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## 'Damn Deleuze': The Unexpected Artefacts of Reading Together

Maureen A. Flint

*The University of Georgia*, maureen.flint@uga.edu

Carlson H. Coogler

*The University of Alabama*, chcoogler@crimson.ua.edu

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## 'Damn Deleuze': The Unexpected Artefacts of Reading Together

### Cover Page Footnote

With deep appreciation to Laura Smithers and Paul Eaton for their feedback on early drafts of this manuscript.

## “Damn Deleuze”

### The Unexpected Artefacts of Reading Together

Maureen A. Flint & Carlson H. Coogler

#### Abstract

What does reading together produce? As we read *A Thousand Plateaus* together, Deleuze and Guattari butted into our dreams, our art-making, and our everyday lives. We found that their concepts were active, blurring the lines between theory, method and art. In this paper, we follow these invasions and interruptions of our thinking and living, collecting and discussing them as artefacts that help us make sense of reading and writing together as methodological, theoretical, artful inquiry. By taking up and sharing artefacts—fragments of encounters, snapshots of artmaking, quotes from novels or poetry that embedded in our conversations about haecceity and becoming, and traces of texts sent back and forth in the intervening weeks between our meeting—we dwell within the momentary becomings of reading together. We invite the reader to think with us about these artefacts and encounters and to make their own connections between theory, reading, and (academic) life. We linger in the practice of reading to wonder together, what does this do, how does this work, what does this produce (in methodology, in pedagogy, in research?)

*Keywords:* Deleuze; Poststructural; Artmaking; Reading; Wonder; Collaboration; Qualitative Inquiry

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*Maureen A. Flint is an assistant professor in the Department of Lifelong Education, Administration, and Policy in the Mary Frances Early College of Education at The University of Georgia, Athens, Georgia. Carlson H. Coogler is a graduate student in the Department of Educational Studies in Psychology, Research Methods, and Counseling in the School of Education at The University of Alabama, Tuscaloosa, Alabama. Email addresses: Maureen.Flint@uga.edu & carlson.hayes.coogler@gmail.com*

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## Introduction

We set out to read Deleuze and Guattari (1987) together. Not with a purpose in mind, an outcome, a goal, but an opening, a challenge, a journey. It started with jewelry. A final assignment that became more-than, an idea discussed over coffee after a class had ended. Over the course of weeks and months we met and zigzagged through *A Thousand Plateaus*, reading chapters out of order, setting the book aside to search out other texts to read alongside. As we read, we found that we became fearful of the text, fearful of failing the authors—of misunderstanding or misusing the theories, concepts, and terms. We were fearful even as we became baptized in the mad element of Deleuzoguattarian language, meanings slipping and sliding away, seeking to wrap our tongues and minds around the possibilities they offered. Finding traces of concepts everywhere. Deleuze in our dreams, Deleuze in the indentations of a snowbank, the margins of other texts, in our art making, in the excesses. We found that the concepts Deleuze and Guattari offered—of becoming and rhizomes, assemblages, sense and signification, the smooth and the striated—began to alter how we read our research, each other, and the academic projects of “graduate school” and “tenure-track professor.” The concepts began to follow us around, and we started to follow them around in turn. Deleuze and Guattari began butting into our everyday lives; we feared Deleuze, and he (they) were suddenly everywhere. We found that “since each of us was several, there was already a crowd” and that “we are[were] no longer ourselves” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 1).

This experience led us to ask: *What does reading together produce, and how do we cultivate what happens when reading begins to alter how we see the world?* Finding these questions to be practically and urgently important, we turned to Jackson and Mazzei (2011), whose discussion of the relationship between theory and sense-making resonated with our experience. Jackson and Mazzei (2011) demonstrated how theoretical concepts can be put to work in the process of analysis and interpretation, through using “theory to think with data (or data to think with theory)” (p. 1). Instead of simply a way to view the world, theory “plugs in” to the world, creating and opening connections between researchers and data (Jackson & Mazzei, 2011). In this process, concepts became what Jackson and Mazzei (2011) imagined as ‘thresholds.’ As their architectural namesake suggests, thresholds are passageways, ways through; they are middles, places of meeting (Jackson & Mazzei, 2011). At the threshold, “the divisions among and definitions of theory and data collapse” (Jackson & Mazzei, 2011, p. 6). As we thought and lived Deleuze and Guattari’s concepts, we too experienced concepts as thresholds, as places where art and methodology and theory blended into something middle, a theory-method-art.

Paying attention to these thresholds did more than help us see how method, theory and art connected. Rather, it helped us understand how they are produced. This is to say that, as we experienced how reading theory together “creat[ed] a

language and way of thinking methodologically *and* philosophically” (Jackson & Mazzei, 2011, p. vii), we also began to use these concepts. The threshold, the middle, the *through*, is not only the location of our travel but also the *how*. In other words, theory-as-threshold did not just illuminate or describe the interstices we experienced. It produced them, and thereby the world. Therefore, thinking of and with thresholds altered the land under our feet. We learned from lingering in the between, the middle, the through, that thresholds-as-theory were not simply spaces of transition, a path to somewhere else, a space to *get through*. With this in mind, we began to orient to the thresholds as the point and purpose of the journey.

