

## **TRANSVERSAL MAPPINGS OF IMMANENT SUBJECTIVITIES: THE CATASTROPHE OF SETTLER COLONIALISM<sup>1</sup>**

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Bloodshed and bigotry mark the foundational coordinates of North American nation building on Indigenous land. The colonial project is nothing short of a catastrophe, and the subjects who populate these territories without sanction have been produced through this catastrophe as subjects of colonial conquest, war, and settlement. To map any catastrophe requires a certain sobriety, but the enormity and scope of effects distributed in the course of the colonial project calls for a particularly cautious approach. Therefore, this paper takes on only one mode of production within the overall machinery of genocide, appropriation, and subjugation, albeit an exceedingly complex and dangerous subject: the settler. We focus on the settler because its coordinates map each of us within the political, social, and cultural cartography of 21<sup>st</sup>-century North America.

For the two of us as settlers on Indigenous land, the gradual emersion of and engagement with Indigenous people, land, art, language, and ways of knowing have unsettled many of our comforts and clear conceptions of identity. Filling us at first with guilt, anger, and other sad passions, these encounters have provided us with opportunities to rediscover, or better, recreate ourselves in new ethical and aesthetic ways. Our journey has been catalyzed by the conceptual apparatus developed by Deleuze and Guattari (1991/2003), who saw catastrophe as a positive event that holds subversive potential, and we continue to be elicited to think through the virtual expressive capacities awaiting actualizations as we come into contact with other bodies, particularly bodies (human, geographical, philosophical) marked by dominant mappings as Indigenous, racialized, or other. We wonder how thinking and writing are processes and appendages in these assemblings, and how writing may provoke a liminal space of encounter and transformation. How might a transversal mapping of Deleuze and Guattari and the catastrophe of settlement probe aspects of settler subjectivity in order to constitute us as people accountable to colonialism? A transversal mapping is an entanglement of overlapping, woven, and transformational collisions that produces cartography as an indeterminate dynamic approximation of a constantly shifting kaleidoscope of time and space. It is in this Deleuzo-Guattarian sense that we approach catastrophes as ruptures, events that open and

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transform existing sets of relations in such a way as to foreclose the possibility of return. Under such conditions, there is inevitably a dislocation and disorientation, a refusal of the actuality of the new set of functions and possibilities, and quite possibly a longing for a return to who and what we were before. The affective components of catastrophe are complex, including conflicting and contradictory compositions of thought and feeling such as grief, loss, sadness, hope, joy, anxiety, terror, rage, catatonia, and mania in varying proportion. To some considerable degree, our lives are composed of how we articulate, compose, and are composed in relation to an infinitely proliferating and cascading series of catastrophes. In this sense, catastrophe is both inevitable and ongoing. It is the stuff of life, both organic and inorganic, a set of relations that produces every moment as an assembling and disassembling of component particulate combinations beyond our ability to comprehend. To resist the vertigo, delirium, and affective overload that the actual apprehension of catastrophe might well evoke, we propose what Deleuze and Guattari (1991/2003, following Spinoza, 1677/2007) refer to as sobriety.

Sobriety, as we deploy it here vis-à-vis Deleuze and Guattari and Spinoza, is not a Cartesian refusal of the corporeal. We are not proposing sobriety as modernist mode of objectivity that gives rationality and reason primacy over the body's perceptual fields and constitutive affective force. Instead, sobriety composes the encounter with catastrophe through a judicious application of reason, rationality, and intuition. In this, we propose the necessity of discovering the limits of reason and rationality required, beginning with an extremely low dosage and seeking to find, not the maximum application, but the minimum limit. The limit state referred to here is the point at which the compositional field delineated by reason and rationality reaches a threshold condition. The threshold constitutes the limit event through which rationality and reason open onto the field of something other than its initial object. It is a rupture or, in our terms thus far, a catastrophe. It is also a moment of crisis that can be resolved in two ways: (1) we can avoid the crisis by appealing to a transcendent outside that delivers us from the contested and contradictory set of relations that compose the catastrophe and hence divert our attention from the actuality of rupture, or (2) we can accept the limit of reason and rationality in its explanatory capacities and open the field of intuition as a mode of apprehending a subjectivity immanent to catastrophe and the living relations it produces. In this paper we map both possible responses to catastrophe by interrogating the makeup and processes first of a subjectivity founded on lack and second of one founded on affirmation.

### **The Colonial Unconscious and Transcendent Outside**

To open the field of our own subjectivity as a mode for apprehending catastrophe means to engage the realm of sense, the ineffable, or, in psychoanalytic terms, the unconscious. In the catastrophe of colonial settlement, the unconscious might well be read in both Freudian/Lacanian and Deleuzo-Guattarian registers. We use the term Freudian/Lacanian to indicate a theoretical entangling of Freudian and Lacanian readings of the genetic unconscious as foundationally

representative. In the Freudian aspect, the unconscious is a space of forbidden representations of desire, while in the Lacanian it is the space of that which cannot be articulated. In our Freudian/Lacanian reading, we see the unconscious as a space of repression in which the term settler signifies both that which must not be spoken—because it is forbidden knowledge—and that which cannot be spoken—because it is ineffable, both in the sense that it is too great or extreme to be spoken and because it is taboo. The production of the term settler then holds a very specific function within the genocidal project of colonization in North America in settling and smoothing the massively disruptive effects of the catastrophe.

