THE DELEUZIAN FOOTPRINT IN RUMI'S
WAR MACHINE OF LOVE

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Abstract: Through the Deleuzian analogy of the nomadic war machine, this paper seeks to tap into Rumi's writings to uncover potential points of contact. In so doing, what emerges is the war machine of love that works to awaken a powerful desire to seek transformative knowledge by advocating the release of the infinite power of love. In essence, the war machine of love inspires an endless intellectual and spiritual struggle that can guide an individual in their search for meaningful introspection and transformation. In engaging with the war machine of love, an individual can transform into a spiritual activist who explores limitless possibilities for being.

AMIDST THE piercing glaze of the new world order, the elevation of the works of Persian philosopher/poet Rumi and French philosopher Gilles Deleuze can pose as potential reprieves. To this end, Rumi's writing is contextualized through the de-Territorilizing language offered by Deleuze in a space that offers multiple possibilities for innovation. In this context, Deleuzian concepts like 'nomad' and 'war machine' open up spaces where Rumi can slip through and create possibilities for alternative thought and action. Here, the Deleuzian concept of the nomadic war machine is revisited in the texts of Rumi as *the war machine of love*. Nomadism is a recurring theme analyzed in the texts of Rumi from the lens offered by Deleuze's nomadic epistemology. Deleuze revives the nomadic subject as an individual who is in a constant state of *inbetweenness* (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). Nail (2012), meanwhile, argues that the figure of the nomad is singular in that "it lives and resides in some specific location and yet belongs universally wherever it is and no matter who it is" (p. 8).

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I. The Deleuzian War Machine

The writings of the fourteenth century Muslim scholar Ibn Khaldun inspired Deleuze's conceptual creation, the *nomad* (Khaldun, 1969). Ibn Khaldun pointed to a nomadic civilization that exhibited qualities such as tribal solidarity, strong moral character, and self-reliance. These nomads, according to Ibn Khaldun, possessed a strong sense of group cohesion and social solidarity. The establishment, and eventual appropriation, of social and private spaces was believed to have pushed social solidarity to the sidelines, allowing different kinds of solidarity to be formed. Deleuze and Guattari (1987) assert the nomadic origin of the notion of solidarity is rooted in Ibn Khaldun's concept of *Asabiyyah,* which been translated as 'group feeling', 'espirit de corps', 'tribal spirit or solidarity', 'social cohesion', and 'collective consciousness' (Gellner, 1975; Ahmed, 2013). Khaldun's historical analysis of social dynamics led him to conclude the most primary kind of social belonging is mobile and nomadic as opposed to sedentary (State) or genealogical. Hence, Asabiyyah is described as a simultaneously shared human bond, an impetus for conscientious action, and a mobilizing force (Garrison, 2012). The nomads are viewed as existing in a state of constant motion in the context of *Asabiyyah* (Ibn Khaldun, 1969, p. 107). Ibn Khaldun reasons that the creation of the State was a natural outcome of Asabiyyah aimed at binding the individual to a social group and exhibiting a kind of solidarity that drives individuals to trust and support one another (Russell, 2014). Ibn Khaldun also proclaims that it is compulsory to understand human history in terms of the tensions that exist between sedentary and nomadic life (Gellner, 1983). A distinguishing feature of the nomadic way of being is resistance to assimilation, which, according to Braidotti (1994), is part of the "nomadic consciousness" (p. 25). The nomadic consciousness encompasses a flowing quality that resists sedentary ways of *being* and permanent identities. Ibn Khaldun contends that nomads are always in a position of strength because they are continually in motion. Once that motion ceases to exist, the group loses its telos, becomes sedentary, and slowly but steadily begins to decay (Khaldun, 1969, p. 138).

Deleuze's emphasis on the non-static nature of nomadism is evident in his claim that the nomadic way of being provides a counter-concept and resistance to the sedentary nature of the State. Nomadic thought is distinct because it chooses the open horizon of the plains with its potential for movement. In a perpetual state of decentring, the nomad is always prepared to take flight and resist power as a

