

# Tracing Lines of Flight: Implications of the Work of Gilles Deleuze for Narrative Practice

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*The philosophical groundwork of Gilles Deleuze is examined for its relevance for narrative practice in therapy and conflict resolution. Deleuze builds particularly on Foucault's analytics of power as "actions upon actions" and represents power relations diagrammatically in terms of lines of power. He also conceptualizes lines of flight through which people become other. These concepts are explored in relation to a conversation with a couple about a crisis in their relationship. Tracing lines of power and lines of flight are promoted as fresh descriptions of professional practice that fit well with the goals of narrative practice.*

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Therapeutic practice has to continually reinvent itself, and redescribe itself, in order to stay relevant and vital. The need for this constant reinvention is that the conditions of life in which counselors, therapists, and their clients have to live are continually changing and the discourses that govern these conditions of life are never constant. In order to stay relevant therapy needs to continue to seek out the most sophisticated analyses of what is happening in the world in which we live and work. In this paper, I propose to pursue this aim through an inquiry into the relevance and application to narrative practice of the thinking of the French philosopher, Gilles Deleuze (1925–1995).

In the aftermath of the intellectual ferment that took place in Paris in 1968, a rich vein of philosophical writing emerged. It has developed into what has become known as poststructuralism and has given rise to theoretical innovation across a variety of domains of academic and professional discourse. Michael White and David Epston in 1990 were the first to introduce the thinking of Michel Foucault into the world of family therapy and Foucault's analytics of power has, since then, been a central feature of narrative therapy. Michael White has since drawn explicitly on other

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poststructuralist philosophers as well. Take, for example, his (1992) use of Jacques Derrida's concept of "deconstruction" in the process of conceptualizing the problems that people present to therapists. Gilles Deleuze, a friend of Foucault's, was another poststructuralist philosopher whose work offers further opportunity to apply post-structuralist thought to the therapy field.

I shall by no means attempt a wide-ranging representation of the totality of Deleuze's substantial oeuvre of writing. Instead I shall take up a few ideas derived from Deleuze's philosophical explorations and ask how these might be used to describe narrative practice and potentially to open up new fields of inquiry. The main concepts I want to reference in this paper are Deleuze's readings of Foucault's analytics of power, with a particular emphasis on his concept of lines of flight from the middle of the struggles over power relations. In the process it will be necessary to reference Deleuze's emphasis on seeking out multiplicity, his preference for understanding difference as prior to identity, and his favoring of geographical over historical metaphors.

The last 20 years have witnessed the growth of so-called postmodern therapeutic approaches, which I would contend are responses to shifts in the conditions of people's lives. Trends such as the end of the great 19th century European empires, the various expressions of the decolonizing impulse, globalization, new waves of mass migration, the whole scale urbanization of lives, transnational civil rights movements of several kinds, the subordination of economic and civic functions and institutions to a universal concept of "the market," fast-growing new service industries, the reformulation of families in new configurations, widespread travel, and the growth of new "lifestyles" have together led to a new emphasis in the relationship between culture, science, and social practice.

Late modernist society is not the same as the early 20th century modernism that became embodied in psychoanalysis. Nor is it the same as the 1960s Romantic rebellion that gave rise to the humanistic therapies and to family therapy traditions. People are not anxious or angry or preoccupied in the same way about the same things as were their parents and grandparents. The changes they negotiate in life do not take place in the same formats. Their families are not driven by the same patterns of discourse. The possibilities of who they might become are therefore different. Ideas about therapeutic practice have, therefore, to change with them. Therapies that grew up in earlier eras have had to move (usually uneasily and awkwardly) to accommodate these changes. The growth of new therapies, less encumbered with philosophical baggage from previous worldviews, has attracted those looking for fresh responses to these trends. Narrative therapy has been one of the results of these shifts, and, in my estimation, has responded in a more thoroughgoing way than most others.

The significance of all these changes in the conditions of people's lives has not always been recognized. The predilections of the day instead are quickly inscribed into "human nature" or into the essence of families. The therapy world has also more recently been preoccupied with reproducing itself and with the intensification of what get referred to as "professional standards" and with restraining new developments in the name of "evidence-based" orthodoxies in the therapeutic professions. This preoccupation is not surprising either. It too can be understood as a response to the shifting conditions of modern life, particularly the development of new manifestations of power relations. Deleuze (1995) himself comments on the increasing formalization of training programs in the disciplines and the professions.

