected (air plus throat plus milk in glass make bubbles that spill over). Oedipalisation requires the subject to internalise the prohibitions of paternal law: to regain a substitute for the prohibited mother (an incestuous relation with whom, in some sense, comes to represent, according to Deleuze and Guattari, engaging in unregulated desiring production with its immanent

satisfactions), one must identify with the father and become an active agent of the law he represents, or become the object desirable enough to obtain passive access to phallic power. This produces a subject whose desire is premised upon lack (one desires what one has lost and cannot have until one lives up to one's ego ideal) rather than upon the creation of connections with the world that unfold creative capacities in living.

Internalisation of paternal law suppresses pursuit of the mutant lines of deterritorialisation that emerge from the swiftly changing circumstances induced by the incessant drive for profit, allowing relative stability of the oedipal subject (if of a paranoid sort) despite the breakdown in traditional codes in living and the habitual patterns of life that actualise such codes. Barred from the creative transformation of productive connection with the world, the oedipal subject of capitalism maintains self-sameness with respect to interchangeable objects of desire through repetition of personalised patterns of meaning and behaviour. Her desiring production is restricted to fantasising the objects that once acquired will give her the satisfaction she seeks. She is thus diverted from engaging in the immanently satisfying production of machines that would connect her in various ways to the flows around her (machines that would extend her capacities and engage her in the kind of on-going metamorphosis that makes subjects hard to pin down). The desire to connect, make things happen, and extend one's capacities and powers to affect and be affected (the productive desire that constitutes active participation in the creative diverging of life) becomes the private desire of a personal self to obtain a substitute for an object of desire prohibited by paternal law (where the latter is understood as the dominant processes regulating social existence in its current configurations).

In *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari's characterisation of the modern subject de-emphasises the role of the family in the production of oedipal subjectivity and elaborates the larger social flows that resonate and affirm the constricted desires of a subject premised upon lack. From the moment a child is born, she is immersed in flows of signification and subjectification, and she enacts, through her perceptions, thoughts, actions, and emotions, the habitual patterns and orientations of her location on the social field with its particular configurations of human and non-human flows. The subject emerges from myriad routines and habitual patterns of living in which she understands herself and what she says and does through meanings made available by the practices engaged in at home, at school, at work, at places of worship, at the doctor's office, at court, and so forth, as well as by multiple forms of cultural production ranging from network news

and printed materials to video games and cinema. Deleuze and Guattari's notion of the faciality machine suggests that the triangulation of identity with respect to sexual difference in the family is replicated and affirmed with respect to multiple flows of the social field in a way that fixes the subject on a 'white wall' of signification where she can always be categorisable and plunges her into a 'black hole' of subjectification where her psychic habits of self devolve into sterile patterns. Everyone must submit to the dualism machines of subjectification, either identifying their subjective experience with one of two opposing categories in a series of opposing categories or being subjected to such identification by others. A recognisable subject with a specific position vis-à-vis what Deleuze and Guattari call the 'majoritarian subject' is thereby produced 'depending on which faciality trait is retained: male-(female), adult-(child), white-(black, yellow, or red); rational-(animal)' (ATP 292).

The faciality function shows us the form upon which the majoritarian subject is based: 'white, male, adult, "rational," etc., in short, the average European' (Deleuze and Guattari 1987: 292). Faces are produced 'only when the head ceases to be a part of the body, when it ceases to be coded by the body, when it ceases to have a multidimensional, polyvocal corporeal code' (Deleuze and Guattari 1987: 170). Mutant fluxes and flows of the body, for example, various forms of becoming-animal, are no longer elements that are taken up into the socially sanctioned organisation of human individuals. 'Bodies are disciplined, corporeality dismantled, becomings-animal hounded out' (Deleuze and Guattari 1987: 181). The complexity of embodied existence is reduced to what can be captured and coded through the faces that are socially recognisable (faces that show up on society's white wall as readable) and psychically convincing (faces that can be internalised as one's personal identity). Faces thus entail a reduction of one's lived experience of another human being in all her specificity to the selected perception of another in terms of relatively fixed social categories of identity. They also entail a personal psychic identity that comes to, in a sense, stand in for the unrepresentable subtlety, variation, and ambiguity in the lived experience of one's own corporeality.

Sexed and gendered identities are crucial to the stabilising identifications required by the faciality machines; taking up a definitive stance with respect to a transcendent representation of desire separated from the differentiating flux of life – the phallus as signifier of whatever one might desire (with its implications of the passive or active relation of the sexed subject vis-à-vis the likelihood of achieving satisfaction) – renders the lines of becoming connecting one to the world

imperceptible and thus totalises a self that can be ranked with respect to the majoritarian subject. Forming a central identity as a woman or a man with a specific gender identity thus entails a conception of self in relative autonomy from the world who takes a passive or active desiring stance with respect to that world. This division of humanity into two sexually differentiated groups obscures a wide range of social investments of the contemporary social field stratified into various configurations of power by highlighting sexed identity as key to determining who one is and how to live one's life. A variegated range of differences among human subjects is thus reduced in significance when compared to identification with one of two categories, woman or man. This binary configuration allows resonating patterns of binary identifications that situate subjects with respect to the majoritarian subject in ways that clearly delineate one's position according to a relatively static social hierarchy.