way of being. The nomad is hostile to settled patterns of thought and exclusionary visions of subjectivity. This allows the nomad to invoke a state of creative energy at all times, where "to think is to voyage" (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 482). According to Deleuze and Guattari (1987), the nomad is in a permanent state of *ongoingness* without a destination in sight. The transformative nature of the nomadic life is a never-ending process of becoming and Braidotti (2006) captures the idea of such nomadic becomings in difference: "Nomadic becomings are rather the affirmation of the unalterably positive structure of difference, meant as a multiple and complex process of transformation, a flux of multiple becomings, the play of complexity, or the principle of not-One." (Braidotti, 2006, p. 145) The flux of multiple becomings as lived by nomads is a form of resistance that makes it difficult for the State to capture, control, and channel. Living in a dynamic space that fosters infinite possibilities for transformation can empower individuals to co-construct strategic forms of resistance. The nomadic thought values motion over fixation, and the nomad occupies "space without counting it" as opposed to "counting space in order to occupy it" (Holland, 2013). The nomad experiences "a continuous flux and the disruption of flux" (Deleuze, 1999, p. 146). This is where the nomadic war machine emerges as the immanently organized machinic assemblage that is not tied to the State apparatus and operates consistent with internal logic. The nomadic war machines are social organizations that counter State orthodoxy and resist control from all directions while becoming sources of leakage. Deleuze stresses that society is in a constant stake of 'leaking,' but it is "the manner in which it deals with its leaks" (Rajchman, 2000, p. 12) that reveal its priorities. The nomadic way of life is described as a system that is decentered and rhizomatic. The lines of flight shaped by the nomad "never consist in running away from the world but rather in causing runoffs…there is nothing imaginary, nothing symbolic, about a line of flight" (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 204). It is understood the line of flight is established to redefine and re-establish existing orders of knowledge. War machines, as disruptors, can engender anti-systemic movements or resistance in part due to their adaptability and shifting patterns of behaviour (Deuchars, 2011). The nomads' resistance can transcend the State and encourage the acceptance of a different mode of becoming that will "seek a kind of war machine that will not re-create a State apparatus, a nomadic unit related to the outside that will not revive an internal despotic unity" (Deleuze, 1999, p. 149).

It can thus be claimed that all social establishments, including educational

institutions, are unable to control all dynamics and capture all flows in order to coordinate social relations. Therefore, every point of 'leakage' or possibility of escape can be deemed as a potential threat to the existence of the capitalist axiomatic and faces capture (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 509). The nomadic war machine is a counter-force that unsettles and challenges the State with its ability to function without a commanding centre. In *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze (1987) emphasizes that the nomadic war machine is not invented by the State apparatus and derives its vitality from 'without' and emerges "like fate, without reason, consideration, or pretext" (p. 353). Deleuze and Guattari (1987) point to how the nomadic war machine disrupts the control of the State and its apparatus of capture: "It is a vital concern of every state not only to vanquish nomadism, but to control migrations, more generally, to establish a zone of right over an entire 'exterior', over all the flows traversing the ecumenon. If it can help it, the state does not dissociate itself from the process of capture of flows of all kinds, populations, commodities, money, capital […] the state never ceases to decompose, recompose and transform movement, or to regulate speed." (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 59)

The nomad's desire for de-territorialization shines through as s/he tries to escape the codes set by the State and adopt a line of flight similar to 'a point of leakage' that not only compromises the control of the State but also manages to avoid its apparatus of capture (Bogue, 1989, p. 110). Thus, a defining feature of a nomadic war machine in a constant state of flux is its refusal to be pinned down, even if it is not heading anywhere. The nomadic war machine's flux and emphasis on the process of becoming is its connecting element to Sufi practices.

II. Deleuze and Rumi: Point of Contact

Rumi's Sufi-based philosophical dispositions provide a potential point of contact between Sufi practices and the Deleuzian poststructuralist position on nomadism. In the spirit of Deleuze's orientations toward nomadism and *becoming*, unpacking the Sufi approaches that shape for which Rumi's thought is essential. Although Rumi's penchant for humanism is in clear contrast with Deleuzian anti-humanism, it should be pointed out that the humanism Rumi embraces is not one born of Western liberalism. Humanism in the Sufi tradition is an unattainable goal and an individual in search of this form of humanism is in perpetual movement. Individuals can never reach such a state because it is relative, plural, diverse, and

inaccessible. While for the poststructuralist this might indicate the lack of space that breeds creativity, Marks (2010) maintains that it in fact "allows a great deal of play to the individual—distracted, contemplative, imaginative, mystical—and thus it does create space for pure difference" (Marks, 2010, p. 11). Deleuze's rhizomatic thinking is perceptible in Sufism's emphasis on the annihilation of the self (*fana*) and transformation into a *being* that is neither fixed nor permanent. This act of *becoming* is not a journey into death, but a new beginning that nurtures possibilities for an infinite existence. In this respect, Marks (2010) points to an important similarity between Deleuzian thought and Sufi traditions: "For Islamic mysticism, awareness of the nonexistent side of every existent thing stimulates fana', the mystical obliteration of the difference between things and God, I and thou. This idea finds a parallel in Deleuze's argument, following Bergson, that the more that perception becomes dissociated from our immediate needs, the further it opens onto the universe of images and opens us to the flow of time. The two processes, one mystical, one epistemological, are strikingly similar." (Marks, 2010, p. 17)