Young philosophers, but also all young writers who're involved in creating something, . . . face the threat of being stifled from the outset. It's become very difficult to do any work, because a whole system of "acculturation" and anticreativity specific to the developed nations is taking shape. It is far worse than censorship. (p. 27)

Foucault's analysis of professional power in the modern world, linked with knowledge disciplines (Foucault, 1980, 2000), pursues the implications of this trend. His analytics of modern power built upon intense personal surveillance and normalizing judgment has only been intensified further in the age of the computer. The last 50 years have also witnessed the exponential growth of what Nikolas Rose (1990) describes as the "psy-complex." Rose is a scholar of Foucault's analytics of power and he concentrates his analysis on the growth of professional power in the psychological professions to a point where it stands accused of "governing the soul" more than assisting in the creation of greater freedom from oppression. Such analyses require a response from the therapy world that needs to be expressed in new ethical practices. Again narrative therapy has been in the forefront of arguing for ethical practices that go far beyond the minimal requirements of legalistic ethical codes.

Accusations remain, however, that postmodern therapies, rather than being based on shifts in the conditions of life, are primarily based on some idealist vision of radical relativism, despite the fact that I have never read any advocate of any postmodern therapy argue for such a form of relativism. Deleuze and Guattari (1994) weigh in on this issue when they comment on the relativity theory (referring to Heisenberg and Einstein) that "it constitutes not a relativity of truth but, on the contrary, a truth of the relative" (p. 130). For Deleuze, the subject, the person who comes to know something, does not "have" a point of view (which would necessarily imply both a pre-existing subject and that truth is relative) but "is" a point of view, and this point of view is a condition of variation rather than of universality (Fraser, 2006). This is a view of persons as grounded in conditions that are relative to the cultural and historical position in which they find themselves, rather than a view of personhood as resembling a free-floating supermarket consumer. Postmodern therapies have not so much argued that truths are all suddenly relative as they have pointed out some of the relations between accepted truths, forms of language, and forms of life. The postmodern demand is that we acknowledge more honestly the mutual relativity of knowledge and culture, rather than rely uncritically on foundational psychological laws as simple truths. To do so requires an acknowledgement of the changing face of the sociocultural world.

One line of development in the way people live in the late modern world is the growth of a multiplicity of lifestyles. Kenneth Gergen (1991) showed that people's lives are now performed across multiple discourse worlds far more than were previous generations. Renato Rosaldo (1993) has argued that, as a result, older concepts of culture need to give way to a concept of life as a cultural intersection through which cultural narratives run. Seyla Benhabib (2002) similarly suggests that we abandon the idea of a one-to-one correspondence between individuals and a singular culture and instead talk about how people draw from multiple cultural narratives. The whole academic field of cultural studies has grown up in response to this development. And sociologists Lilie Chouliaraki and Norman Fairclough (1999, p. 131) argue that late modern life offers persons a wider range of "lifestyle choices" than were conceivable in the past.

Deleuze's work is relevant to these cultural shifts because of his efforts to interrogate the concept of multiplicity. Deleuze is a philosopher in the next iteration from the philosophers of the text and of discourse, especially Foucault and Derrida. He is interested not just in how multiplicity might be established through the influence of multiple meanings, based on differences of textual or discursive influences, but also in the subtleties of multiple ontologies. If we look closely enough, rather than searching for the repetition of categories of identity, we can see that each instance of apparently similar phenomena is subtly different.

What might this emphasis on multiplicity mean for therapy? In exploring the implications of the work of Gilles Deleuze, Todd May (2005), in a commentary on Deleuze's work, offers a starting place for introducing Deleuze's thinking into conversations about narrative practice. The central concern for Deleuze, he argues, is the question, "How might one live?" The question is deceptively simple. It makes central a focus on creative possibility and invites us, as May suggests, to "enlarge our lives" (p. 7). Deleuze is a philosopher of "becoming." It connects with the narrative practice of inquiring into a person's preferred narrative. May contrasts this question with other possible questions. It is not "How should one live?"—the question often posed by ancient Greek philosophers, which would invite an exploration of moral imperatives in response to what the human role in the universe is believed to be. Nor is it "How should one act?"—the modern equivalent question, more existential in flavor. It is not even the observer's question "How do people live?," which would invite a search for singular, empirical truths about the influences on persons' living. While Deleuze claims, nevertheless, to be an empiricist in his own particular terms, his interest lies in always seeking out the conditions of multiplicity, or the "conditions under which something new is produced" (Deleuze & Parnet, 2002, p. vii).