The colonial Freudian/Lacanian unconscious that produces the settler in this way then produces both a mythical subject free of the disruptive and forbidden activities engaged in during the extensive historical conquest of Indigenous peoples (European, African, Asian, and North American) and a mythical event horizon that obscures and eviscerates memory, producing the settler as innocent and utopic desire for democracy and opportunity. The colonial unconscious is a site of primary repression of that which it is taboo to know. Such an unconscious produces the settler as an identity-cypher to stand in for a subjectivity overwhelmed with shame and guilt in desperate need of a sociopathic overlay to defer any debt due on the terms of its survival. We, as settlers, must not know, in any existential or phenomenological sense, the price we have exacted from the land, from the Other, or from our own desire. It is the nature of the psychotic delusion of the settler that such knowing must be denied in the fundamental constitution of identity and any threat to this systematic denial must be met with the highest degree of savagery to sustain our system of paranoid foreclosure.

Under such a foreclosure of knowledge, the settler must believe that history is in the past and that any and all harm, trauma, and associated accountability has no contemporary actuality. The fact that the lands that are currently known as North America have been the home of Indigenous peoples for millennia (Blackstock, 2003) is only of historical interest. It is something to be taught as an event whose time has passed. The reality of an alternative sociocultural ecology of living peoples with significant diversity among their different cultures, societies, and language groups “bound together by a perspective that supports a holistic interdependent worldview, communal rights and a commitment to sustainable decision making” (Blackstock, p. 3) must be glossed over and homogenized into an element of how we as settlers manage multiculturalism or human rights. The history of thousands of years in which Indigenous peoples across Turtle Island<sup>2</sup> developed complex and functional systems of politics, economics, education, health, and spirituality (Chansonneuve, 2005) is to be reductively and selectively denied and subsumed within the discourses that valorize European and American models of democracy and progress. Indigenous peoples’ own accounts of their historical origins through creation stories are produced as quaint, antiquated mythological accounts to be measured against anthropological and archaeological evidence produced by settler science (Chansonneuve, 2005; Watts, 2013).

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<sup>2</sup> Turtle Island is the English translation for the name that numerous Indigenous Peoples used to speak about the land that is now called North America.

The Freudian/Lacanian settler unconscious must also erase and reconfigure the history of contact to foreground the settler as the origin point for all relations to follow. This manoeuvre precludes any history of independent “intricate systems of political and commercial alliances” (Henry, Tator, Mattis, & Rees, 2000, p. 134) among ethnically and linguistically diverse Indigenous peoples of Turtle Island. The delusional paranoid constructions derived from the repressive apparatus of the settler unconscious produces the history of first contact of Indigenous peoples with Europeans through the telling of John Cabot’s meeting with the Beothuk or the voyages of Christopher Columbus. To derive this construction, the history of Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples’ interactions across four periods<sup>3</sup> spanning a thousand years (Henry et al. 2000) must be foreclosed and rewritten to create a narrative in which the colonial project of settlement not only is foregrounded but becomes the only story of consequence. In this telling, conquest and settlement are inevitable and the resulting set of relations the only possible outcome.

The construction of any history of relationship has significant implications, not just in terms of the accurate reporting of events, but also in the very production of who we settlers imagine ourselves and the Other to be. If we misapprehend and misconstrue, through repression and denial, key constitutive events that compose us affectively through our interactions with others, then the ways in we become subjectified are significantly impoverished. In this sense, the process of abstract accounts of colonial history as the development of imperial European institutions and policies in a new land sanitizes the actual corporeal encounters between bodies. However, the production of the subject as settler also inadvertently opens the realm of abstract colonialism by suggesting that settler colonialism “is different from other forms of colonialism in that settlers come with the intention of making a new home on the land, a homemaking that insists on settler sovereignty over all things in their new domain” (Tuck & Yang, 2012, p. 5). Here we have a subtle move away from sovereignty as the province of the imperial state and the introduction of an individuated subject whose modes of dominance, coercion, and appropriation are founded, not on the state, whose interests are of course intertwined, but on the home and family.

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<sup>3</sup> The first period includes intermittent contact between Indigenous Peoples and Europeans, such as the Norse and Basque, starting in 1000 AD, as well as sustained European presence from the end of the 15th century until the 18th century. This period, Henry et al. (2000) claim, is characterized by mutual tolerance and respect, with some exceptions. Beginning in the 18th century and propelled by French and English battles for imperial supremacy in North America, the second period is marked by the formation of trading and military alliances, as well as increased conflict and death. Indigenous peoples suffered enormous population declines as European diseases spread across the continent, while at the same time the European population grew with increased immigration and settlement. The displacement and assimilation of Indigenous peoples is indicative of the third period of Indigenous-European relations, which occurred at different times across the continent. The third period is “marked by a continuing saga of expropriation, exclusion, discrimination, coercion, subjugation, oppression, deficit, theft, appropriation, and extreme regulation” (Henry et al., p. 120). The fourth period, which continues today, is described by Henry et al. as distinguished by negotiations and renewal. Following the end of World War II, the authors explain, public awareness and Indigenous political mobilization increased in response to the ongoing racist attitudes and policies directed at Indigenous peoples.