Although Sufis aim for a mystical end, it is the one never achieved which in turn inspires an endless intellectual and spiritual struggle. Sufism, as the mystical core of Islam, focuses on spiritual development and self-realization as well as identifying all the barriers to the awakening of one's consciousness. As an existential basis of Sufi practices, the self is regarded as a multidimensional and flowing entity. The directionless in nomadic wandering resonates with the Sufi notion of flowing like a river (Chapline, 2011). When the great Sufi master Rumi states, 'Out beyond ideas of wrongdoing and rightdoing, there is a field. I'll meet you there', it is a call to distance oneself from inflexible ways of thinking and *being*. This inspires a de-territorialization of the mind that moves beyond dominant hegemonic thought as it taps into the individuals' raw capacity to reach their creative potential.

III. Rumi's *War Machine of Love*

The Deleuzian war machine is a vantage point through which Rumi's writings are explored as individuals enter a space where the target of the war machine moves from the State to the self. The Deleuzian war machine is about metamorphosis and transformation within a discourse that is fundamentally exterior to the State. The aim of this discourse is to unsettle the sedentary culture and aspire for

"[a]nother justice, another movement, another space-time (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 354). According to Reid (2003), the 'nomadic war machine' is a radical way of thinking involving the formation, invention and fabrication of new concepts that violently differs from existing orders of thought imposed by the State (Reid, 2003, p. 3). As a form of resistance on the move, the nomadic war machine refuses to be subordinate to formal possibilities of thought (Reid, 2003). In adopting the language offered by Deleuze, Rumi's writings open the way for new interpretations regarding the creative potential of the war machine as a machine of production directed against the baser elements of the soul.

Rumi contends through the practice of selfless love, the individual is no longer confined to predetermined paths but is alive in an open and empty "field of possibilities" where life unfolds and transformation is a never-ending reality. Rumi encourages the awakening of the powerful voice of longing and transformation by advocating the release of the infinite power of love. Harvey (1999) reflects on Rumi's view toward longing and love, stating that "evolution is an infinite process that never ends on any of the planes of any world, and that the journey into embodying and living Love is as infinite and boundless as Love Itself" (p. xvi). Here, love becomes the "missing link that brings together moral reasoning and critical discernment with moral values, character, responsibility and compassion into a qualitatively different consciousness, empowered, resilient and authentically moral" (Mustakova-Possardt, 2004, p. 260).

Rumi encourages seekers of knowledge to be involved in a process of ongoing self-reflection. Through intense self-examination and the subsequent purification of the heart, a moral identity is formed, which awakens a feeling of intense love or *ishq* and "provides the basic motivations in humans. The generative impulse is the desire to generate something enduring. *Ishq* is procreation, it is creation; it is birth. It is more than the love of the beautiful; it is beauty incarnate (Zaimaran, 1985, p. 256). For Rumi, love never loses its nomadic quality because, "Like Adam and Eve, Love gives birth to a thousand forms; the world is full of its paintings but it has no form" (Rumi, Divan, 5057, as cited in Chittick, 1983). Thus, crossing the threshold of love leads to transformation and transcendence. With its potential to energize everything, love as a life force that animates is "The Sea of Non-Being: there the foot of the intellect is shattered" (Rumi, 1995). Similar to a nomad, a being enveloped in love is indeed a "Non-being", that which is not (absent), that which is yet to be (come into being)" (D'Souza, 2014, p. 13). It is in this context that Rumi's *war machine of love* comes into being: it

thrives in a third space where there are multiple versions of reality. A third space perspective, according to Barrera et al. (2003), "does not 'solve the problem.' Rather it changes the arena within which that problem is addressed by increasing the probability of respectful, responsive, and reciprocal interactions" (p. 81). Rumi's *war machine of love* is a deterrent force that enables the construction and re-construction of identity where a new understanding of the self is continuously being negotiated as the individual experiences the death of the false self. Within the third space, there is a hybrid reinvention of identity where "the very categories of 'Self' and 'Other' emerge as fluid and negotiable" (Bhabha, 1994, p. 56). Rumi's *war-machine of love* offers a conceptual tool for revisiting hegemonic discourses with the potential to resist them. The *war machine of love* relies on its nomadic qualities to create ruptures in static spaces through fluid and indeterminate action. Similar to the Deleuzian war machine (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987), Rumi's *war machine of love* has the ability to spring up at any point and deconstruct thought in nomadic fashion.