I've never renounced a kind of empiricism, which sets out to present concepts directly. (Deleuze, 1995, p. 88)

For Deleuze this means analyzing the "states of things," which are "neither unities nor totalities, but multiplicities" (Deleuze & Parnet, 2002, p.vii).

To ask, "How might one live?" is to build upon a sense of a multiplicity of possible "lines of subjectivation" (Bell, 2006, p. 215). These lines of subjectivation are trajectories for personal becoming. They are processes rather than objects, such as a self, and they trace what people internalize into their sense of themselves in the course of living in the face of modern knowledge and power. Deleuze is concerned with developing a philosophy that is not concerned just with multiple textual implications of discourse usage but with the ontological multiplicity that is immanent within any concept, or any event. For Deleuze, the problem is not one of a singular reality that we interpret in multiple ways because of the competing tugs of multiple discourses. For him reality is in itself always multiple, always subject to complex variation, and we diminish it by falling back on some "image of thought" (or representation of truth, Deleuze, 1994, p. 129) that refers to a bottom-line version of identity. His focus is pragmatic (Inna Semetsky, 2006, argues that he shares a legacy with John Dewey in this respect) but it is the "pragmatics of the multiple" (Deleuze, 1988, p. 84), not the singular hard-nosed reality, that he seeks. Our lives are crisscrossed by multiple lines of subjectivation.

“How might one live?” is a question that is implicit in many of the presentations of concern people make to therapists and counselors. In an age of the availability of multiple selves in multiple communities (Gergen, 1991), increasingly complex family arrangements, and burgeoning varieties of lifestyle, this is a highly relevant question. I believe it is more relevant than that posed by therapies that seek to match people’s trajectories of life with the unfolding of a singular inner potential or in line with a closely specified social norm or in response to specified determinations from an individual’s family of origin.

Multiplicity does not, however, suggest a simple buffet at which we might choose from a smorgasbord of lifestyles one that happens to suit our taste. Power and force always constrain our choices, and people’s lives are always being patterned and constrained by “dominant significations” (Deleuze & Parnet, 2002, p. 45) or the lines of force (power relations) that are at work in the shaping of their existence. Far from being free floating, people’s lives are specifically located in the intersection of lines, some that are culturally given and some that are constituted through their own response to what is given. Deleuze (1995) comments:

What’s interesting, even in a person, are the lines that make them up, or they make up, or take, or create. (p. 33)

Lines of subjectivation are inextricably interwoven and to some extent (to a large extent even) produced by lines of power.

We live in a world that is generally disagreeable, where not only people but the established powers have a stake in transmitting sad affects to us. Sadness, sad affects, are all those which reduce our power to act. (Deleuze & Parnet, 2002, p. 61)

For Deleuze, the power to act is to be understood in terms of the intersection of lines, or trajectories, that can be, in theory at least, plotted on a geographical plane like a map. Says Deleuze:

I tend to think of things as sets of lines to be unraveled but also to be made to intersect. (1995, p. 161)

Foucault (1982) famously defined power relations as “actions upon other actions” (p. 220) and Deleuze describes his analysis as “diagrammatic” (Deleuze, 1988). That is, Foucault was concerned to diagram the effects of people’s actions upon each others’ actions. Deleuze extracts from Foucault’s analytics the primacy of discursive statements in the production of lines of power in relations between people. These discursive statements express assumptions about how the world is, how life works, who each person is, which identities are legitimate, and which are marginal. For example, we might refer to some classical examples of discursive statements, which have been shaping the modern world, “Women are more emotional and less rational than men.” “Homosexuality is not natural.” “European culture is superior to that of non-White people.”

The lines of power driven by such discursive statements draw connections between points on a diagram in something that can be imagined to be like a mathematical curve on a graph. A line of power proceeds through a series of coordinates that represent

events in a relationship and heads off on a forward trajectory toward a future. For Deleuze (and Foucault) these lines of power are always multiple, always contested, and seldom monolithic. Lines of power are productive of people's lives and professional practice should, in part at least, be about tracing these lines of power.