As we attuned ourselves to the ways concepts layered and overlapped, we noticed how we were always in thresholds, always in the middle. Such extension and multiplication of the threshold, we felt, aligned with the concepts of Deleuze and Guattari that were invading our thinking and living, becoming both the process and substance of our thought. In the process, we began to notice thresholds *within* the thresholds. Moments that separated our thinking, making, and living into some ‘before’ and ‘after’, even as it all was middle. These moments set themselves apart, glowing (MacLure, 2013a), even as they were in and of the process of reading-writing-thinking-making. We picked up these moments as artefacts that we could collect, wonder about, worry over, and discuss, a wondercabinet of theoretical concepts butting into our lives (MacLure, 2013a; 2013b). “Artefact” is a specifically chosen term, as we read in it a liminality: a coalescing of process and product, of ‘art’ (as way) and ‘fact’ (as product). Fact, of course, is a misnomer, but nonetheless, we feel that the imperfect container serves. After all, what is an artefact but a sliver of an experience, an embodiment of a process, a history, a living that alighted for a moment? In this paper, we spread out these artefacts as a map of concepts and theory and encourage you to read them as we do: as the way-markers of our wondering, the thresholds we passed through and lingered in. Like Christ and colleagues (2021) in their own readings of Deleuze and Guattari, we offer these artefacts as opportunities for (re)encountering, possibility for venturing on yet still undiscovered and unexpected paths. Our wondercabinet—assembled from memos and writings collected while reading *A Thousand Plateaus* together—flirts along lines of order and excess, fears and failings, interest and obsession, drawing boundaries, creating taxonomies, juxtaposing the previously unconnected. It is therefore a strange sort of map and an even stranger sort of compass; it may do more to tell you how you might go—moving in middles within middles, the hyphens between living and researching, theory and method and art—than either where you are or where you will end up.

This article is meant not to be a tracing but a mapping—a performance in process, an opening up, of our theory-method-thinking-making journey. Importantly, it is a journey that was not taken alone; we have wondered nomadically across lines marking out disciplines and the ‘proper’ confines of research, and we have done so together. We invite you to journey with us. To pitch a tent with us in

the middle, in the *terra incognita*, of reading/thinking/making theory-method-art together. To wonder with theory and concepts, to think with your own encounters with texts—what does reading (together) produce? To fill your pockets with your own questions and artefacts and especially those that are both. To ask, *what might it look like to read (and live) poststructural theory affirmatively?* as you experiment. To ask, *what might it look like to think a/part the research process? To think into the gaps all those unruly practices and their artefacts that enliven and glow* (MacLure, 2013a)? Asking *what does reading do, how does reading work, what does reading produce (in methodology, in pedagogy, in research)?* as you carry your wondercabinets, the nomad's pack, over the dunes.

### Reading Plateaus, and Rhizomes

Deleuze and Guattari (1987) wrote that “to think is to voyage” (p. 483) and that “there are not only strange voyages in the city but voyages in place” (p. 482), and with this in mind, we fell into reading as a voyage together. In the translator's forward to *A Thousand Plateaus*, Brian Massumi wrote,

The reader is invited to follow each section to the plateau that rises from the smooth space of its composition, and to move from one plateau to the next at pleasure. But it is just as good to ignore the heights. You can take a concept that is particularly to your liking and jump with it to its next appearance. (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, pp. x-xv)

Our journey had grown organically from our relationship as two graduate students, one teaching an introductory qualitative research course, one taking it for the first time, a tentative invitation to read together over the summer, to meet every other week over video conferencing or in person. An invitation to both sit with the same segment of a text, to think with it and see what it did—how the text, as Deleuze and Guattari (1987) wrote, “plugged in,” becoming in “connection with other assemblages in and relation to other bodies without organs” (p. 4). And so, we began with a plan, an ordered way to move through the book. Even as our plan was ordered, it did not follow the text linearly. Rather, we zigzagged between chapters: 1, 2, 14, 11, 3, 9, 10, 6, 7, 12, 13, 5, 4, 8, 15. Our path of reading skipped from rhizomes and wolves; to the smooth and the striated; refrains, segmentarity, intensities, and faciality; signs and stories; and finally, the conclusion. (Authors note: “To a certain extent, these plateaus may be read independently of one another, except the conclusion, which should be read at the end” [Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, front matter]). Zigzagging, seeking to “make a map, not a tracing” (p. 2). A way of reading that (we hoped) was attuned to both methodology and theory: how ways of reading and thinking (e.g., methodologies) might combine fruitfully with the concepts and engagements that the text invited. Following the urge to “read starting anywhere” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 2) then, was not a whim but rather a strategy for reading the text in/as the threshold.

Unsurprisingly, places of meeting (personal and methodological) are not easy to navigate. We became disoriented together, meeting every other week, contemplating a segment of text, a plateau, sorting through highlights and underlines and notes made in the margins. The first time we met, Carlson wondered what we should talk about, ‘is this how this is supposed to go?’ We moved between wonderings and musings, moments of stuckness, happenings outside the text that became related and connected. Again, in the introduction, Massumi noted that,

The best way of all to approach the book is to read it as a challenge [...] The question is not: is it true? But: does it work? What new thoughts does it make it possible to think? What new emotions does it make it possible to feel? What new sensations and perceptions does it open in the body? (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. xv)

In those first weeks, we found this invitation to plug in and read affirmatively as a challenge particularly hard to follow. Our shared document was titled “Fearing Deleuze” because that’s what we felt in the beginning, a fear of Deleuze (and Guattari), of failing them, of not understanding, of doing it wrong. As academic subjects, we were trained to have an answer. And yet Deleuze and Guattari resisted easy answers, simple readings, because they evaded understanding.