At the level of the lived orientation of embodied subjectivity, each subject, whether oedipalised or not, lives out her life as a unique configuration of the concrete flows of physiological, corporeal, and semiotic processes that inform her day-to-day life. How well this orientation fits with the categories through which she is designated and interpellated by the various practices she engages depends upon her specific situation. No subject in contemporary society can escape dealing with sex and gender categories in one form or another. Whether one lives out these designations and interpellations in comfortable conformity or painful dissonance depends upon whether the multiple forces converging in the durations one lives resonate with dominant memory (that is, the representational memories and history sanctioned by the mainstream) or induce varying tendencies toward counter-memories and minoritarian resistance. Furthermore, binary sexual difference turns out to entail a form of subjectivity structured in terms of bifurcating categories that valorise some subjects by marginalising others. Identification with one or the other of two sexually differentiated positions (despite the molecular connections subverting or complicating that identification) is paradigmatic for other selections made from the faces of the faciality machines. The active/passive dichotomies of sexual difference are replicated in other social binaries with one identification of two possibilities being always better or worse (that is, either closer to or further from the majoritarian subject).

If a variegated range of social flows (from physiological and cultural flows related to one's able-bodiedness and race to economic and political flows related to one's class and political affiliation) become subsumed under one's sexed and gendered identity with respect to a familial story

about sexual difference (one is a disabled woman or black woman rather than a disabled or black human being; one is disabled *or* abled, black *or* white, just as one is a woman *or* a man), then the latter will loom large in one's attempts to live a meaningful life. Troubling the waters of binary sexed and gendered identities by revealing the complexities subverting them as well as their imbrications with other aspects of identity would thus appear to be especially threatening to forms of subjectivity organised with respect to the majoritarian subject. If this is the case, the feminist imperative to map sex and gender in relation to other social designations could be said to be a project of mapping forms of subjectivity structured in terms of their divergence from a normative subject in order to explore and experiment with the possibilities implicit in our present of a subjectivity that could welcome differences without ranking them. Mapping subjectivity in terms of sex and gender from this perspective respects the importance they play in orienting lived experience in its contemporary formations at the same time as it fosters lines of flight that could lead to forms of subjectivity that do not require marginalising others.

II. Lived Orientations and Feminist Genealogies

Linda Alcoff, in an insightful essay on identity, argues that we need to conceive identity as more than a category. Identity entails an interpretative horizon that 'should be understood not simply as a set of beliefs but as a complex (meaning internally heterogeneous) set of presuppositions and perceptual orientations, some of which are manifest as a kind of tacit presence in the body' (Alcoff 2006: 113). She cites George Lakoff and Mark Johnson's work demonstrating that the concepts we use in everyday life emerge from 'largely unconscious embodied conceptual systems' (Alcoff 2006: 113). And she draws from the phenomenological descriptions of Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Simone de Beauvoir, Sandra Bartky, and Iris Young to indicate how a lived orientation of the body in the world constitutes a kind of implicit knowledge. On Alcoff's account, identity is an orientation to the world lived in the gestures, movements, and actions of the body at a non-conscious level as well as in the presuppositions, assumptions, and beliefs of a linguistic orientation. Both together comprise an interpretative horizon that grounds a subject in a perspective that is lived as her own. Social identity is not simply the categories into which one fits, but an interpretative horizon shared with certain others that affects what and how one perceives. These identities are experienced in terms of the

imbrications of social flows that converge in the various assemblages through which day-to-day life is lived rather than the abstract categories of identity to which people are often reduced. Identity is thus not necessarily something that is inflicted upon one by others; it is an orientation experienced as one's own that emerges through participation in collective patterns of corporeal and symbolic activity. This is why claiming an identity through a rewriting of dominant history can be so important. In articulating and asserting such an identity, a perspective grounded in patterns of collective living experienced by a minoritarian group is brought into conscious awareness and made the basis for an alternative epistemological claim to that of the dominant culture about the nature of social reality. 'Real' identity is thus, according to Alcoff, experienced as an orientation grounded in often non-conscious patterns of body, mind, and speech so habitual that they can appear (if they appear at all) to be inevitable or natural.