This home and family are precisely the home and family of the Freudian/Lacanian Oedipal/phallic unconscious. Family and home in the vernacular of psychoanalysis are founded in primary trauma, and the system of rule deployed in relation to such trauma is founded in the phallic assertion of the father and the primary space of lack as desire that is the mother. To produce the home requires an erasure and sublimation of desire and the dialectic productive capacities of lack. To sustain the family and the home, the rule of the father must eradicate and clear all preceding forms of sovereignty and any alternative modes of production.

Settler colonialism, as just such a system of patriarchal rule, is principally about remapping the land and deploying imperial institutions and policies that forcibly erase Indigenous presence, traditions, and life from such maps and from the land itself. Canada and the U.S., as settler colonial states, were predicated on the discourse of *terra nullius*, empty land. This, in psychoanalytic terms, constitutes the land as absence or lack: the feminine. Such lack is at the heart of the dialectics of desire, which utilizes the anxiety of absence to generate the imaginary and the symbolic. The dialectics of desire is premised on the lack of phenomenological being or, in another term, the ineffability of coherent subjectivity. Producing a new subject within a new world required symbolically castrating the old world order. The ambivalence of the symbolic patricide of the old order leaves a residue of shame only partially resolved by a symbolic return to the new world as an empty space or pure possibility. If there is no *terra nullius*, then there is no escape into a utopic future through the murder of the father. However, the father, as European Empire, is not yet dead and demands a rebirth through the symbolic (and literal) rape of the realm of the feminine that is the new world. This complex set of force relations intersects with the existing sets of Indigenous relations in entanglements of old and new, but the dialectic construction of the settler subjectivity is always to be found in the reading of the Indigenous and all colonial others as lack that will provide and provision the empty canvas of the settlement.

It is in these terms that we can come to understand how the British and French colonists acknowledged First Nations land occupation when it served their purposes, such as in strategies of war. This dialectical simultaneous appropriation and evisceration of native sovereignty was designed to open a clear field for the establishment of the homeland for the settler to settle. Alfred (2009) explains that during conflicts between the French and British in North America, these powers needed the alliances of Indigenous nations to defeat one another and therefore recognized the original sovereignty of Indigenous nations. Britain, once it defeated France in the Seven Years War and asserted control over North America, both recognized Indigenous presence through the Royal Proclamation of 1763 and simultaneously initiated a systematic process of removing Indigenous people, language, and culture from the land to profit settler institutions and individuals. The Royal Proclamation established British rule of French-claimed territory in North America and determined that the emerging government would have responsibilities to Indigenous peoples, particularly in land and other treaty negotiation. By the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, however, “Canada decided to abandon its responsibility to settle Treaties” (Blackstock, 2003, p. 4) and

focused instead on a program of assimilation, community dislocation, and genocide. Wesley-Esquimaux and Smolewshi (2004) explain that following the pandemics and wars, “there would have been no one to stem the tide of colonialism because so few would have been left standing and those who survived did not have the strength of mind or body” (p. 23). Already weakened Indigenous communities could not protect themselves from assimilationist policies set out in the Indian Act and enacted through such bodies as the residential school system.

Canadian settler colonization, including land theft, cultural genocide, the forcible removal of children, and the deliberate spread of disease and pandemics, was responsible for the deaths of up to 90% of the Indigenous population and rendered Indigenous people “physically, spiritually, emotionally and psychically traumatized by deep and unresolved grief” (Wesley-Esquimaux & Smolewshi, 2004, p. iii). Clearly what we are describing here is a catastrophe, and the catastrophe continues today. As Alfred and Corntassel (2005) explain, contemporary settlers

follow the mandate provided for them by their imperial forefathers’ colonial legacy, not by attempting to eradicate the physical signs of Indigenous Peoples as human *bodies*, but by trying to eradicate their existence as *peoples* through the erasure of the histories and geographies that provide the foundation for Indigenous cultural identities and sense of self. (p. 598)

In the reading of catastrophe we provided at the beginning of this writing, we identified two ways to manage the affective dislocations of such rupture. Here we see the first in full extension: the appeal to a transcendent outside that delivers us from the contested and contradictory set of relations that compose the catastrophe as immanent event and hence divert our attention from the actuality of rupture. To produce the Other as pure abstraction is to reify the Other as lack. The erasure of the Other as anything other than a sociopolitical abstraction to be deployed through juridical, ideological, and biopolitical regimes of control and discipline is an appeal to the transcendent as absolute denial of material and corporeal actuality. Such a move, however, is not without consequence to the settler as subjectivity in relation to the Other.