Power . . . is less a property than a strategy . . . "it is exercised rather than possessed; it is not the "privilege," acquired or preserved, of the dominant class, but the overall effect of its strategic positions. (Deleuze, 1995, p. 25)

Tracing and exposing lines of power is not, however, Foucault's main purpose, in Deleuze's reading of his work. Nor should it be the end focus of professional practice. Rather our practice should be aimed at investigating the possibilities for the creation of new and more satisfying lives and relationships. Deleuze attributes to Foucault the working through of an analysis of power relations during the course of his academic career to the point where he reached an impasse. His admiration for Foucault's achievement lies especially in the latter's working through of this impasse to a place of joyful assertion of life, especially in his later work about the care of the self. For Deleuze,

Foucault . . . writes with an increasing sense of joy . . . the joy of wanting to destroy whatever mutilates life. (1995, p. 23)

It is the pursuit of such joy that animates Foucault's writing and Deleuze's reading of Foucault. Deleuze himself cites a memorable quotation from Foucault to illustrate his effort not just to diagram and map the function of power in the world but to seek out the ways in which responses to power can be affirmations of life of the most intense kind. Here is Foucault's (2000) statement about what he calls in another place "political spirituality" (p. 233):

. . . the most intense point of a life, the point where its energy is concentrated, is where it comes against power, struggles with it, attempts to use its forces, and to evade its traps. (p. 162)

This statement can be read as a clarion call to counselors and therapists to consciously direct their work to the place where lines of power and lines of subjectivation intersect. It is here they can potentially have the most critical impact. At this point of intersection, they can help their clients discover different ways of governing themselves, not just of being governed by other persons or by forces outside themselves. If counseling can be situated at this place, clients will seldom find counseling irrelevant or lack motivation to participate in it.

In the face of lines of power, "How might one live?" becomes poignant. How might one find ways to escape the forces that produce these sad effects and assert something more life giving? Indeed, it is in the assertion of what is life giving in response to the sad effects produced by lines of power that Deleuze's commitment to "vitalism" emerges. In this context Deleuze advances the concept of "lines of flight." Lines of flight are shifts in the trajectory of a narrative that escape a line of force or power. These diagrams of lines of power are also "places of mutation" (Deleuze, 1995, p. 85) where people bend the lines and seek out lines of flight to somewhere else. The action

of bending a line of power is an act of resistance to the operation of power, but it differs from what Foucault (2000) called “muddled resistance” (p. 155). They are not just any act of resistance but particularly creative shifts that give rise to new possibilities for living. They are directions rather than destinations and they lead to the living of life on some different plane or in some different territory.

Michael White also described a sense of such joy when he first read Foucault that is similar to what Deleuze is identifying.

Upon first reading Foucault on modern power, I experienced a special joy. This joy was in part due to his ability to unsettle what is taken-for-granted and routinely accepted, and to render the familiar strange and exotic. Apart from other things, I found that this opened up new avenues of inquiry into the context of many of the problems and predicaments for which people routinely seek therapy. (White, 2002, p. 36)

I read this sense of joy as a personal experience of “transport” (in his own terms, White, 2007) that Michael White is reporting. Like Foucault himself, he travels through the impasse where power produces a sense of dark outrage at the presence of injustice to an experience of the effect of power producing a consciousness of the spiritual struggle for freedom from its influence, a struggle that might be pursued along a line of flight to some new territory of living and of therapeutic practice. Deleuze, like White, appreciates the vitalism in Foucault, the search for life in the face of power. It is to be found in what have become known in narrative therapy as “unique outcomes” (White & Epston, 1990), or more recently as the “absent but implicit” (White, 2000), which serve as entry points to alternative storylines.

There is no diagram that does not also include, besides the points that it connects up, certain relatively free or unbound points, points of creativity, change and resistance, and it is perhaps with these that we ought to begin to understand the whole picture. (Deleuze, 1995, p. 44)

These points of creativity can be connected to constitute lines of flight that are about the escape from places where lines of power squeeze out the sense of being alive.

In order to explain these concepts further, I shall illustrate them with regard to an example of a conversation with a young couple whom I shall call James and Melia. They consulted with me in response to a crisis they were living through that was being experienced as a conflict. The express aim of our conversation was conflict resolution. They had been in a relationship for 5 years and “shared dreams of getting married some day,” when Melia had discovered that James was conducting a flirtatious online relationship by e-mail with another woman whom he had met at his university. Melia felt hurt and betrayed. James was initially defensive in claiming that there was nothing serious involved and he was just being friendly, but came to see that what he had done “crossed the line” and violated Melia’s trust. He had agreed to halt his online flirtation. For several months they had continued to struggle over the meaning of this issue. Melia had tried to show James many times how upset she was over it. James had tried to convince her that it was minor, was in the past, and that she needed to let it go. The more he tried to minimize the significance of the relationship, the more she tried to prove to him that it was deeply hurtful for her and should not be minimized.

