

Nomadic

Michael B.
MacDonald

The nomadic is a concept crucial to the understanding of contemporary decolonization and postcolonial movements. The nomad exists outside of and is uncontained by the laws and customs of the state, a “hunter [that] follows the flows, exhausts them in place, and moves on with them to another place” (Deleuze and Guattari, 2004, p. 162). The nomadic is the conceptual affect that a nomad creates: a relation to the process of deterritorialization. To deterritorialize, the nomad identifies a space of thinking and desiring outside of stratified space, an open

thought system that roams outside of codes. As Deleuze and Guattari write, “between the act of producing and the product, something becomes detached, thus giving the vagabond, nomad subject a residuum” (2004, p. 28).

The nomadic is the potential of the nomad, but not to the degree that the latter can fully slip outside of coded space. The act of slipping out of domination, however, is an entry, even in brief, into the nomadic, into “the sense of nomadism as a way of occupying space that is characteristic of nomadic peoples” (Holland, 2004, p. 21). In this sense, the nomadic is “everywhere apparent but remains difficult to conceptualize” (Deleuze and Guattari, 2004a, p. 390). The nomadic prohibits the State from developing into its pure potential, but only to the degree that the former is prohibited by the latter to actualize itself; the nomadic simply chooses the “smooth” space of “vectoral, projective, or topological” (2004a, p. 399) social relations that are opposed to the striations, structures and officially sanctioned orders. Deleuze and Guattari position themselves in *A Thousand Plateaus*, for instance, as nomadic philosophers against a state science that “turns the rest [of nomad science] into a set of strictly limited formulas without any real scientific status” (1987, p. 362). Nomadic space deterritorializes thought, politics, social order and philosophy.

Nomadic groups are most familiar in retrospective forms. Some instances might include the Beats of 1950s America, Hippies in the 1960s, Punks in the 1970s-1980s, culture jammers in the 1990s, and underground hip hop and metal scenes in the contemporary state. The nomadic is not, however, necessarily anti-statist, but it creates a tension within the state: “The State always finds it necessary to repress the nomad and minor sciences ... because they imply a division of labor opposed to the norms of the state” (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, p. 368).

References

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