Deleuze and Guattari became contagious, and we carried them with us—ideas spreading and infecting and mutating. In a seminar talk for graduate students Maureen had attended, a senior scholar had said about reading poststructural theories, ‘don’t do anything too quickly, get them in your bones, until you cannot *not* use them, you will not be able to *not* apply them.’ Reading, thinking, dreaming, we moved forward, trying to feel the words themselves within a new way of thinking. Reading, and trying to make sense of it, to become comfortable in the fear and the uncertainty of not knowing, sedimenting concepts in our bones. To feel the words themselves within a new way of thinking, wondering together how these words made possible imagining and encountering the world in new ways. *Maybe, we wondered, part of the experience of reading and thinking with poststructural theory was the uncomfortable and disorienting experience of uncoupling the automatic assumptions of signs and signifiers. Using signs as they use you, as they expose your lack of mastery over them. Venturing into liminal spaces and experiencing them not as a transition but as essentially and always transitional. Of dwelling in the in-between, the and-and, the thresholds.*

This was not easy—as academic subjects, we were both trained to regurgitate meaning. To synthesize, summarize, solve. And yet, each week we walked away from the text more disoriented than when we began. As days piled into weeks, into months, we began to wonder if that disorientation might be the point. If finding ourselves in the middle, on our way to understandings we could not seem to arrive at, might be an essential part of living as an academic nomad. If the experiences that glowed (MacLure, 2013a)—where theory and method and art swarmed—might not be so-much ‘problems’ to overcome, as lodestones for finding what we

really needed. That is, not *answers*, but rather *practices* of lingering in the murkiness of the middle, the thresholds of inquiry. Through our collaborative, messy, rhizomatic reading, crossing theory and practice, personal and academic, we began assembling artefacts and encounters engendered by the text that we turned over and over. We began curating these assembled artefacts and encounters into a wondercabinet, an affirmative response to our disorientation, a way to stay with the text. Reading Deleuze, fearing him, we wondered together what it did to live in that fear, to become comfortable in the space of not knowing. More specifically, we felt that this lingering in the not-knowing was an intentional shift from the interpretive and constructivist paradigms that we were so used to thinking with.

### Wonder(ings)

Moments of wondering echoed through our weekly memos. ‘Does this make sense?’ We would ask, confused. ‘I am not sure...’ we would say, tentatively, struggling to understand, to make sense, to order. Most often, these moments of wondering came as we thought through encounters and moments where Deleuzo-guattarian concepts had invaded our lives in some way, changing our language or our strategies for sense-making. Events and encounters crossed a semipermeable membrane of life/theory and sense/non-sense, becoming artefacts—and, thereby, not just events but *also* types of events, doubly-articulated, molar as well as molecular—events that we returned to and referenced as we read.

These moments of wonder lingered with us because they ruptured the smooth process of sense-making. As we read, moments of wonder coalesced, grew in intensity, begged to be examined, theorized, and explained. And yet, as Deleuze and Guattari warned us against signification (against purging the wolves of their multiplicity, of returning to roots) we tried to resist flattening and signifying, the pull toward “Oedipus, nothing but Oedipus, because it hears nothing and listens to nobody. It flattens everything, masses and packs, molecular and molar machines” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 34). (That is, of course, the danger of the second articulation: how easily it falls into “overcoding...hierarchization, and finalization” [Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 41].) So, with this warning in mind we explored these moments of wonder as fault lines that helped us map areas of interest in our thinkings-readings-becomings: the places where Deleuze and Guattari made things make sense and also made sense fall apart.

### Composing a Cabinet of Wonder

Massumi wrote in the introduction to *A Thousand Plateaus* that, “the authors’ hope, however, is that elements of [the text] will stay with a certain number of its readers and will weave into the melody of their everyday lives” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. x). In the beginning, we had only intended to read, venturing tentatively, fearfully. Yet, we found that reading entangled with the fabric of the every-

day (even if not always harmoniously or smoothly). Through reading, concepts infiltrated our feelings, movements, perceptions, thoughts. Deleuze and Guattari (1987) invite their readers to “write, form a rhizome, increase your territory by de-territorialization, extend the line of flight to the point where it becomes an abstract machine covering the entire plane of consistency” (p. 1). After several months of reading together, stumbling through the text, we began to start our weekly meetings by memoing, writing into a shared online document for ten minutes our thoughts and wonderings that had accompanied our reading of the text. Wyatt and colleagues (2010) wrote of writing across geographies in this way as “seek[ing] to cultivate the in-between, not the points, the ends” (p. 731). Reading and then writing, then, became part of our methodology, a way of “find[ing] something out” (Richardson, 1997, p. 87), a way of moving through our shared and individual readings and encounters, of (momentarily) fixing the dialogues between us (Rolling & Brogden, 2009), the sparks generated by plugging into the text.