It was Freud who pointed out that denial of trauma through repression can only be sustained through ongoing violence to the integrity of self-production. Put simply, that which is repressed will surface in ways that warp and distort the autopoietic capacities of the body. Since trauma always engages the Other, repression is always a collective act centered and focused through the unique and idiosyncratic capacities of the singular body. The logic of settlement as an act of traumatic erasure that must be repressed through an appeal to the transcendent so as to elide the corporeal affective horror of genocide cannot avoid the inevitable radical alienation of the settlers from the actuality of their own lived experience. In this way the settler is doomed to live within a simulacrum of family, home, and culture. Through the process of settlement, each of these social institutions becomes a symptom of deep malaise complete with neurosis and constant slippage into paranoia and delusional thought. Ironically, the ostensible logic of

the settlement project to create home and family undermines any possibility of actual affiliations of either home or family. Indeed, as Marx and Engels (Engels, 1884/2004) and Hardt and Negri (2009) point out, the family and home become deep sites of social corruption that undermine possibilities of love and affiliation. It is not surprising that the colonial project finds its deepest and most extensive sovereign logic through the development of capitalism within settler nations such as the U.S. It is, after all, through capitalism that absolute transcendent simulacra can become the social and cultural logic of our age. Following Michael Hardt (1995), we might note that capitalism as a cultural logic that eviscerates civil society for the North American settler extends the very logic of settlement that made every attempt to eviscerate Indigenous modes of living. Thus the catastrophe cascades out and leaves none of us unsullied or invulnerable, as Deleuze and Guattari (1991/2003) suggest in relation to another genocide (or possibly a reasonable extension of the one we are mapping):

It is not only our States but each of us, every democrat, who finds him or herself not responsible for Nazism but sullied by it. There is indeed catastrophe, but it consists in the society of brothers or friends having undergone such an ordeal that brothers and friends can no longer look at each other, or each at himself, without a “weariness,” perhaps a “mistrust.” (p. 170)

The limit to the regimes of transcendence is remarkably similar to that of addiction. The capacity of a drug to sustain sovereignty over an addict’s life is directly proportional to its ability to seamlessly deliver its anaesthetic or amnesiac promise. The problem is that the capacities of living force are always impinging on and at least marginally exceeding the limit conditions of amnesia and anaesthetic so that both pain and memory leak through. The tension between the force of life and its leakage and the promise of transcendent escape wears on the subjectivity in question until, in the vernacular of addiction, the addict hits rock bottom and is forced to seek a new life.

Just as Nazism sullies democrats not responsible for it, colonialism sullies those of us settlers who are weary of struggling to deny or escape our living relations with our Indigenous sisters and brothers. We are literally sick at heart and soul over the denial of the actuality of our common interests that would compose us as friends. The ordeal of settlement has made it difficult for us as settlers to look at each other or ourselves without weariness, and this weariness extends to all those we encounter as other. However, as Deleuze and Guattari tell us, it is at just such a point that there exists the possibility of breaching the limit of the existing social configuration through a threshold of new thought: “After an ordeal that is too powerful . . . inexpressible . . . [comes] a mutual distress, a mutual weariness that forms a new right of thought” (1991/2003, p. 71). If, we propose, we are to abandon the transcendent formulations of settlement and settler subjectivity and have a new right of thought, we must form a new unconscious that is capable of more than repression and sublimation.

## **Toward an Immanent Subjectivity Forged in Catastrophe**

Thus far we have mapped settler colonialism and the unconscious of the settler founded on its denial. We have argued that repression, abstraction, and the appeal to transcendence are one possible set of responses to the catastrophe of settlement. In this section we provide an alternative subjectivity founded on an affective engagement with colonialism and the living relations that constitute and are disrupted by it. This subjectivity is founded in the second form of unconscious we noted above. As Guattari (1979/2011) tells us, “we have the unconscious we deserve!” He goes on to suggest a different form of unconscious, not simply an unconscious of the specialists of the unconscious, not simply an unconscious crystallized in the past, congealed in an institutional discourse, but, on the contrary, an unconscious turned towards the future, whose screen would be none other than the possible itself, the possible as hypersensitive to language, but also the possible hypersensitive to touch, hypersensitive to the socius, hypersensitive to the cosmos. (p. 10)

Such an unconscious elides the transcendent by denying it the sustenance of the denial of living catastrophe. For such an unconscious, the temporality of catastrophe is never in the past but always in capacity for becoming that is not yet. This is not to deny the trauma of past catastrophic actions or relations of force. It is instead to refuse their seduction as inevitability through institutional abstract discourse that crystallizes or congeals the past into a transcendent carapace that encapsulates subjective relations in reductive repetitions of old battles and unfinished resentments. Indeed, such an unconscious would break the carapace of transcendent denial, opening a field of hypersensitivity that would not shrink from the complexities of pain and joy that make up actual living relations. Such an unconscious is instantiated within individual subjects and operates as a productive instigator of subjectivity, but it does not represent them, nor is it restrained or restricted by any particular singular corporeal assemblage. It is a collective unconscious, but not in the Jungian sense of global structural archetypes. It is instead the collectivity of living force as absolute possibility. To rethink the settler in this way is to unmoor the settlement and open the field of the nomadic. It is to move from the lack and negation of the colonial project to a field of affirmation of life itself. We deploy affirmation here as the prospective belief that painful affects and catastrophic circumstances are transformed, not through historicizing or negating catastrophe, but through sensitivity to it and activity in it.