What Alcoff calls 'real' identity is, from Deleuze and Guattari's perspective, the perceptual, cognitive, affective, and embodied orientations of a subject sustained through the habitual patterns of physiological, social, and cultural processes that constitute one as an embodied human subject. Orientations constituted and sustained through organic processes experienced in imbrication with the semiotic and corporeal signifying and subjectifying processes of human living inform how one experiences the world. If one's corporeal and/or psychic anomalies are such that one cannot take up positions with which one can identify without dissonance, then one will experience a sense of discomfort, a sense of not being at home in the world.² This discomfort will deepen if dissonance results in derogatory descriptions or exclusion. Subjects marked in terms of their divergence from the majoritarian norm are designated as somehow less entitled to other forms of social power. Unless one can find alternatives, practices available to others as an extension of their capacities into action in the world (of a more or less powerful sort) will block one's lines of becoming and decrease one's power. Individual and collective orientations suffer damaging marginalisation and uncomfortable dissonance when they are subjected to faciality machines in ways that mark their divergence from the majoritarian norm and block potential capacities for affecting and being affected from unfolding.

When the lived orientations Alcoff describes as 'real' identity are extended and elaborated in the minoritarian form of, for example, a feminist gender identity or an antiracist raced identity, identity becomes a form of self-naming that extends some of the lines of flight always insisting in any subject in its divergence from the majoritarian subject.

The faciality machines that designate either/or identity positions through prevalent ways of speaking and patterns of activity that resonate with the majoritarian subject attempt to cancel out the corporeal and conceptual fluxes that would lead human subjects in their becoming to resist the dominant patterns of signification and subjectification: you are a man *or* a woman, you are black *or* white. Resistant identities are identities in process—they create new identities rooted in fluxes of living that continually vary from the dominant norm, refusing to let those variations be assimilated to binary categories or their implicit tendencies blocked from unfolding new ways of living.

Subjecting a range of evidence to abstract social categories like race and gender tends to obscure the imbrications of social flows as well as the ‘intensities’ (implicit tendencies that could unfold in new ways of being) insisting in them. Understanding identity categories such as those designating one’s gender, race, (dis)ability, or sexuality in terms of the concrete situations in which they are used reveals the varying flows that converge in the pragmatic contexts in which embodied subjects are submitted to and/or identify with specific categories. Mapping these flows with respect to one another allows one to see how various flows of meaning produce identity categories inflected by the specific forms social flows take in a given time and place. For example, Abby Wilkerson’s mapping of erotophobia, in an essay using disability and queer perspectives to explore continuities in the effect of erotophobia on oppressed groups, shows how social flows can be coded in divergent and yet mutually reinforcing ways. Wilkerson argues that a paraplegic may be coded as asexual, an African American as hypersexual, and a lesbian as perverted, but in all cases, the effect is to render the lived experience of one’s sexuality less comfortable, thus blocking one’s power in the world to a greater or lesser extent. She presents some examples of how erotophobic judgements of the sexual behaviours or ‘natures’ of members of various groups suggests that

[c]ultural erotophobia is not merely a general taboo against open discussions of sexuality, and displays of sexual behaviour, but a very effective means of creating and maintaining social hierarchies, not only those of sexuality but those of gender, race, class, age, and physical and mental ability. (Wilkerson 2002: 41)

Medical literature that presents moralising restrictions on the sexuality of the physically or cognitively disabled, hypersexualised images of African American and Latino men, legal obstacles to the sexual agency of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people, the shame and alienation

connected to the sexuality of heterosexual women that Sandra Bartky discusses in her book, *Femininity and Domination* (Wilkerson 2002: 42–5): these are some of the effects of social practices that designate certain bodies as deviant. From Deleuze and Guattari's perspective we can say that it is through such practices that bodies and their desires are delineated in terms of their distance from the majoritarian subject acting as an orienting reference point (in more or less overt forms) in those practices. Such delineation, through more or less subtle approbation (a doctor who refuses to discuss birth control with a disabled patient) or outright exclusion (laws against sodomy) renders certain lines of becoming uncomfortable, dissonant, or impossible, diminishing the power of those groups and their individual members to affect and be affected in the process.

Feminists inspired by the Foucauldian notion of genealogy have mapped various aspects of the social field to investigate how identity designations have evolved over time, leaving legacies in the present that might not be immediately obvious. If we look at some feminist genealogies of race, for example, we discover not only a telling resonance with Deleuze and Guattari's notions of faciality and the majoritarian subject, but how designations of the Eurocentric faciality machines are implicated with capitalist and colonialist investments of the social field, and how sex and gender designations intertwine with race designations according to the configurations of forces of specific times and places (see, for example, Lawrence 2003, McWhorter 2004, and Warnke 2005). Other feminist genealogies show that sex and gender are not only intertwined with race, but with other perhaps less obvious (at least if you are closer to the majoritarian norm) designations of cognitive and physical ability. For example, Anna Stubblefield argues that the concept of feeble-mindedness became linked with '“off-white” ethnicity, poverty, and gendered conceptions of a lack of moral character' (Stubblefield 2007: 162) in the eugenics movement of the first three decades of the twentieth century in the US. The eugenics movement was widespread and according to Stubblefield its impact still influences scientific research and public policy. In her investigation of how, in particular, 'feeble-minded' white women became subject to coercive sterilisation, Stubblefield examines distinctions white elites drew between the white race and other races; (untainted) whites (supposedly) have the intellectual capacity to produce 'civilisation':

the development of agriculture, science and technology (in forms that white elites recognize); sophisticated (according to white perception) cultural

products such as literature, music, and art; and the development of complex (according to white perception) societal organization and forms of government. (Stubblefield 2007: 169)