A new round of conflict occurred after several months when a woman who was a friend of James ended another relationship and began text messaging and phoning James on a regular basis in a way that Melia saw as highly flirtatious. Even though she believed that James was not acting on any intention to establish a sexual relationship with this woman and credited his concern for her after the break up of her relationship, she was not so trusting of this woman's intentions toward James and was shocked at what she saw as his naïve response. James had responded to the text messages as innocent fun and denied any sexual overtone to the relationship. "I am a girl," said Melia, "I know what she means by doing these things."

Melia was devastated for a second time and her worst understanding of the earlier relationship was confirmed by this new one. She began to believe that James was not as faithful to her as she needed to feel secure in the relationship. She could not, however, convince James of the importance of her concerns. For him, her emotional reactions had initially been very concerning, but they had gone on for so long that he eventually felt pushed away by them. He began to make comparisons with other situations in which he had been hurt by her and had confronted her, accepted her apology, and let the matter drop. He wondered why she could not do the same. Melia had demanded the right to monitor James's phone records, e-mails, and text messages. James had been willing to submit to this demand in order to prove his faithfulness to her.

A round of secondary conflict had begun in which they were in dispute not just about what had happened but also about how they were each responding to what had happened over the previous 6 months. Melia was upset that James was still not crediting her concern and was either fooling himself or deceiving her about the recent flirtatious text message relationship. James was upset that she was not believing his protests of innocence and not accepting his apologies for hurting her and his willingness to address her concerns. He accused her of pushing him away and not being willing to let some things go that should be placed in the past. In our conversation, Melia offered, by way of explanation of her unwillingness to let things go, an identity statement. "I am not someone who forgives easily," she said.

In this context, let us tease out some of the lines of power that might be speculated to exist. James, for example, claims a sense of entitlement (Winslade & Monk, 2000) that might rest on discursive statements, such as, "I am free to be friends with women as well as men as long as I do not cross the line and have sex outside my relationship." Although they are not married, James may be said to be drawing upon certain stratified formations in relations between men and women, very likely without being completely conscious of doing so. (Stratified formations is the concept Deleuze, 1988, uses to describe the way in which, for example, the to and fro of ongoing power struggles between men and women eventually settle into ossified patterns of dominance with the particular rigidity of institutional force.) The way that James goes about acting on this statement ensures that he maintains a degree of privacy and secrecy that acts upon Melia's trust of him and positions her in a place of hurt and suspicion when she finds out. I am using the word "positions" here with reference to the positioning theory (see Davies & Harré, 1990; Winslade, 2005). When a person makes an utterance into a power relation, positioning theory suggests that he or she calls on background discourse to create a discursive position for the other, from which the second person is required to respond. In this instance, James positions Melia in relation to the taken for granted discursive statement above. He can be said to have

“acted upon her actions” through how he positions her. In this sense, his actions produce Melia’s sense of hurt and her emotional responses.

But Melia is not powerless in this situation and can take up the challenge of re-positioning herself and, in her own turn, positioning him. She has not acted without recourse to other lines of power herself. She claims the entitlement to feel upset and to demonstrate her emotions over a period of months in a manner that acts upon James to keep him in a place of supplication and shame. That she does this at some cost to herself does not mean that there is not a line of power that she traces here. Her statement that she is not the kind of person who can easily forgive maintains this line of power and justifies her in demanding the right to monitor his phone and e-mail contacts. By doing this she acts upon James’s freedoms in a limiting way.

Both of these lines of power encounter resistance. Melia protests many times that James does not have the right to hurt her in this way and that he does not fully comprehend her feelings. James objects to Melia’s ongoing emotional force and her unwillingness to forgive.

The first part of my conversation with James and Melia was aimed at tracing these lines of power, or forming a mental diagram of the intersections of the lines of power, and with mapping the effects (White, 2007) of these power relations in their relationship. It was clear in a number of ways that the struggles of each to act upon the actions of the other was requiring enormous energy and was detracting from other much valued aspects of their relationship.

Once it became clear just which lines of power were entangling for them, I began to wonder about where were the lines of flight in relation to these circumstances. At this point of my conversation with James and Melia, I became conscious of an opportunity to explore what Michael White (2000) has referred to often as the “absent but implicit” (p. 153). For some 6 months Melia and James had been struggling intensely together. I started to wonder out loud how they were managing to stay together through this period. “Many people,” I speculated, “would have given up before now.” Given the degree of emotional turmoil they were willing to put up with, there must be much of value in their relationship that would make it worth hanging on through this turmoil. I began to ask them about what kinds of relationship know-how could sustain them with a sense of hope through this period of turmoil and struggle. What might be the source of life and vitality in their relationship? Such relationship know-how was implicit in what they were telling me but was absent from their representation of the period of struggle.