The Freudian/Lacanian reading of the settler unconscious that we mapped above presents our disavowals of catastrophe as an impingement on our creative capacity to (re)produce ourselves in new and ever-changing relationships. Conversely, in the production of an alternative subjectivity commensurate with the hypersensitive unconscious that Guattari intuits, we propose a perhaps counterintuitive affirmation of the present. Our sobering analyses of the present bring us to the threshold of encounter where abstraction gives way to a future-oriented material unconscious capable of drawing out patterns in the present as relays to virtual possibilities. Such an unconscious, hypersensitive to its material and relational constitution, can revisit that

which was abstracted—the site of repressed horrors and guilt—as a repository of desire trapped and diverted by such denials. Our existing material relations offer an almost infinite range of modes of being that have been precluded by colonialism, and the trick is now to work through colonialism to get at those possible worlds, affects, relations. In opposition to the abstract worlds and peoples of colonialism, affirmation of this one living world can only be done through a full engagement in the living relationships and affects that are foreclosed by colonial mappings. Mapping settler subjectivity in immanence is a process of enduring the affects of loss, pain, grief, guilt, joy, hope, confusion, and anger involved in the lost comforts of an invulnerable identity and accountably recreating ourselves in relation to all others in this world.

We have numbed ourselves from the pain, guilt, shame, and even joys of our history and present, and it is by revisiting these that the process of becoming ethical can start. The power of the settler in colonialism has relied on a closed body where forces and flows are consolidated and contained in a stable identity. The settler unconscious has provided the necessary mechanisms for denial and repression, but the forces and flows of life always exceed these closures. For some of us, the suffering of Indigenous people and our own complicity in it is no longer to be avoided. For others, the friendships and joys we share with people we have come to care about and love inspires a desire for change. In either case, we settlers must first forgo an identity premised on amnesia regarding the ongoing violence of settlement and our role in it. It also means to endure such experience with a sobriety capable of understanding the singular reconfigurations of relationships and responsibilities that follow such a process. While the settler is the site of privileged subjectivity within current neoliberal power, a subjectivity that comes to be the norm and standard within dominant institutions and discourse. An immanent remapping of the settler as intricately engaged in living relations affirms its contingency in geography, otherness, and the catastrophe from which current neoliberal power has emerged. To open the settler body back up to history, geography, and the Other is to begin a process of subjectification constituted by external forces, connections, and flows. This reengagement with material life and related loss of transcendent identity is replete with pain and joy. It allows us to produce ourselves within a life that proliferates in a singular instantiation of immanent material flows in mobile rearrangements. This is to move from an abstract mapping of colonialism to an affective cartography of living relations and immanent subjectivity.

A cartography of living relations disperses the settled identity of the settler and repositions it as an active participant in particular relationships, practices, campaigns, strategies, and tactics that engage colonialism and decolonization. The stable settler subject is reconfigured within ongoing, dispersed, and contradictory processes of subjectification within various relational assemblages. We therefore challenge the inevitability of the settler subject through an engagement with both the settler's stable configurations and constitutive forces. Guattari (1979/2011) proposes that we think in terms of refrains rather than wholes in this type of situation. The refrain of the settler can thus be both a repetition of an identity located within a particular space-time matrix and a singularized autopoietic and networked instantiation of that

identity. The immanent unconscious is therefore not personal and representational (in that it is the storehouse of forbidden representations of our personal desires) but active (in that it constitutes the assemblages through which desire flows and produces).

In challenging the inevitability of the settler subject, we are calling for a decentering of the settler unconscious onto a plane of relational and intensive constitution. Importantly, we are not making any suggestions regarding Indigenous subjectivity, as such commentary would simply reiterate the unfortunate historical practice of the dominant vernacular refusing its own constitutive ruptural necessity through the diversion of the Other. Our comments here are a proposal specific to the historical trajectory of the settler from the inside of that project. Furthermore, we are expressly not arguing that Indigenous people are a mechanism for settler transformation. Our proposal is for settlers to map new processes of subjectification that are accountable to their constitutive relationships and the catastrophe of colonialism.

Using the settler as an identity in transforming the unconscious from one of lack to one of material constitution is our first task in the construction of an immanent subjectivity. Identification of settler subjectivity reintroduces the coordinates of colonialism into our constitution and allows for a mapping of current power relations and the complexity of affect and desire. Affirming a settler subjectivity then does two related things: (1) it reintroduces the catastrophe of colonialism as a living present and (2) it resists such a present as what Braidotti (2013) terms a becoming. The first signifies or represents identity in a politically charged and affectively challenging way; the second opens onto new forms of subjectivity. The acknowledgement of a settler subjectivity immediately undermines itself in that settler subjectivity is premised on a repression of the actualities of colonialism and a continued accumulation of dominant force. Enunciating a settler subjectivity therefore simultaneously reifies an identity while calling forth a new process of subjectifying which is responsible to the catastrophe of colonialism and the living relationships of the present. By engaging the repressions, disconnections, and stagnations that have come with complicity in colonialism, we make ourselves vulnerable to all the affects that our illusions once protected us from.