Stubblefield cites research by scientists such as Paul Broca, Robert Chambers, and J. Langdon Down, in the mid-nineteenth century that investigated how to measure intelligence by first assuming that white people were more intelligent than black people, and then, on the basis of that assumption, construing differences between white and black people as reasons for why white people were further along an evolutionary path of ethnic types than black people. When Henry Hubert Goddard, writing in the early twentieth century, described intelligence (understood in terms of this model of ethnic evolution) as hereditary and impervious to environmental influence, the stage was set for designating 'heritable' forms of white impurity (Stubblefield 2007: 172).

In 1908, Goddard adapted Alfred Binet's intelligence test for use in the United States by adding the category of 'moron' (designating people with a mental age of eight to twelve) to the original scale that included the 'idiot' (designating people with a mental age of two or younger) and 'imbecile' (designating people with a mental age of three to seven years). The notion that extreme poverty was hereditary and linked to the moral defect 'of a supposedly shameless willingness to live on public charity' (Stubblefield 2007: 173) was a widespread belief that became increasingly linked to the concept of the moron in family studies done in the early twentieth century. Feeble-mindedness became linked with 'white poverty, off-whiteness, and lack of civilization-building skills' and the 'category of the moron – the feeble-minded person who appears normal but who is prone to immorality, incapable of being a contributing citizen in a democratic society, and who will pass feeble-mindedness on to his or her offspring' became 'a powerful device for drawing a distinction between tainted and pure white people' (Stubblefield 2007: 176). In addition, white women who demonstrated their failure to understand their role in the advancement of civilisation by engaging in unchaste behaviour manifested, like impoverished white women and off-white women, a 'lack' of intellect that tainted their whiteness. Thus, intertwined constructions of race, class, gender, and cognitive dis/ability came together in a conception of feeble-mindedness that 'became gendered in a way that led to women bearing the brunt of eugenic sterilization' (Stubblefield 2007: 178–9).

'Disabled' subjects may be divergent enough from the majoritarian norm that their disability becomes a salient feature of their designated

identity. Even in such cases, however, their sexed and gendered identity will be central to how that identity is interpreted and lived. Stubblefield's mapping reveals specific physiological, economic, colonising, and cultural flows in the use of the term 'feeble-minded' that manifest the imbrications of gender, race, cognitive (dis)ability, and economic status in that designation in a way that belies the primacy given to sex and gender in organising and understanding the converging flows of concrete individuals. A wide range of practices resonate with familial positioning in order to reinforce and naturalise distance from the majoritarian subject. Maps like Wilkerson's reveal the social investments and configurations of power that such positioning conceals.

In addition to revealing the multiple forces that come together in one designation of social identity, feminist maps reveal critical points in the present where intensification of various sorts could result in significant change. Thus, Wilkerson and Stubblefield's genealogies reveal relations of flows of which we may not have been aware that condition our understanding of disability. Intensifying these connections in new ways of understanding designations of disability and racial designations, as well as the social practices related to them, could in turn lead to action from within the relevant practices that shift them (to a larger or lesser extent) into divergent forms of those practices or directly challenge them (through discursive critique or some other form of resistance). These genealogies, incomplete as they are, show how important it is to understand how identity designations – be they those of sex, gender, sexuality, race or otherwise – emerge and are interpreted in keeping with specific investments of the social field best understood in terms of the confluence of multiple forces of particular durations. The bifurcating sorting of personal identity into yes/no categories obscures the shifting vagaries of their evolution as they are put into effect in a multitude of day-to-day situations. Although an emphasis on the personal identity of an autonomous subject and the demand for clearly defined identity designations tend to suggest that a given identity is a property of persons, on Deleuze and Guattari's view, identity is produced, reproduced, sustained, and transformed through the unfolding of social life over specific periods of time in particular places.

A designation of gender, race, or disability can never, from Deleuze and Guattari's perspective, be a static category. Its meanings inevitably shift along with the faciality machines (as they are actualised in specific patterns of meaning and activity) that enact it as well as the molecular flows of lived orientations and identifications that resist those machines. Such shifts are in response to the convergent forces affecting the

relevant assemblages and will resonate with patterns organised around the majoritarian subject or proliferate lines of flight. Words such as 'disabled' or 'feeble-minded' and the racial, gendered, and economic connotations associated with them, leave traces in the present of which we may be unaware, even if those specific words are no longer used. Ways of speaking and doing become habitual patterns that self-replicate even if in doing so they continually diverge from past repetitions. Mapping an association among variations in cognitive style, skin colour, financial income, and cultural practices of the duration connecting us to an earlier time renders some of the relations now only implicit explicit, making us more aware of the habitual patterns informing our naturalised reality, and thus provide insight into how to shift those patterns in ways we can support.