IV. Rumi and the Spiritual Activist

Story after story and poem after poem, Rumi highlights one of the most ubiquitous interconnections linking knowledge with action: spiritual activism. Embracing a form of knowledge that advocates spiritual activism leads to action and humility and renounces inaction and stagnation much like a nomad. Like a nomad who vacillates between *being* and *becoming*, the spiritual activist chooses openness over any fixed and finite field. What the nomad and the spiritual activist have in common is humility, creativity, and an openness to difference as they both connect to all the creative forces that move through an individual.

Rumi advances a form of knowledge that cultivates spiritual activism and moral imagination and leads to enlightened action. Bucko and Fox (2013) establish that authentic spirituality is the union of action and spirituality and without critical engagement, it is empty and dissipative. To navigate challenges that may arise, critical spirituality lessens the gap between thought and action and enables transformative practice to emerge. In this space, the experience of embarking on an inward journey is encouraged through constant self-reflection for seekers of knowledge. Since reflection can only lead to change if it is accompanied with action, Rumi resurrects the notion of the spiritual activist who is morally grounded, historically informed, and socially functional.

A close reading of Rumi's story *How a Hare Killed a Tyrannical Lion* offers a nuanced understanding of the concept of the spiritual activist. The story chronicles the schemes concocted and successfully executed by an intelligent hare to avoid becoming the lion's next pray and to rid other animals of a similar fate in the future. The story, which addresses determination and freewill, is about a tyrannical lion that terrorizes other animals' lives by killing them in order to feed himself. The animals are left with little choice but to submit to the sacrificial ritual until a clever hare decides to take action. When it is his time to be sacrificed, the hare takes his time to get to the lion, inevitably finding him enraged and fuming with anger. At this point, the hare tells a story about how another lion had eaten a friend of his just as they were to be sacrificed. The pride of the lion was hurt because he simply could not accept another great power roaming around in his territory. The lion demanded that the hare take him to where his arch nemesis had attacked earlier. Pretending to be scared, the hare went on the lion's back and directed him toward a well. When the lion looked down into the well, he saw what appeared to be another lion with a hare on its back and plunged into the well to attack his enemy. The hare was quick to jump off the lion's back before he fell into the well and drowned.

The lion in this story is the symbol of the *false self* and ego; he is first a dominating force among other animals but is at the same time a slave to his own self-serving desires. The lion's overbearing conduct does not make him welcome in the kingdom and his mere presence strikes fear into the hearts of all the weaker animals. Moores (2014) maintains that, "the machinations of the lesser animals might suggest to a Sufi reader the tricks the mind plays in preventing one from accepting the wisdom and directions of the master (p. 73). Hence, the hare's refusal to surrender to the lion represents the *nafs* (ego) and the intellect's interference with the soul's progression. Rumi reminds us of the importance of introspection and the need to confront our 'inner lion'. Through the lion, Rumi conveys the message that we must free ourselves from baser elements of the soul that prevent us from being free. While the lion is the symbol of the *nafs* that can take away all feelings of safety and security in an instant, the smaller animals symbolize baser elements of the soul. The hare, who is aware of the lion's weakness, symbolizes practicality and logic on the path toward inner peace. In this dynamic space, the wise hare cajoles the lion of the *nafs* to look at his own reflection and to rail against his ego. The lion's downfall is his pride, as the reflection of the *nafs* becomes the reason behind his destruction.

After sending the tyrannical lion to his death, the hare urges the now ecstatic animals to engage in the more difficult warfare against the desires of the *nafs*. While the well can be the manifestation of the baser elements that exist in the human soul, the hare can also be considered a spiritual activist. After the lion has been eliminated, the hare notices how easily pride has taken over the animals and to guide them, he moves beyond logic into a realm that can best be described as spirituality. In this sphere, the hare cautions the animals against letting the baser qualities of their souls run loose and encourages them to go to war against these elements:

> *Dear kings, we've killed the enemy outside,*
> *A worse foe still remains for us inside;*
> *Your brain does not know how to kill this foe:*
> *A hare can't bring this inner lion low!* (Mathnawi I, 1382-1384)

It is at this point that the hare transitions into a spiritual activist; constantly in motion; always questioning; travelling tirelessly from the struggle with the outer enemy to the one within. In essence, Rumi celebrates the dawn of the spiritual activist who explores limitless possibilities for alternative modes of knowledge seeking. The spiritual activist values engagement as essentially a prerequisite for social transformation. Exploring the tapestry of identities in Rumi's writings reveals a continuous struggle between various forces that swing the pendulum of opposites in the direction of the 'field of possibilities'. Embracing Rumi's vision of the *Insān-e-Kamil* (the perfect human being) requires that we, too, move beyond restrictive discourses and allow new spaces to present themselves.

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