CHAPTER 2

THE IDEAL FAMILY: A TRACING INTERNALIZED

DELEUZE AND GUATTARI: THE MAP AND TRACING

Deleuze and Guattari’s (1987) theoretical concepts of the map and tracing offer a helpful framework in understanding how the infinite lived expressions of the family are covered over by the one dominant nuclear family structure.

Imagine the infinite expressions of the lived with family on a map, existing despite of the dominant tracing of the lived by nuclear family ideal that dominates Westernized culture, and permeates our internal unconscious. As you imagine a “map” in your mind, you may see a two-dimensional folded piece of paper, for instance, a map of Canada. But by the end of this section, I hope to convince you that a map of Canada is not a map at all!

INFINITE EXPRESSIONS OF THE LIVED WITH FAMILY ON THE MAP.

Deleuze and Guattari (1987) describe a rhizome as a “subterranean stem” system made up only of lines as its dimensions: while lines of segmentarity break the rhizome, making it “stratified, territorialized, organized, signified, attributed” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 9), lines of flight deterritorialize the rhizome by exploding the lines of segmentarity, freeing the rhizome through their rupture. Indeed, Deleuze and Guattari (1987) suggest that we “[a]lways follow the rhizome by rupture; lengthen, prolong, and relay the line of flight; make it vary, until [we] have produced the most abstract and tortuous of lines of n dimensions and broken directions. Conjugate deterritorialized flows” (p. 11). In an infinite process of territorialization and deterritorialization, the rhizome always “start(s) up again on one of its old lines, or on new lines” (p. 9). This is because it is “not amendable to any structural or generative model” (p. 12). To illustrate this process of territorialization and deterritorialization,
Deleuze and Guattari (1987) use the example of ants, and how we can never get rid of them because “they form an animal rhizome that can rebound time and again after most of it has been destroyed” (p. 9).

The rhizome is a map, and the map is “part of the rhizome” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 12). In other words, “the rhizome pertains to a map that must be produced, constructed, a map that is always detachable, connectable, reversible, modifiable, and has multiple entryways and exits and its own lines of flight” (p. 21). The map is “entirely oriented toward an experimentation in contact with the real” because it is:

open and connectable in all of its dimensions; it is detachable, reversible, susceptible to constant modification. It can be torn, reversed, adapted to any kind of mounting, reworked by an individual, group or social formation. It can be drawn on a wall, conceived of as a work of art, constructed as a political action or as a meditation. (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 12)

As part of the rhizome, the map fosters infinite possibilities, connections, and performative capacities (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 12). The map removes blockages on “bodies without organs”\(^1\), allowing “the maximum opening of bodies without organs onto a plane of consistency”\(^2\)” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 12). Finally, the map “has to do with performance” in all its potential for multiplicity and unbridled desire\(^3\) (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 12). But what does all this abstract language mean for the family construct?

Essentially, Deleuze and Guattari’s (1987) concept of the map is fully potentiated with endless desire and a multiplicity of performative assemblages (where an assemblage is an “increase in the dimensions of a multiplicity that necessarily changes in nature as it expands its connections” [Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 8]). On their notion of the map, therefore, there is no pre-traced family destiny, ready-made family definition, but rather, we can imagine all the infinite performative capacities of the family flowing free of/from dominant ideals, definitions, or professional restrictions.