These genealogies track social practices that constitute subject positions informing the categories through which people are designated as well as identify themselves. These practices, from Deleuze and Guattari's perspective, are corporeal and semiotic assemblages that tend to replicate and extend themselves, thus settling into stratified configurations of power. Individual human beings with their personal identities and desires emerge as individual solutions to the problem of subjectivity from processes they collectively share in various ways with others. Although sexed and gendered identity is a crucial feature of dominant forms of subjectivity, these genealogies show how other investments of the social field are equally, if not more, crucial. Even when one's personal identity is still experienced in terms of one's sex, gender, and sexuality (for example, one's primary identification is as a woman), these genealogies show the myriad social investments that coalesce around that identity (it turns out a woman who primarily identifies as a woman may be more likely to be relatively closer to the majoritarian norm and so has not been confronted with other ways that she differs from that norm—that is, she is a physically and cognitively 'normal,' white, heterosexual, middle-class woman).

From Deleuze and Guattari's perspective, modern subjectivity, insofar as it is oriented with respect to the majoritarian subject, thus entails organising multiple flows and investments of the social field in terms of sexual difference. This structuring plays out through the oedipalising function of the family and the faciality machines that confirm and elaborate the binary structure of oedipalisation. Oedipalisation and the faciality machines that produce the personal identity of modern subjectivity thus operate not only to render the continuous variation in human becoming that might extend into new forms of subjectivity

non-productive, but also to turn collective stories about power investments into personal stories about achieving meaningful lives. Although Deleuze and Guattari do not themselves pursue this point, this makes feminism an intervention that targets sex, gender, and sexuality as a crucial fault line in modern forms of subjectivity that is just the starting point for unravelling multiple configurations of power detrimental to our collective unfolding.

III. Nomadic Subjectivity and Feminist Change

The deterritorialising of cultural codes precipitated by capitalism opens human existence to an unprecedented amount of creative evolution by releasing old constraints upon proliferating change. Thus, capitalism actually enacts more of the differing and diverging becoming of life and so, according to Deleuze and Guattari, on the one hand, puts us in a better situation to become more aware of life as process, but on the other hand, has produced a reterritorialisation onto oedipal or majoritarian subjectivity, the reduction of productive desire to desire premised on lack, and the incessant pressure to produce and consume. The former tendency they align with their notion of schizophrenia and a nomadic subject able to creatively evolve and the latter tendencies they associate with paranoia and absolute systems of belief where all meaning is, as Eugene Holland helpfully puts it, 'permanently fixed and exhaustively defined by a supreme authority, figure-head, or god' (Holland 1999: 3). Thus, along with the high speeds of contemporary life with its frantic pace of technological change and globalisation goes paranoid reterritorialisation onto consumerism as well as fundamentalist religion and fascist politics. Faciality machines are not universal to human life; subjectivity in modern capitalism requires excluding more of the corporeal fluxes running through any line of human becoming than the other two social formations Deleuze and Guattari describe (although this, in itself, does not guarantee the kind of desiring production Deleuze and Guattari would like to promote). Rather than explore possible connections among micropcepts and affects that could lead to aggregates of perception and feeling that violate current opinion and consensus representations of reality, faciality machines interpret sensation as the meaningful experience of a recognisable subject. Rather than pursue the physiological, social, and cultural permutations that inevitably result from hybrid forces converging in particular locations, faciality machines interpret anomalies as exceptions that do not affect the norm or as exceptions that require new categories that resonate with the system as a whole. This entails cancelling out subtleties

in individual and collective experience and blocking exploration of alternative connections.

Facialisation entails an embodied orientation organised in terms of a personal identity. That is, all desires of the body are of *one* body with a psychic self that is (more or less) unified with a coherent history that can be represented and collated with the narratives of other members of the community. Sexed and gendered identity forms an important fault line of this self since it is through familial positioning with respect to sexual difference that the multiplicity of social flows affecting subjectivity are totalised in a self that is assimilable to the faciality machines of capitalism. Personal identity, especially as it is regulated by the faciality machines that percolate throughout the semiotic and corporeal practices that insist on clearly delineated subjects with identities that fit into already laid out parameters (to register for public school, I need to designate age, sex, and residence; to walk into a restroom I need to know to which sex my body conforms), becomes the organising reference point for lived experience. If a lived experience cannot be referred to such reference points, it may be unrepresentable and excluded from having an impact (the knowledge I gain independently of a recognised school may not gain me entry to the conference I want to attend), or it can render lived experience either dissonant or unlivable (ambiguous sexed or gendered identity can make life painfully confusing). But on Deleuze and Guattari's view, personal identity is not necessary for non-psychotic subjectivity. Habitual refrains and some sort of constriction on desiring production are necessary for relatively stable forms of human subjects to be sustainable. But subjectivity is a self-organising system of becoming with relative autonomy from surrounding flows grounded in a wide range of territorialised processes that allow emotions, perceptions, and day-to-day life to stabilise into habitual patterns. In a social formation premised upon a lacking subject threatened with a loss of humanity insofar as she or he breaks the rules (where the majoritarian subject is the norm for what it is to be human and any deviation from that norm is carefully observed and marked), unregulated refrains in living are not allowed extension into new patterns. Productive desire must be reduced to the lacking desire of a self still waiting to be completed (the child's desire to swirl water into dirt to make mud must give way to the desire *to be* a chef or a scientist rather than simply to make connections), and identity must be computed from the bifurcating patterns of social recognition that select constants from a wide range of continuous variation in order to plug those constants into already delineated rules of living (a woman who is disabled must no longer be interested in sex since she no longer fits the subject positions designated in countless narratives