Reading and writing together produced “spaces of trust-tenderness-friendship as we uncover[ed] our experiences of descent, and our being in dark hidden places” (Henderson & Black, 2018, p. 265). More specifically, our reading led us to other encounters: artmaking, novels, poetry, podcasts, pictures, and texts sent back and forth in the intervening weeks between our meetings. We conceptualize this compilation of items and encounters and experiences as a “wondercabinet” or “wunderkammern,” a cabinet of curiosities (MacLure, 2013a). Wondercabinets, the precursors to museums, “arose in mid-sixteenth-century Europe as repositories for all manner of wondrous and exotic objects[...] combining specimens, diagrams, and illustrations from many disciplines; marking the intersection of science and superstition; and drawing on natural, manmade, and artificial worlds” (Suzuki, 2008, n.p.). As we explore the ways Deleuzoguattarian concepts entangled in our dialogues on academia, dissertating, relationships, and tenure, we find the wonder cabinet a contextualizing device for the encounters and objects of curiosity we (re)turned to throughout our reading. Specifically, we ground our conceptualization of the wondercabinet with Maggie MacLure (2013a, 2013b), who imagined the wondercabinet as a way of moving beyond the taxonomies and hierarchies of data analysis in qualitative research. We take up the wondercabinet as a way of organizing and moving through what reading together provoked, an organization that has both a “discernment of order and pattern, *and* is attuned to the lively excess that always exceeds capture by structure and representation, leaving openings where something new, or something else, might issue” (MacLure, 2013a, p. 229, emphasis our own). Thus, the wondercabinet becomes a way for us to linger in the threshold where theory helps and hinders sense-making. How it sometimes provides us words and other times alerts us to our inability to explain. The artefacts are thereby messy and unpredictable. They sit at the intersection between the (un)sayable and the (un)knowable, producing a dialogue between theory, concepts, events, and encounters.

In the following section, we present a handful of our wonderings as artefacts. We have curated this wondercabinet for how these events resonated; how the concepts plugged into our lives, and we often found, surprised and a little fearful, that some ideas were plugging in with an agency of their own. Like MacLure's (2013b) wondercabinet, the artefacts that follow are thus "alive with the contradictions of classification and curiosity" (p. 229). In this way, although this presentation format requires us to present them in a specific chronology and an order, they have no order. Ideally, they would be presented as a wondercabinet is viewed, eyes tracing a voyage over the cubbies, jumping from frond to amethyst to bone to thimble. To try and preserve some element of this zigzagging, they are labeled and presented out-of-order, disrupting linear time and chronology. We invite you to imagine the spaces between artefact b and h, a and z. Similarly, you will note that our curation is incomplete, missing artefacts. Again, we invite you to think with the spaces between (the thresholds within thresholds within thresholds), provoking openness to connections that might yet be—leaning in, perhaps creating your own cabinet of curiosities and concepts.

#### **Artefact h.**

Maureen is leading a training, saying to a group of students—the question is not one about where power is located, but about how it flows, how it circulates, how it picks up intensity. They slowly nod their heads and then stop. She has lost them in this becoming-together: Maureen-Deleuze-theory-training. She finds herself caught up in flows of power and agency and intensity. This becoming clicks, for a moment, and then the very same dialogic flow reverses, becomes unintelligible. She reflected:

A cocked eyebrow. Oh dear. Damn Deleuze. Making me unintelligible again. But there is (is there?) room for Deleuze in dialogue, if I could only find the words. If I could translate the words. Or the affects (effects?) of them.

#### **Artefact p.**

Carlson accidentally opens an article on Deleuze while sitting in a quantitative analysis course. The moment shimmers as a rupture of refocused attention and begged questions, both conveying and resisting meaning, like the vomiting that MacLure (2013a) theorized. This is an accident, a moment of serendipity, a stray keystroke. Yet, it was a "hot-spot, experienced...as intensities of body as well as mind" (MacLure, 2013a, p. 173), flirting with sense both in the moment and afterwards. How does Deleuze fit here, if at all? How does one do quantitative analysis when Deleuze is haunting you, your mind, your laptop, waiting at the door of your classroom? She wonders what this invasion produced, what sort of assemblage popped into existence. And, what might her attunement to it do? Deleuze and Guattari (1987) might call that moment a line of flight, the sudden

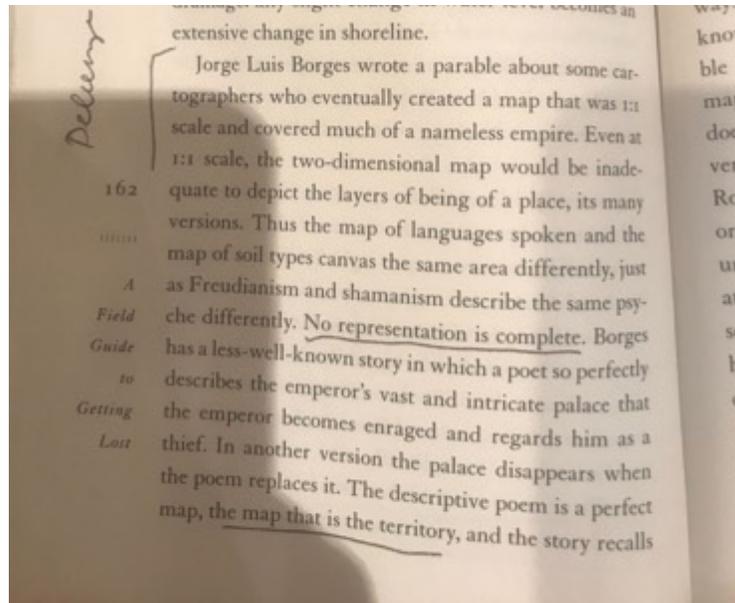
allowance for/of a smooth space, a crackling intensity with the potential to deterritorialize disciplinary lines. If she followed it, where would it lead? But, *should* she, considering how Deleuze and Guattari maintain that their theory is not totalizing, that it resists grand narrativizations like psychoanalysis or Marxism?