Deleuze and Guattari (1994) use some concepts that I think offer an alternative description of what Michael White was referring to as the “absent but implicit.” They make a distinction between what is virtual and what is actual. The virtual is not, they argue, the opposite of the “real,” it is indeed real, but it amounts to a reality that has not been or is not being actualized. Things are actualized through being differentiated. In this instance, James and Melia were speaking about their experience of their relationship in terms that featured the actuality of the pain and conflict. Under the influence of the talk about the lines of struggle and power, their appreciation of the joy in their relationship had receded to a place that was not available for them to recount. This joy was still there. It was real but it had taken on a virtual form and was not being actualized, or indeed acted upon. Through my invitation to speak about these more enjoyable aspects of their relationship again, and through their active response to this invitation, these relationship joys became differentiated from the conflict story and actualized once more.

James and Melia spoke with some animation and some surprised pleasure about the joys of their relationship. They spoke about how other people had often remarked on how loving they seemed together and told stories about how their respective families supported them as partners and included them as family members. To speak about these aspects did not resolve the issues of power struggle but they did contextualize them differently and reminded James and Melia of aspects of their relationship that were more joyful, definitely mutual, and might constitute creative lines of flight from the exhaustion of power struggle.

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. (Deleuze & Guattari, 1994, p. 112)

Note here too the references Melia and James made to comments about the joys of their relationship from witnesses outside themselves. Drawing principally on Foucault, narrative practice has for some time emphasized the role of the outside in the construction of the interior experience. Hence narrative writers have drawn attention to Foucault's analysis of the external gaze (White & Epston, 1990), have advocated the externalization of problematic stories (White, 2007), have deployed the use of outsider witnesses (White, 2007) to resonate with personal stories, and have called forth the remembered voices of the dead as further witnesses in re-membering conversations (Hedtke & Winslade, 2004; White, 2007). For Deleuze, it is from the outside that our subjective experience is created. The metaphor he favors is that of the fold (Deleuze, 1993). As experiences are reflected upon, brought into conversation, unfolded and folded back on themselves, or folded into a project of subjectivation, personal depth and richness of variation is constructed. Deleuze uses a sewing metaphor to describe the process of folding, twisting, and pinning along a hem. He suggests that constructing a new line of subjectivation is like this. Taking a moment from the outside of experience and folding it into oneself and then pursuing the line created by the fold in a direction that becomes a line of flight.

In search of new folds (and of a line of flight), we began to explore what might be necessary to restore trust and faith in their relationship. I asked about the history of dealing with difficult issues in their relationship before this current crisis. For example, I took some of the singular identifications ("I am not someone who forgives easily" is an example) and asked questions to introduce the differentiation and multiplicity in relation to this concept. Melia found it very difficult to identify an instance where she had been able to forgive James and let go of something that had hurt her. She was insistent that being unforgiving was part of who she was. By contrast, she remembered an occasion on which she had hurt James some years ago in their relationship and in which she had been very grateful to James for his willingness to forgive her and let the incident quickly be consigned to history.

I asked whether there was anything that was necessary from James in order for her to be in a place to forgive him. She spoke about how he still did not seem to understand the recent instances of receiving flirtatious text messages as invitations to relationship that threatened James's relationship with her. We spoke about this topic for some time and I lent my voice to support hers, saying that, to my ear, these text messages did sound like invitations to more than platonic friendship. My intention at this point was to name a power relation that was producing a struggle in the politics of meaning

making over these text messages. I could see Melia's position in these politics sliding into a deficit discourse and I wanted to support her not to have to go that way. I also wanted to demonstrate to both Melia and to James, that her understanding of the situation was not essential to her identity as a "girl." As a male with no claims to special female knowledge, I could also appreciate the power relation that was working on her. In a tone of relief, Melia thanked me for saying this. James was moving readily in the direction of accepting this idea. We ended our meeting with an intention to meet again to review how things had gone in 3 weeks time.