and scenarios emerging in multiple social practices about 'what happens when one is sexual,' a mother who does not feel the kind of 'maternal' love for all her children depicted in various forms of cultural production as well as assumed in social practices connected to childcare, pedagogy, and citizenship must be an inhuman monster).

From a psychoanalytic perspective, immersion in a world of partial objects where corporeal fluxes connect (or do not connect) in immanently unfolding flows with surrounding flows where neither self or other, subject or object, are points of reference is a psychotic nightmare. Deleuze and Guattari present us with the provocative possibility that desire does not have to be about what a personal self wants, but could be about connecting with the world, making things happen, and experiencing what happens in ways that defy subject/object and self/other dichotomies. Self/other dichotomies obscure the physiological, social, and cultural flows I share with others; I live at the same speed as other organisms with similar configurations of processes (as I discover in the assemblages I make with others) and the semiotic and material assemblages that condition my individual speech and actions are often the same. On Deleuze and Guattari's view, a personal self or identity as a totalised point of origin to which to refer all desire operates as a kind of stranglehold on the individual and the capacities it could unfold as well as the assemblages into which it could enter. By referring my desires to a sexed self with a gender and a sexuality computed according to the faciality machines, I block off intensification of other tendencies insisting in me—tendencies concerning sense experience and perception as well as emotions and beliefs—that could be extended into new ways of living my subjectivity and new ways of connecting with my world including the other subjects within it.

The famous case of John/Joan (who I will henceforth call by his real name when living as the sex he ultimately chose, David) is a sad example of how difficult it can be to live one's humanity in a social formation that demands a recognisable identity sorted through the faciality machines.³ When a botched circumcision led to an anomaly in organic sex (David's penis was damaged beyond repair), a choice was made to try and repress the anomalous range of continuous variation in human organisms he manifested by surgically altering him, designating him as female, and concealing from him his initial status as male. Judith Butler's rendition of his story brings out the violence to which the people trying to deal with his situation subjected him. Although as he grew older he refused to comply, he was submitted to practices designed to remake him organically so that he would fit certain categories (surgery and hormone therapy), as well as subjectively so that he would

identify in particular ways (socialisation that encouraged him to engage in 'feminine' behaviour such as cooking and playing with dolls and interviews that encouraged him to have 'feminine' desires).⁴

From Deleuze and Guattari's perspective, there was no true self attached to either David's 'real' sex (his clearly male body as it existed before the accident) or his gender identity as it had been promoted through subjectification procedures designed to create a female gender identity (being identified and treated as a girl, being subjected to interviews designed to elicit 'female' desires and so forth). David's flow of individuation involved a convergence of physiological, semiotic, and subjectifying forces to which he—as a self-organising process of subjectivity needing to navigate the practices of his social location—had to respond in order to solve the problem of living a life. Although David did achieve his desire to marry and have a family, his life was, by all accounts, difficult, and he committed suicide at the age of 38. It is impossible to know why he made the choice to end his life, but one can imagine how painful dissonance between one's lived experience in all the molecular complexity of one's lived orientation and the molar subject positions designating one's identity in a way that demands the erasure of such complexity can become. His situation was anomalous in a way that could not be easily cancelled out; he simply was neither male nor female in the same way as his peers, given physiological anomalies as well as anomalies in his socialisation.