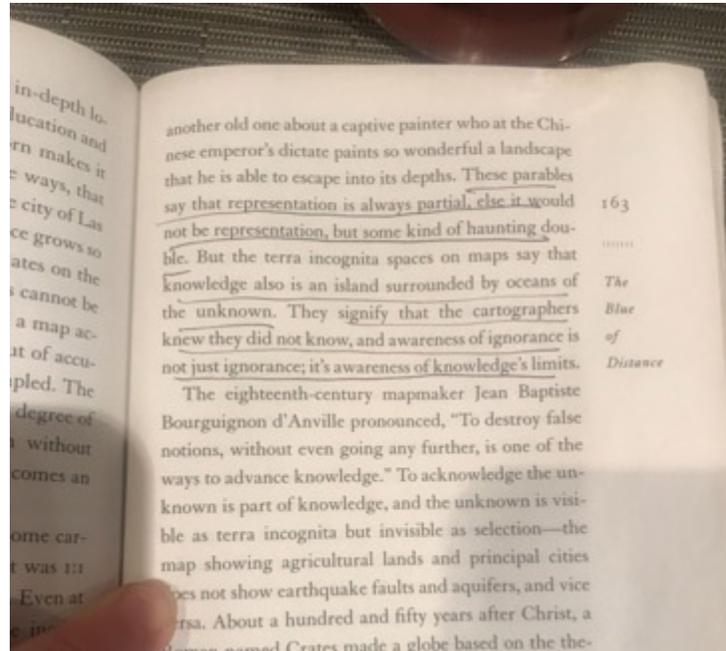
#### Artefact a.

Maureen tells Carlson about a document called "Productive but Unpublishable" that she kept during her dissertation for brain dumping Deleuze, feelings, melodramatic distractions unassociated with her data (a long paragraph about eyelashes and wolves and rhizomes and lines) so that she could go on with the business of her data. Now, it seems like a mapping of how Deleuze and data and personal life were intertwining: the writing, a disruption (or was it?) to the dissertation assemblage. An assemblage that was so persuasive and sticky as to drive her to write, to try to untangle for her reader what was "dissertation" and what was "disruption" as she tried to pull Deleuze-from-her-thoughts.

#### Artefact n.

Maureen texts Carlson photos of Rebecca Solnit's (2006) *A Field Guide to Getting Lost*.





In the photos, Maureen had marked passages on representation, mapping, knowledge and the unknown, and scrawled “Deleuze” in the margin. Our conversation took off from there—Ariadne’s thread, a line of flight connecting Deleuze and Solnit and Borges, space and non-sense. The map and the labyrinth were entry points, “forking paths” (Borges, 1941/1998) into questions, forming an assemblage in which the material embodiments of maze and map “imitat[ed]” the ideological, “reproducing its image in a signifying fashion (mimesis, mimicry, lure, etc.)” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 10) like the wasp-orchid. This becoming together produced:

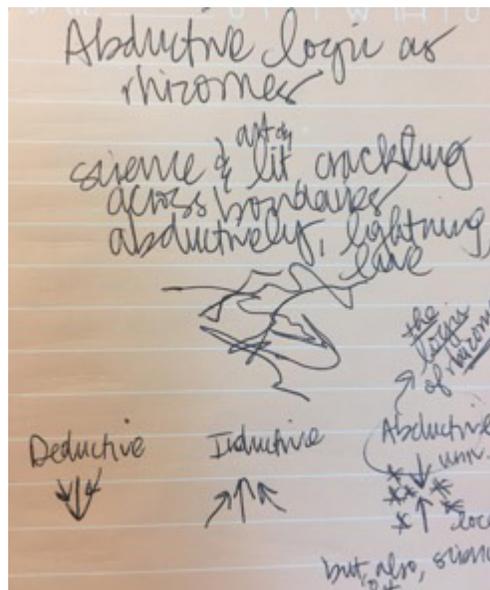
the deterritorialization of one term and the reterritorialization of the other; the two becomings interlink and form relays in a circulation of intensities pushing the deterritorialization even further. There is neither imitation nor resemblance, only an exploding of two heterogeneous series on the line of flight composed by a common rhizome that can no longer be attributed to or subjugated by anything signifying. (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 10)

Mad elements, the non-sense. Can you map non-sense? We wondered. (Are there relations that make up non-sense? Or just a lack of relations?) “Always follow the rhizome *by rupture*; lengthen, *prolong*, and relay the line of flight” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 11, our emphasis). We venture into the terra incognita, the unknown land, what it means to claim/accept what we do not know, the possibilities of not knowing. Even a map that is a 1:1 replica will leave something out,

will fade at the edges. Although our journey along this rhizome of non-sense was brief – all maps have edges, unmapped wild spaces—in this time of writing together (February 5, 2020, 3:51 PM) the assemblage extends, picks up speed, makes new paths. Solnit-Borges-Deleuze-map-labyrinth-non/sense-paper-artefact-Maureen-Carlson.