When I phoned Melia to ask about whether they wanted another meeting, the time for such a meeting was not opportune for several reasons, but she did catch me up with what had been happening in their relationship. The line of flight had moved them further along its trajectory. James had taken the initiative to send a very clear message to the woman who was sending him flirtatious messages to say that he was not available for an intimate relationship. Melia had been very grateful for this action. It had increased trust in him for her. He repeated it several times when this woman was "blatantly disrespectful of our relationship" at another social occasion. It meant that James was taking Melia's concerns very seriously and she could begin to let go of her monitoring of his text messages. For her part, Melia had been doing a lot of thinking about what it would mean to her to let go of her anger and resentment and forgive James and forego the story of him as potentially unfaithful. She had decided that forgiveness was no longer completely outside her nature, despite the difficulty she still experienced with the feelings of hurt and anger. She still struggled with the continuing experience of being hit by "the wave" of feelings that still troubled her. Melia's reference to the wave was a ready-made externalization that I could pick up and talk with her about, without making it essential to her own subjectivity or to James's actions upon her. Every 2 days on average the wave would hit and would interrupt the other more positive aspects of their relationship. James began to appreciate how the wave was affecting her and to talk with her about how she could manage its destabilizing effects. "We're going to get through this," he would reassure her and he asserted his willingness to remain there with her. The concept of the wave fits too with Deleuze's notion of multiplicity. It opens up multiple places of difference in the experience of being washed over by a wave. On the one hand, it references the moment of being submerged, but on the other it also implies the gap between waves where something different emerges.

I continued to be curious about the concept of forgiveness and its meaning for Melia. It contrasted with what she saw as the "unforgiveness" inside her, which she experienced as strong feelings of hurt and anger and resentment. She recognized that she could not "let everything go and start from scratch" and she also recognized moments of success when she was not hit by the wave and was able to have upbeat and optimistic thoughts. She was also able to stand up again after she was hit by the wave. She had decided that letting go and forgiving was a conscious thing that she had to work on, just as James was working on demonstrating his trustworthiness in their relationship and his caring for her sense of hurt. Melia was definite that she had "seen consistency" in him and that this was important to her.

Deleuze's treatment of "the concept" supports such curiosity. In his thinking, it is the primary role of the philosopher to develop concepts. But he argues against an essentialist approach to concepts. All concepts are for Deleuze temporary totalizations, which, when we penetrate them, become multiplicities.

There are no simple concepts. Every concept has components and is defined by them. It therefore has a combination [chiffre]. It is a multiplicity, although not every multiplicity is conceptual. (Deleuze & Guattari, 1994, p. 15)

Deleuze also points the way for our exploration of the complexity or multiplicity of concepts. He suggests that every concept has a history that zigzags through discourse (again along a line) and is always peopled with conceptual personae that participate in events. Every concept is for Deleuze related to other concepts and also to some problem of living. He invites us to open up concepts to a kind of curious rummaging around in their basement. Through such curiosity we might, therefore, explore with people the history and the lived context of a concept such as forgiveness, for example. In what events has it participated, in what contexts, and who were the people that gave it meaning in a person's life? How has it taken on particular resonance, or a distinctive timbre, in a person's experience? With what circumstances is it associated and are those circumstances still relevant? In what relational struggles has the meaning of the concept nestled or found a home? And are the current struggles of the same kind? In the current situation, how is the concept changing? Deleuze's opening up of the concept in this way evokes a specific kind of curiosity that can be embodied in therapeutic practice. It is the kind of curiosity that Michael White (1992) referred to as "deconstructive," and it opens up many possibilities for pursuing lines of flight.

James and Melia had been spending time talking about what animated and felt valuable in their relationship, further to what we had discussed in the meeting. Melia reported that this had been useful and had meant that they had been much happier together. Neither of them had been willing to let go of the relationship. She was no longer feeling as constantly depressed and as tearful as she had been, even though she was still hit by the wave at regular intervals. In the other times between waves they had been able to talk about the future of their relationship. They were discussing saving money and planning to buy a house together. The line of flight that had begun in our conversation together had continued after the meeting. It had begun to transport them to a different territory, to "deterritorialize" them from the conflict story to "reterritorialize" them in a different relational place (Deleuze & Parnet, 2002, p. 99). Deleuze describes himself as a philosopher of geography (in contrast to Foucault, who adopted for himself the professorial title of "historian of systems of thought") and articulates a "geophilosophy" (Deleuze & Guattari, 1994). Metaphors of place and of movement through space abound in his work. He invites us to think of ourselves as "nomads" as we move through life, rather than as rooted in one spot.

Nomads are always in the middle. . . . Nomads have no history, they only have geography. (Deleuze & Parnet, 2002, p. 31)

It is a metaphor that yields to a conception of therapy that is always about becoming other than what we have been, rather than to a becoming more true to who we are. These geographical metaphors echo some of Michael White's (2007) own emphases on "maps of narrative practice," on "mapping the effects of a problem," on "migrations of identity," on "landscapes of action and identity," and on the "transport" metaphor for describing *katharsis*. I also believe that such metaphors fit better with the shifts in the shape of life as it is produced in the late modern social world which James and

Melia inhabit than do metaphors that emphasize stable personality or the determining power of nuclear family relations.