Susan Stryker, a male-to-female transsexual who refuses assimilating explanations of her actions (such as the explanation that she was 'really' a woman who simply needed to change her body to fit her true identity), is a happier example of how anomalous gender identity can play out in that she is able to intensify and extend her capacities to affect and be affected by the world in ways that challenge the binaries of the faciality machines. She speaks out publicly about her situation and she is a respected member of a transgender community that challenges binary designations of sexed and gendered identity. She thus defies erasure of the range of continuous variation manifest in her particular actualisation of humanity despite her deviance from the norm. She gives a provocative challenge to those who would denounce her and her choices (in a performance piece presented in, as she puts it, 'genderfuck drag' at an interdisciplinary, academic conference)⁵:

I find no shame... in acknowledging my egalitarian relationship with non-human material Being; everything emerges from the same matrix of possibilities... [T]he Nature you bedevil me with is a lie. Do not trust it to protect you from what I represent, for it is a fabrication that cloaks

the groundlessness of the privilege you seek to maintain for yourself at my expense. You are as constructed as me; the same anarchic Womb has birthed us both. (Stryker 1999)

David and Stryker both, in different ways, resist the faciality machines that would recuperate their inassimilable differences to binary categories of designation and interpellation. If David had difficulties in identifying with the categories assigned him (when he was forced to identify as a girl despite his lived dissonance with that designation) as well as the categories he finally chose (by choosing to identify as male upon discovering some of what had been hidden from him about the story of his life), it was not because he wanted to challenge traditional notions of sex and gender. What he wanted was to live a meaningful life. What his story shows, perhaps, is how important a sense of self that coheres with one's lived orientations is to making one's life meaningful and therefore livable. We want to connect with the world, affect and be affected, in ways that resonate with a self-understanding and life narrative that makes sense to us, whether or not that sense of self is conventional or dissonant. In Deleuze and Guattari's terms, we might say that subjects need to extend not only their embodied capacities to make things happen, but also their psychic, cognitive, and emotional capacities to make sense of how they fit into larger wholes. David's lived experience was too dissonant for a number of reasons (anatomical, hormonal, cultural, familial) to easily fit into social patterns of making sense—ways of speaking, interpreting, and behaving available to him through collective practices of the social field dictating intelligible behaviour and interpretations—making it difficult for him to feel worthy as a human being.

Deleuze and Guattari's characterisation of subjectivity posits a subject who emerges from collective physiological and social processes as an individual process in its own right by sustaining habitual patterns distinguishing it as an individual from other processes around it. As a specific formation of physiological, social, and linguistic matter with actualised capacities—replete with hidden potential and tendencies structured by virtualities that are part of the wider non-human as well as human field conditioning its becoming—the subject is able to affect as well as be affected by what is around it. But its separation is always provisional, its form always on the verge of differentiating into something else, and the actualisation of its capacities always dependent upon the actualities and intensities that it is and with which it comes into contact.

Nomadic subjects emerge from collective patterns of living with the configuration of social and non-human forces unique to the becoming of specific processes of individuation. The individuation of such subjects cannot be represented. It emerges as a lived orientation constituting one's perceptions, thoughts, emotions, and perspectives through the territorialisations of unique individuations and communities grounded in the material reality of shared patterns of living. Some orientation with respect to the identity designations of mainstream social practices is necessary for subjectivity. One's 'personal' identity can be thought in terms of the 'molar' designations of the faciality machines that enable negotiation of dominant social systems of meaning or in terms of lived orientations too subtle to be captured through such designations, but which one could choose to assert by naming them. Heightened awareness of converging flows and the habitual patterns that orient one along with a sense of one's own location and places to intervene in order to affect individual and collective forms of self-production could allow resolution of the dissonance often arising between the two forms of identity as well as enable collective compositions that enhance mutually joyful becoming. Nomadic subjectivity as an alternative to oedipal subjectivity invites us to engage in a dynamic process of self-naming rather than reduce ourselves to static self-representations. Identity designations are representations that do not capture the nuances of lived orientations and can block lines of flight by putting people in opposition with one another despite the orientations they share. Drifting from the identity designations of faciality machines in order to experiment with joyful connections entails relinquishing some of the control derived through representational intelligence with its penchant for categorisation in order to trust the affective guidance of intuitive insight into processes of becoming. Becoming more aware of how one's subjectivity is produced allows one to participate more actively in one's self-production, develop skilful ways to synchronise becoming with others, and deterritorialise from identity designations in order to unfold new solutions to the problems life poses. Flexible living entails individual deterritorialisation from personal identity as well as collective deterritorialisations from majoritarian subjectivity. A politics influenced by Deleuze and Guattari would investigate different durations, the mutually reinforcing reference points of the faciality machines among those durations, and the places where intensification of virtual tendencies might unfold new answers to how to live together.