### **Vulnerability, Endurance, Affirmation**

Now that we have made ourselves vulnerable, we follow Spinoza (1677/2007) in seeking endurance and affirmation as practices for forming a subjectivity worthy of the catastrophe that produced it. We can no longer avoid pain and uncertainty; we must become active through them. There is no way to rationally comprehend the horrors of colonization, and we argue that rationality is actually one very potent way of avoiding the pain. The ethics being called for here is an active affirmation of the constitutive catastrophe and a working through it affectively, bodily, intuitively, and relationally, accepting the ineffable and incomprehensible as the threshold of change and encounter. Braidotti (2009) argues that enduring affects that are relational is necessary for developing an ethical subjectivity. She states that “endurance points to the struggle to sustain the pain without being annihilated by it” (p. 51)

and links this pain to betrayal and wounds simultaneously hard to forget and remember. The affirmation of settler colonialism reintroduces the rupture of catastrophe as an unsettling affective fracture that opens settler subjectivity onto new sets of complex and interdependent relations with people, animals, and plant life. The unsettling effect of affirming the complexity of these affects and relations, and further understanding oneself as constituted by them, is to risk being vulnerable to the unpredictable, to the directions that relationships can take us, to not knowing. The role of sensation in this project then is to maximize our capacities to be affected by our environment and the people, organisms, and bodies that constitute it, yet maintain our living bodies. Our lives therefore become premised on a desire to affect and be affected: to increase power, express capacity, and compose our subjectivity as immanent to our relationships. For Spinoza (1677/2007), the philosopher of immanence, joy is an increase in our body's power to affect and be affected. In contrast, the sad passions of disgust, resentment, pain, and denial are feelings of diminished constitutive force. An immanent subjectivity composed in the catastrophe of colonialism therefore seeks ways to participate joyfully in our own decolonization and increase sensitivity and endurance necessary for transformation. Such an immanent subjectivity seeks ways to affirm the transformation of sad passions in the present, encounter the sensations that will push them through a threshold of change, and endure the changes therein.

The endurance of sad passions such as guilt and shame holds the possibility of transformation when relationships and the body are premised in the process. In this rendering of negative experiences, affect and psychological movement are highlighted as catalysts for change, whereas stagnation, repression, avoidance, and rigidification are synonymous with violence to self and other. In terms of the problematics of earth and people, Braidotti (2006, 2009) invites us to use the concepts of *zoe* and becoming to think with new hope about life and vulnerability. Following Spinoza, she offers an account of ethics in which conflict is recast in a larger frame of life that implies that the harm done to others is simultaneously visited upon oneself and, conversely, empowering others brings joy and an increase of power to oneself. All of our freedoms and affects are interdependent and positively correlated: taking from another gives one less, not more. Rather than a lack that inaugurates desire and action, the immanent subject sketched out here is constituted by a vital force of desire that is ontological and constitutive. Action and affirmation is desire increasing its power to act in bodies through which it flows and is apprehended. Increasing the interactions, sensitivity, and relational interdependence of bodies increases their expressive capacity through diversity and experimentation. Braidotti (2009) argues that the traditional unified vision of the subject which rendered woman, nature, and native as the Other in modernism returns at the end of postmodernism as a nonunitarian subject whose other is vitality or life force: *zoe*.

*Zoe* can be contrasted with *bios*, or what Foucault (1978) called bio-power, where the body is associated to knowledge, intervention, and control. Bio-power preeminently includes the social apparatus's power "to ensure, maintain, or develop its life" (p. 136) or reduce life to bare and perishable conditions. Foucault's concept of bio-power helps to explain

how technologies that manage the health of urbanized populations do so through surveillance and administrative means. By deploying such technologies, governments seek to optimize the integration of subjects into the capitalist system as workers who work most efficiently through a docile subjectivity. The intersection of bio-power and docility is the site of production of a subject whose life and capacities, now appropriated by capitalism, are worth maximizing. Subjects who do not become produced at this intersection, or whose subjectivities and productive capacities are not easily appropriated by capitalism, are left bare. This is the realm of zoe, or precarious life, life ungoverned. While this conception of zoe maps the functioning of power, it is limited in its ability to theorize the creative force inherent in material bodies that are not strictly disciplined and produced by governmentality. Braidotti (2013) emphasizes that, in contrast to the concept of bare life, zoe can be conceived as “a creative force that constructs possible futures” (p. 343).

In contemporary settler colonialism, bio-power is deployed, for instance, as institutional indifference to the murders and rapes of Indigenous women and youth who do not achieve recognizable subjectivity (de Finney, 2014). In British Columbia alone, hundreds of cases of abuse, rape, and missing persons have gone uninvestigated because the victims were Aboriginal women—a situation which the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (2014) recently condemned as a human rights violation. Bio-power here is evident in the state’s differential response to the lives of its subjects. Not only does the state differentially govern life and death through control, calculation, health promotion, and intervention, it is simultaneously constituted by such practices. The state is co-constituted by the divisions that are made between the life and death of its subjects. The settler colonial state is only the state insofar as it bolsters the life of settlers and would cease to function as a state if Indigenous life, presence, and history were not systematically eradicated.