Lines of flight do not need to be 180° turnarounds. They might be subtle shifts of direction. Deleuze, remember, talks about them as bending a line of power. If we follow the trajectory of a line that is bent only to a small degree, over time, the narrative trajectory takes us to a quite different place. We become in the process quite different people. Let me quote from a novelist commenting on the value of a narrative perspective to illustrate this point. In a radio interview with American National Public Radio's Steve Inskeep (April 22, 2008), novelist Tobias Wolff spoke about how particular tiny decisions in many given moments in life can lead to quite different futures. Each decision potentially charts a line of flight. Given the circumstances we are thrown into, we all make responses about which line we shall pursue. Even tiny degrees of difference when projected out lead this line of flight into markedly different outcomes.

INSKEEP: Do you think that if we were to go through our own lives with the eye of a storyteller that we could truthfully say that we have these moments, these little epiphanies and realizations of how our lives are?

TOBIAS WOLFF: Sometimes we do, but we also have moments in our lives when we're offered the chance to recognize something about ourselves or about our relations with others or our need to change in some way and we reject that. It's these little turns in life that are so important. If you change the direction of your life by even a degree, years later you're going to end up in a very different place than you would have if you hadn't.

Think of Shackleton, . . . in that little boat . . . sailing from Elephant Island to New Georgia Island . . . thousands of miles away on the sea. If he had lost his course by even half a degree he would've missed that island and all his men would've perished. . . . When I read that I thought that was a wonderful physical manifestation of what we do in our personal lives all the time. We're always adjusting our course by a little degree, and we have to be alert to those opportunities to just change that little bit now and then. And as a result, you know, thirty years later we're going to be different people. (Inskeep, 2008)

Tobias Wolff here provides inspiration for narrative practice. Like Deleuze, he is referring to a person's navigation across a geographical landscape and using it as a metaphor for articulating direction in life. It is a metaphor that again fits snugly with Michael White's (2007) evocation of maps that help therapists chart such a journey. What if we were to think of our work as helping people make shifts that need only be about one degree of difference in direction? What if we were then able to help trace those small shifts into a line of flight, as Deleuze envisages? Do we not then help those who consult us to become in the end (1, 2, or 30 years later) different people? It is this effort to create difference, rather than to help people be true to their existing selves, that distinguishes narrative practice. And it is a purpose that Deleuze honors as creative and life giving.

The search for a line of escape from what is deadening and toward a territory that is enlivening is emblematic of Deleuze. "How might one live?" was the question Todd May read in Deleuze's work. We might here expand it to read, "How might one find lines of flight to places where living is rich with agentic action and resistant to the ways in which power relations threaten to close down possibilities for difference?" For James and Melia, the question revolves around how they might shape their

relationship in a world of electronic messaging and in the face of new formats of gender discourse. They are not just contending with the same old forces of human nature that their parents and grandparents did and which our therapeutic ancestors mapped out for us. They are navigating new territories and creating new selves and new relationships. As Deleuze and Foucault instruct us, we should collaborate with them to identify the lines of power that are at work upon their lines of subjectivation and, where these are entangled, to identify the lines of flight that escape the tangle.

For the therapist, Todd May's question also becomes, "How might one work?" In particular, how might one work for creativity, for differentiation, in people's lives? It is part of the verdant legacy of Michael White's contribution to narrative practice that he has demonstrated many examples of such work. White was always searching for new ways to describe this work, combing the writings of creative thinkers for inspiration. New descriptions that pick up on the most searching analyses of the current directions in the trajectories of modern life give us the best chance of developing new lines of flight in the development of therapeutic theory. Deleuze is clearly one such source and new practices or lines of therapeutic inquiry can result from an investigation of his thought. In his final teaching workshop on March 31, 2008, White spoke of his recent reading of Deleuze and used the Deleuzian metaphors of deterritorialization and reterritorialization (Winslade & Hedtke, 2008). I had hoped to discuss with him later that evening over dinner what he had been finding interesting in Deleuze's work, but, alas, the opportunity was precluded by events. To my ear too, Deleuze's work seems decisively relevant to narrative practice and the concept of tracing lines of flight toward territories of difference reads as a fresh way of describing the intentions of the work performed by narrative practitioners.

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