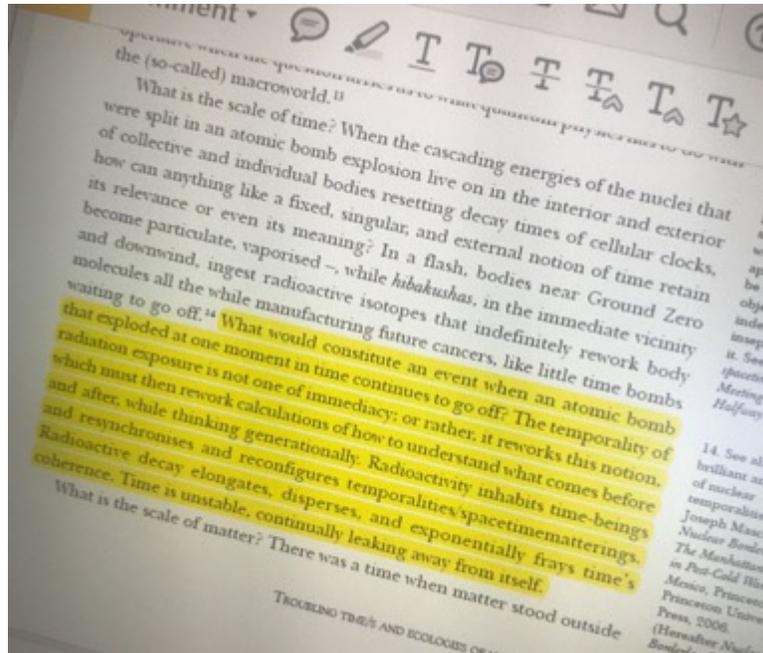
### Artefact k.

Carlson, trying to nap, is fever-dreaming Deleuze. She is startled awake with clarity about rhizomes and her own academic interdisciplinarity. She scrawled down a sketch and some words to try and preserve the sudden epiphany. "No longer are there acts to explain, dreams or phantasies to interpret, childhood memories to recall, words to make signify; instead, there are colors and sounds, becomings and intensities" (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 162).



### Artefact b.

Maureen texts Carlson an image from her computer screen, a highlighted portion of text from Barad's (2017) chapter on spacetime-matterings and the atomic bomb:



Barad launches us into a conversation we had had in the past. The past extending into the present, not really gone, lingering as radiation. “Something happened, something is going to happen, can designate a past so immediate, a future so near, that they are one” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 192). Barad becomes something else. Text messages sent back and forth, following the picture of a computer screen.

*Maureen:* This made me think about our conversation about haecceities/essence.

*Carlson:* I’m still having trouble thinking of haecceity without thinking of essence. Maybe the point is that essence is mobile and always in relation, and thus we use the term “haecceity”? But, there must be limits to what it is possible to become, right? A limit to at least the degree of becoming if not the type: a man can be becoming-horse but never become a horse. If there are negative spaces/limits, I cannot help but adjust my eyes—like looking at one of those dual images of a young woman and an old woman—and see all-the-things-that-are-possible as an essence.

*Maureen:* It is invigorating to talk about this! I think the essence you are circling around, though, is always on the move; there is no essential horse. When you ride a horse, you are becoming horse, in tune with its movements. I think of the child playing horse, becoming horse. If you understand “horse” to be always on the move (legs and coat, tail, whinny, trot, perk of ears, eating apple, chomping teeth, sound of hooves) in singularity and multiplicity, then to become horse is to become those movements. The list of what makes horse is always infinite, and it is always becoming (a horse is not every quality of a horse at once).

*Carlson:* But what do we do with the things that will never be on the list? Breathing underwater? Writing poetry? If that is the case, if you remove the infinite things that a horse is not, that leaves another body of infinite possibilities. Is not this body of things the essence, the horse-as-map, per se?

*Maureen:* How might we think that affirmatively, according to positive as opposed to negative difference? Deleuze would say that reduces to a binary logic of *what is not*, rather than thinking of *what is*: trot poetry/song, the horse singing; ripple of muscle poem, rhythm; horse swimming through liquid grass. What happens, what is produced, when we think of the possible?

### Artefact e.

Carlson is walking with her family across a field of deep snow in Colorado. Playing, talking, laughing after sledding, noticing tracks left in snow. And suddenly, in the snow, *Deleuze*—there demanding, signifying—but what? What did it mean? “Something happened, but what?” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 193). She texts Maureen with the caption “Plateaus of snow... made me think about Deleuze while walking back from sledding.” Maureen responds: “they look like bodies.”



What is your body without organs? What are your lines? What map are you in the process of making or rearranging? What abstract line will you draw and at what price for yourself and for others? What is your line of flight? What is your BwO merged with that line? Are you cracking up? Are you going to crack up? Are you deterritorializing? Which lines are you severing, and which are you extending or resuming. (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 203)

**Artefact s.**

Trump visits The University of Alabama, where Carlson is studying. Carlson is thinking about how politics can divide person from person, separating us into opposing sides, where we think each other is mis-thinking. How this infects relationships. “Reading your writing,” she says to Maureen, “makes me think of this mis-thinking, this negotiation as being on the edge of each other’s pack. The pack as a place of possibility, departure.”