Bios, as the manipulation of life related to social hygiene, governmentality, and control, is the Other side of life as zoe, which Braidotti theorizes as “the mindless vitality of Life carrying on independently of and regardless of rational control” (Braidotti, 2009, p. 37). The colonized version of “the human” identified by whiteness, maleness, heterosexuality, wealth, and standard language use has been historically conflated with bios, whereas zoe has been historically associated with woman, nature, and racialized other. In advanced capitalism, and in connection with biotechnological advances, however, zoe, as the life force represented as the Others of the traditional subject, has now taken a central place in political economy. The complex intersections of zoe, bios, capital, politics, and technology are now the contested and transformative spaces of contemporary subjectivity marked by environmental, global, and colonial catastrophe. The way forward, we argue with Braidotti, is through “forces, desires, and values that act as empowering modes of being” rather than a moralistic set of “negative, resentful emotions and life-denying reactive passions” (Braidotti, 2006, p. 236). A consideration of zoe as the nonrepresentable becoming of life force queries new approaches to thinking of life, the subject, and others.

Zoe moves our analysis away again from abstract representations of life and toward the phenomenological world of encounter and action. Deleuze and Guattari (1980/2004) write that “we know nothing about a body until we know what it can do, in other words, what its affects are, how they can or cannot enter into composition with other affects, with the affects of another body” (p. 257). Affirmation requires that we analyze the power that bodies have through an experimentation with capacities that can be expressed in relational webs of action. It is an ethics of engagement that seeks a transformative encounter in the space of catastrophe rather than seeking an escape through a transcendent and abstract outside such as god, democracy, rationality, or utopia. Our first task, then, is the sober analysis and acknowledgement of horror of the historical events of colonialism that have constituted settler subjectivity. Our second task is to experiment with new forms of subjectivity capable of transforming the negative affects and sad passions of such a rupture into modes of being capable of deepening relationships based on accountability to each other.

Braidotti (2006) builds with Deleuze on Spinoza’s concept of endurance and states that “endurance is self-affirmation. It is also an ethical principle of affirmation of the positivity of the intensive subject—its joyful affirmation as *potentia*. The subject is a spatiotemporal compound which frames the boundaries of processes of becoming” (p. 244). Here Braidotti highlights the embodied maintenance of pain or pleasure without the body being destroyed by them. Endurance is the ability to endure the transformation from negative to positive affect, which becomes the hallmark of sustainability and self-preservation within experimental praxiological engagements. It is the endurance and working through of fear, pain, or anxiety to the point of transformation, not the avoidance, disgust, resignation, or rejection of suffering and death, that affirms the transformative potential of life in all its difference. Braidotti (2009) writes, “Paradoxically, it is those who have already cracked up a bit, those who have suffered pain and injury, who are better placed to take the lead in the process of ethical transformation” (p. 53). In terms of constituting new earths and new peoples, Braidotti’s rendition of the nomadic subject proposes that engagements with difference and others, including land and other forms of life, is necessary for sustainability and survival. Otherness, for Braidotti, “is the threshold of transformative encounters” (p. 46) that prompt and mobilize “flows of affirmation of values and forces which are not yet sustained by the current conditions” (p. 49). The power to resist the present is here cultivated in our capacities to be vulnerable and endure the present’s most virulent aspects, to cultivate relations that exceed the abstract configurations of oppositional subjectivity.

### **Resistance to the Present**

Deleuze and Guattari’s conceptualization of catastrophe juxtaposes two senses of the word, the representational and the actual. Representing catastrophe as an abstract or historic occurrence distances us from its effects while recreating ourselves as expressions of catastrophe allow it to function as an actual present. It is through a sobering acknowledgement of the present as a state of catastrophe—an admission that takes up

history in our current spatial, corporeal, and conceptual makeup—and an endurance of the shame and anger that accompanies such a revolutive analysis that new ethical subjectivities can be forged. A yes-saying to the present, to all of the present, moves beyond an acceptance of things as they are and affirms all that could be, since

the actual is not what we are but, rather, what we become, what we are in the process of becoming—that is to say, the Other, our becoming-other. The present, on the contrary, is what we are and, thereby, what already we are ceasing to be. (Deleuze and Guattari, 1991/2003, p. 112)

To be clear, affirmation is not an acceptance of the way things are nor a hopeful projection of a future predicated on growth-oriented investments in security, accumulation, and comfort, but a view of temporality as dynamic dependency and affective and corporeal vulnerability. Our present is here recast as our very undoing; it is a present of living relations that is in a perpetual state of change. The present is a ceaseless flow of becoming that undermines a settled identity. Concerns with settler subjectivity as an abstract entity continue to withdraw us from the living present in which we are composed through our relationships. What this means for us is that rather than ask who or what we are, we must ask about our capacities and relationships. What has been foreclosed through the separations, closures, and bio-politics of colonialism? What might still be extractable through vulnerability, endurance, sobriety, and confrontation with catastrophe? Who do we become when repressions and negative affects are transformed into action? The violence of colonialism, as Tuck and Yang (2012) insist, “is not temporally contained in the arrival of the settler but is reasserted each day of occupation” (p. 5), yet we have to resist the belief that the current settlement and set of relations are the only possible outcome.