Deleuze and Guattari's conception of human subjectivity emphasises its continuity with the inhuman force of creative life. This emphasis

fosters working with rather than against the differentiating forces of life of which we are a part. This ontology conceives individual human beings as singular individuals who more or less diverge from the flows of life currently sustaining themselves in the recognisably human forms with which we are familiar. The question of one's humanity thus shifts from that of measuring up to an essential form of humanity (with respect to which many are found wanting) to the question of what diverging flows of humanity we want to foster in the inevitably diverging and differentiating flux of human life. Shifting the question in this way has practical impact on identity questions key to feminist thought. Women, as well as others who are 'other' to the paradigmatic subject of contemporary culture, have been denigrated for somehow failing to measure up to an ideal norm of what it means to be human. But such a norm assumes an ontology where the form one's humanity takes may well count as a deviation. One strategy of feminism, understandably enough, has been to contest what that essence is in order to make room for women. Shifting to an ontology of becoming suggests a different kind of strategy. If what it means to be human is not fixed, if human becoming entails creative evolution—if what it means to be human consists in the specific forms humanity actually takes and could unfold rather than a human essence that is then instantiated more or less well—then what feminists need to do is map where we are in order to find the best places to intervene and foster the human forms we would most like to support. The question then becomes not who we have always been and always will be, but how to make the mechanisms that create subjects and identities better function in keeping with our own becomings.

Feminism could be seen as an untimely schizo practice designed to intervene with contemporary configurations of modern subjectivity that involve suppression and oppression of subjects that deviate from a majoritarian norm with the fault lines of sexed, gendered, and sexual identity as its starting point. Deleuze and Guattari provide a narrative about the formation and production of those subjects that suggest critical points of intervention that could move us beyond binary categorisation of sex and gender and the oppression it entails. By distinguishing subjectivity as patterns of lived activity from faciality machines that designate identity they give us a way of understanding how we could be subjects without the binary designations that we currently think of as crucial to being any kind of subject at all. But they do not think we can simply choose to leave those binary machines behind. Rather, they recommend carefully mapping where we are in order to find vitalising paths that extend the tendencies resisting binary

designations. And they suggest that rather than be paranoid about the anarchic chaos we imagine moving beyond such binaries could cause, that we consider the capacities we could unfold if we could open up to the impersonal and inhuman flows around us. They present us with alternative conceptions of subjectivity as relatively stabilised patterns of physiological, corporeal, and semiotic activity that mutate over time in keeping with the flows that constitute them and the flows with which they come into contact, but which, as self-organising systems, and, in particular, human self-organising systems with the capacity to intuit the durational whole, can consciously participate in their creative evolution. And while such participation does not entail the masterful control of the autonomous subject as conceived by traditional modernity, it does entail ways of being more skilful than others in coming into joyful synchrony with the flows around it. Feminism, as a theoretical and pragmatic process, can intuit ways of living our sex and gender that are more affirming of the continuous range of variation in being sexed and gendered becoming-human entails. By mapping where we are and finding lines of flight from majoritarian subjectivity that can extend our capacities in ways that synchronise with others, feminists, along with other forms of minoritarian and schizo becoming, can promote a joyfully collective and open-ended process of becoming-human.

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Notes

1. Deleuze and Guattari's account is compatible with Foucault's reading of sexed identity as taking on new importance in the circulation of biopower and the management of large groups of people emerging in the eighteenth century. Whereas one's sex in premodern times had significance in the role one would play and the patterns of social living in which one participated, it was not key to personal identity, on both these accounts, until the emergence of a modern subject with its increasingly interiorised psychic structure (see Foucault 1978). See Nietzsche's *Genealogy of Morals* for an account of the interiorisation of subjectivity in the context of Christianity that influences Deleuze and Guattari's account (Nietzsche 1989).
2. Sara Ahmed presents an example of an evocative phenomenological account of how a queer orientation can precipitate such dissonance (Ahmed 2006).
3. 'John/Joan' was actually David Reimer. For more information on this case from various perspectives, see Colapinto 1997, 2000, and 2004, Diamond 1997, Diamond and Sigmundsen 1997, and Money 1997. I am particularly indebted to Judith Butler's provocative rendition of this case that brings out the problem David posed to the people who responded to him by attempting to render him intelligible from competing perspectives as a problem of a humanity that exceeds intelligibility. On Butler's view: 'it is precisely the ways in which he is not fully recognizable, fully disposable, fully categorizable, that his humanness emerges' (Butler 2004: 73).
4. David's situation was particularly contentious since there were at least two views of who he 'really' was that were being promoted and contested. To oversimplify what were more complicated and evolving positions over the course of a long

debate, John Money, a medical psychologist and founder of the Gender Identity Institute at Johns Hopkins University, thought gender identity was malleable and hoped David's case would prove him right (it helped that David had an identical twin – the perfect complement to an experiment in manipulating gender identity through socialisation) and Milton Diamond, a sex researcher involved in a long-standing battle with Money, believed gender identity had a hormonal basis. See Diamond 1997, Diamond and Sigmundsen 1997, and Money 1997.

5. Stryker describes her outfit as 'combat boots, threadbare Levi 501s over a black lace body suit, a shredded Transgender Nation T-shirt with the neck and sleeves cut out, a pink triangle, quartz crystal pendant, grunge metal jewellery, and a six-inch long marlin hook dangling around my neck on a length of heavy stainless steel chain' (Stryker 1999: 2). There are, of course, social flows involved in transgender identity that are the subject of heated discussion in feminist and transgender debates that I do not here address.