She thinks about David Bright’s (2017) becoming city. Multiple Hanoi. What is a city? What is Hanoi? What is a body? Where are the boundaries? Am I one or multiple (cells, bacteria that are not “me”, digested food)? This then makes her think about how the body has been used as a site to play with ideas of order and disorder (Coogler, 2013; Harris, 1998). The body as ordered, the body as government, the king as the head, death of the body as death of the state. She thinks about Hamlet’s uncle pouring poison in the king’s ear; the guillotine chopping off the heads of aristocrats. Death to the body, death to the state. Aristotle used the body as a metaphor for an ordered argument. Plato used the city led by a philosopher king. But, the body is simultaneously a site of disorder. Matter is full of spaces, full of movement, full of intensities. City-body. Body-city. Order-disorder. Health-disease. These all depend upon the basic belief that the body/city is boundable, ordered, when good or healthy. But, what if it is not? Does this free us in some way, to think differently? To do politics differently? To argue or construct arguments differently? To see and live the body-city-politics as molecular, to follow Braidotti’s (2011) nomadic ethics and make smooth spaces in the striated, refuse the binaries of outside/inside and me/other?

**Artefact t.**

We are both pulled to artmaking. “What movement, what impulse, sweeps us outside the strata and (metastrata)?” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 503). Carlson is swept up with this desire to make art/jewelry, this mental vision of folding and folding and folding wire. Sometimes when she reads Deleuze, she feels like she understands, she approximates, via the material, the affect, in a way that her brain has not caught up to yet, in a way that she does not yet have words for. Research-creation, thought in the act (Manning, 2008). She thinks about how she can read an entire novel without really ever pronouncing a character’s name, without knowing how it is even spelled. Her brain recognizes it, is faster than her internal voice, moves at a different intensity. In the same way, sometimes her art-making moves faster in embodiment and interpretation than words, “a tool for blazing life lines” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 187).

Carlson makes a necklace without anything actually attached so that all relations are temporary. Everything is wrapped, looped, “accumulations” and “foldings” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 502), but only for a time, a moment. There is

no clasp. You pop it on or off, pop it together or apart. The “chain” is continually disassembled, unfixed. Jewelry-in-motion, an event, a becoming and a multiplicity “composed of heterogeneous terms in symbiosis, and... continually transforming itself into a string of other multiplicities” (p. 249). Deleuze and Guattari (1987) instruct: “you don’t know what you can make a rhizome with... So, experiment” (p. 251). Her jewelry-in-motion is an experiment, an attempt to embody the concepts that her brain was moving too slowly to overtake.



Meanwhile, Maureen is making quilts, without pattern or direction, scraps of silk and cotton and velvet accumulated over hers and other lifetimes. Scraps of dresses and projects and ideas, pieces of clothes that have become worn, scraps of her mother, sisters, grandmothers, each curling and fraying fragment a line to another time and place and person. Sitting on the floor of her living room, she “shifted and fitted and mused and fitted them like pieces of a patient puzzle-picture trying to fit them to a pattern or create a pattern out of them” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 476). Each time she unpacks the bag of scraps and blocks and segments they fit together differently, make new patterns, new lines between blocks, quilt-in-motion. Making the same quilt, over and over, unsemi-

mented, unattached, moveable, trying out configurations and patterns, dwelling in the process.



**Artefact x.**

Carlson is thinking about her reading practices, how she jumps from place to place. How she finds new articles and books to read in a way that is totally unsystematic: by word of mouth, by stumbling-on, by interest and intensity. By line of flight. Deleuze and Guattari (1987) ask: “What are your lines? What map are you in the process of making or rearranging?” (p. 203). And, she wonders in turn, “What is this doing for my scholarship?” She talks to Maureen about these questions and about an almost visceral resistance she feels to stratification, a slowing-down she feels when she systematizes. Should she keep detailed notes on method, research questions, data types—the organs of the article faithfully traced into notes? How could she instead map? But, what does a map look like? Susan Cannon’s (2020) work on doing comprehensive exams resonates; Cannon asks, “I kept asking myself if trying to fit myself into this space would subjectify me to such an extent that I would not be recognizable to myself once I made myself legitimate in the field” (p. 44). This becomes the question: what does it look like to “make a map, not a tracing” as Deleuze and Guattari (1987, p. 2) instructs? Carlson thinks of the tangles she doodles as rhizomes; is there a reading methodology there? She draws lines swooping and angling away from each other. She does not pick up her pencil until a tangle is done, a Body without Organs, with no center. Eventually, they cross, once, twice, three times, more. A knot of intensity, a plateau rising up out of the smooth territory of paper. Again. She ends up covering

so much space, the doodle a “BwO...a component of passage” and its record (p. 158). Some spaces end up crossed over many times, thick; some spaces are on the fringe, the edge of the wolf-pack. She folds the paper over, bringing new lines into relation, making new connections possible. There is no order or direction. Instead, there are “multiple entryways” (p. 12). It is “open and connectable in all of its dimensions...detachable, reversible, susceptible to constant modification” (p. 12). She folds the paper again and draws a new line, extending the boundaries of the doodle, pushing back the margin of the map, annexing “territory by deterritorialization, extend[ing] the line of flight to the point where it becomes an abstract machine covering the entire plane of consistency” (p. 11).