### **Difference, Identity, Subjectivation**

While acknowledging that decolonization is specifically about the repatriation of Indigenous lands (Tuck and Yang, 2012), we persist in considering that undoing the colonial mind and its apparatus is important in reconfiguring lived relations and developing a new society. We are not asking our fellow settlers to leave their homes to join the anticolonial revolution, but suggesting precisely the opposite: to make your home and life the revolution itself. We are calling for a focus on unsettling settler subjectivity in order to develop new modes of accountability and relationality. We are seeking ways of being radically present on Indigenous territory, a radicality that undermines the state, Western identity formations, and settler futures. We are interested in producing subjectivities that are not founded on binaries between who we are and who we are not—without, of course, interfering with Indigenous politics of identity or ignoring differential distributions of injustice and violence based on identity. We want to move from rigid settler identities toward processes of subjectification based on who and what we are related to, including humans, plants, minerals, waters, and stars. We seek to undo dialectical thinking and recognize the singularity

of every existent outside state taxonomy and organizational system. As Deleuze (1970/1988) writes,

the Spinozan principle asserts that negation is nothing, because absolutely nothing ever lacks anything. Negation is a being of reason, or rather of comparison, which results from our grouping together all sorts of distinct beings so as to refer them to one and the same fictitious ideal, in the name of which we say that one or another of them falls short of the ideal. (p. 96)

The concepts of identity and lack in the colonial project are used to organize difference and diversity into dichotomies or taxonomies. Categories and subcategories of difference are without exception hierarchical and saturated in power relations where to be identified with or different from is inextricably tied to access, affordances, and annulments. In Spinoza and Deleuze, alternatively, difference is immanent to life and the affirmation of distinctiveness and singularity have the capacity to break up transcendent systems of organization. Deleuze proposes that catastrophe offers a new right to thought that can open up transcendence in such a way that one can actually apprehend, in at least an instance, the whole of life as a system of interconnected forces and flows. This thought of immanence is particularly useful to apprehend how colonialism naturalizes hierarchy and attempts to repress the infinitely diverse ways that the flows and forces of life continually reassemble. The quest is not to see any difference, but to see difference in itself—the complete singularity of an existent without reference to what it is not or to any other set of abstract codes. Such a thought better sensitizes us to apprehending how current social structures and rationality work to organize, prevent, extract, and control the living flows. Furthermore, it allows us to glimpse the processes at work in the formation of our own subjectivities. We are not proposing here that living in immanence is an option. We are proposing that life is immanence and that recognizing that can allow us to map how the state, rationality, and the settler subject disfigure life in order to extract from it what they need to extend themselves.

All transcendental, categorical, or universal settler principles are anathema to the immanent subjectivity that we are here mapping as their alternative. We therefore entirely reject the set of universal standards instituted, yet betrayed, in settler colonies by the state, church, and educational systems. We understand that the moralisms of the church, the democratic promise of equality issued by the state, and the pseudo-sciences of anthropology, history, psychiatry are all founded on a transcendental image that has undermined Indigenous lives and worldviews and marginalized immanent and revolutionary subjectivities. A new immanent settler subjectivity that rejects the dictates of a transcendental god, state, or knowledge moves toward an ethics of accountability to the immanent relations that constitute it. We seek to dislodge ourselves from the dominant power and change the effects of that power toward a collective community building. Such relationships move alongside recognition politics by the state through laws and rights, but more critically act to undo the state's power to subject others to rights and laws. This is a revolutionary call to undo our own power and

dominance and respond directly to alternative sovereignties, knowledges, and subjects. It is a call to rethink power, agency, and freedom through a situated accountability based in responsibility, allegiance, and affiliation. Ethics here is about active forces and increasing relationality. It therefore calls for singularized mappings of power and responsible negotiations en route to a different world.

## Conclusion

Our transversal mapping of Deleuze and Guattari and the question of settlement has probed the virtual aspects of the present that might constitute settlers as new peoples. The denials and abstractions inherent in an unconscious founded on lack proved unfitting for becoming accountable to the catastrophe of colonialism. We have rejected such an unconscious and arrived instead at a conceptualization of an immanent subjectivity founded on an affirmation of the living relationships that constitute it. The settler's immanent encounter with catastrophe provides an alternative response to the repression and incomprehensibility that are foundational to the myth of terra nullius and the horizon of a subject free of history and geography. Avoiding the pain, shame, anger, and guilt that constitutes the settler unconscious is inadequate to our current state of affairs. We need a new unconscious that is hypersensitive to the living world and capable of founding a subjectivity of increased relationality. We propose that undoing foundational myths is settlers' first task in producing ourselves as ethical subjects. To endure this undoing will require us to be vulnerable and to relate with accountability to Indigenous peoples, to our Indigenous friends, as we experience—and work to dismantle—ongoing colonialism together in a landscape where death is a shared predicament and life is a mutual goal.

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