#### **Artefact z.**

Maureen wakes up and re-reads *One or Several Wolves*. Skimming the chapter, word document open, writing notes and phrases underlined in previous readings. She is having one of those days (weeks, months, years, epochs?) where everything seems to signify something. And yet the significations, the meanings, slip and slide away when she tries to nail them down. She is trying to resist roots and radicles, Freudianism’s, “replacing multiplicities with the dismal unity of an object declared lost” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 28). How do we live as wolves, she wonders, the dizzying state of “tak[ing] care of [one]self at the same time as participating in the band” (p. 33)? How do you resist the pull to always look ahead, to signify? Or perhaps it is she who is signifying? Looking for signs in the edges of leaves, in the sunlight coming in bands across her kitchen floor, in the segment-ed numbers on the stove clock, asking what does it mean?

The wolf, as the instantaneous apprehension of a multiplicity in a given region, is not a representative, a substitute, but an *I feel*. I feel myself becoming a wolf, one wolf among others, on the edge of the pack. A cry of anguish, the only one Freud hears: Help me not become wolf (or the opposite, Help me not fail in this becoming) [...] The wolf, wolves, are intensities, speeds, temperatures, non

decomposable variable distances. A swarming, a wolfing. (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 32, emphasis our own)

She feels herself becoming, but what? Does becoming have to have a becoming-toward? Becoming-woman, becoming-middle-aged, becoming-scholar, becoming-colleague, becoming-friend, becoming-teacher, becoming-girlfriend, sister, daughter, mother, granddaughter, writer, cook, gardener, advocate, artist, voter, organizer, ally... these becomings are making her dizzy, all at once. Her packs are multiplying and dividing, and she is trying to keep track of which one she is on the edge of, mapping the peripheries, the centers on the move. Career-family-relationships-self-others overlap and blur, tugging and pulling at her to make a decision, do something.

### Returning to Wonder

What does it do methodologically to read, together? How do you affirmatively embrace the messiness and fearfulness of reading and writing about theory? These are questions that were spurred by our reading of *A Thousand Plateaus* together, and that continue to guide our reading and thinking and writing. Reading as moving within an assemblage that someone else has made, even as you are forming your own assemblages, picking up some pieces and carrying them with you. Returning to concepts and ideas and phrases, scraps of fabric, like a treasured stone or bauble, objects that you carry even when their purpose is undeterminable. Bringing them on the journey of becoming-student-faculty-woman-scholar. Thinking with these artefacts, we wonder, what does it do when we take it out, when we look at it again, when we turn it this way, when we put it under water, when we put it next to something else. What does it evoke, what falls out of it, how does it plug in?

This article has been a response both to what falls out and what remains stubbornly elusive when reading and thinking with theory. It pays attention to the ways that our movings-through and understandings of the world are altered when we linger in the threshold where theory, art, methodology and living, meet. Thus, like Christ and colleagues (2021), we resist the tendency to pass through the text (and the questions it has evoked) quickly, despite the fact that such speed might mark us as productive. We resist the instruction we have internalized to ‘get to the point’, ‘to solve’, to ‘explain’. Instead, we pick up the raiment of the nomad who lives in the in-between, and extend the threshold to better experience how theory-method-art blur in our everyday sense-makings. In so doing, we do not aim to conquer the world, or theory, but rather to “engag[e] in becoming with the text” (Christ et al., 2021, p. 4) and each other. To linger on purpose, we have conceptualized these moments as artefacts, of which we asked not just what they have done, but also “What now (and later)? If the artefacts we have collected shimmer still with meanings like light shifting on water? If these interpretations are at best

tentative and incomplete?” We found that how they plug in stays minor, resisting some grand Molar interpretation. We resist the pull to tie Deleuzoguattarian theory up into neat bows, into the little quanta of “take-ways” and “contributions”. Wouldn’t it be disingenuous to present both their work and our reading of it outside of the messy fecundity in which it dwells?

We have come to believe that writing about the messiness of reading and thinking theory is both methodologically responsible (Guyotte & Kuntz, 2018; Kuntz, 2015) and an ethical, feminist move (Christ et al., 2021; Braidotti, 2011; Haraway, 2016; Koro-Ljungberg, 2015). We have found that we have changed through this process of reading Deleuze and Guattari: they are with us even when they are not with us, haunting our bones, suffusing our dreams, lingering in the peripheries of our conversations. We choose to embrace it. This choice, importantly, is affirmative. Writing about it from inside the process—writing of it as process rather than product—is affirmative, too. (There is still danger and some fear, but we have learned/are learning to play in it. To exhilarate in the wondering, to affirm the connections between reading and thinking and doing and being despite the fear.) With Deleuze, we are oriented, not toward mastery, but toward these moments of wonder, an orientation to proliferation and possibility. What might be. As you have read through the artefacts of this wondercabinet we have curated, we hope that you, too, have found something to plug into, to take with you, to bring into the mess of reading-writing theory together.

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